

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 88 - Networking

NETWORKING

Networking as a concept has acquired what is in all truth an unjustified air of modernity. It is considered in the corporate world as an essential tool for the modern businessperson, as they trot round the globe drumming up business for themselves or a corporation. The concept is worn like a badge of distinction, and not just in the business world.

People can be divided basically into those who keep knowledge and their personal contacts to themselves, and those who are prepared to share what they know and indeed their friends with others. A person who is insecure, for example someone who finds it difficult to share information with others and who is unable to bring people, including friends, together does not make a good networker. The classic networker is someone who is strong enough within themselves to connect different people including close friends with each other. For example, a businessman or an academic may meet someone who is likely to be a valuable contact in the future, but at the moment that person may benefit from meeting another associate or friend.

It takes quite a secure person to bring these people together and allow a relationship to develop independently of himself. From the non-networker's point of view such a development may be intolerable, especially if it is happening outside their control. The unfortunate thing here is that the initiator of the contact, if he did but know it, would be the one to benefit most. And why?

Because all things being equal, people move within circles and that person has the potential of being sucked into ever growing spheres of new contacts. It is said that, if you know eight people, you are in touch with everyone in the world. It does not take much common sense to realize the potential for any kind of venture as one is able to draw on the experience of more and more people.

Unfortunately, making new contacts, business or otherwise, while it brings success, does cause problems. It enlarges the individual's world. This is in truth not altogether a bad thing, but it puts more pressure on the networker through his having to maintain an ever larger circle of people. The most convenient way out is, perhaps, to cull old contacts, but this would be anathema to our networker as it would defeat the whole purpose of networking. Another problem is the reaction of friends and associates. Spreading oneself thinly gives one less time for others who were perhaps closer to one in the past. In the workplace, this can cause tension with jealous colleagues, and even with superiors who might be tempted to rein in a more successful inferior. Jealousy and envy can prove to be very detrimental if one is faced with a very insecure manager, as this person may seek to stifle someone's career or even block it completely.

The answer here is to let one's superiors share in the glory; to throw them a few crumbs of comfort. It is called leadership from the bottom. In the present business climate, companies and enterprises need to co-operate with each other in order to expand. As globalization grows apace, companies need to be able to span not just countries but continents. Whilst people may rail against this development it is for the moment here to stay. Without co-operation and contacts, specialist companies will not survive for long. Computer components, for example, need to be compatible with the various machines on the market and to achieve this, firms need to work in conjunction with others. No business or institution can afford to be an island in today's environment. In the not very distant past, it was possible for companies to go it alone, but it is now more difficult to do so.

The same applies in the academic world, where ideas have been jealously guarded. The opening-up of universities and colleges to the outside world in recent years has been of enormous benefit to industry and educational institutions. The stereotypical academic is one who moves in a rarefied atmosphere living a life of sometimes splendid isolation, a prisoner of their own genius. This sort of person does not fit easily into the mould of the modern networker. Yet even this insular world is changing. The ivory towers are being left ever more frequently as educational experts forge links with other bodies; sometimes to stunning effect as in Silicon Valley in America and around Cambridge in England, which now has one of the most concentrated clusters of high tech companies in Europe.

It is the networkers, the wheeler-dealers, the movers and shakers, call them what you will, that carry the world along. The world of the Neanderthals was shaken between 35,000 and 40,000 BC; they were superseded by Homo Sapiens with the very 'networking' skills that separate us from other animals: understanding, thought abstraction and culture, which are inextricably linked to planning survival and productivity in humans. It is said the meek will inherit the earth. But will they?

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 87?

In boxes **11-13** on your answer sheet, write:

YES if the statement agrees with the writer's claims

NO if the statement contradicts the writer's claims

NOT GIVEN if there is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

Example

Answer

Networking is a concept

Yes

1 Networking is not a modern idea.

2 Networking is worn like a badge exclusively in the business world.

3 People fall into two basic categories.

4 A person who shares knowledge and friends makes a better networker than one who does not.

5 The classic networker is physically strong and generally in good health.

Questions 6-10

Using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage, complete the sentences below.

6 Making new acquaintances but also has its disadvantages.

7 At work, problems can be caused if the manager is

8 A manager can suppress, or even totally the career of an employee.

9 In business today, working together is necessary in order for to grow.

10 Businesses that specialize will not last for long without

Questions 11-15

Using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage, complete the sentences below.

11 In which sphere of life have ideas been protected jealously?

12 Which type of individual does not easily become a modern networker?

13 Where is one of the greatest concentrations of high tech companies in Europe?

14 Who replaced the Neanderthals?

15 What, as well as understanding and thought abstraction, sets us apart from other animals?

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Answer:

1. YES 2. NO 3. YES 4. YES 5. NOT GIVEN 6. brings success 7. (very) insecure/jealous/envious 8.

block 9. companies and enterprises 10. co-operation and contacts 11. (the) academic world 12. (the) stereotypical academic 13. Cambridge/ around Cambridge/ Cambridge in England 14. Homo Sapiens 15. culture

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