



FGI RCOE Webinar Transcript Tips for Effective Networking March 2, 2023

[00:00:00] **Michelle Day:** Good [00:01:00] afternoon everyone, and welcome to The Fletcher Group Rural Center of Excellence's webinar series. Today's session is scheduled to run from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. My name is Michelle Day and I'm your moderator for the session, along with Janice Fulkerson and Erica Walker. A couple of brief housekeeping items and then we'll begin.

You enter today's session on mute and your video was off and will remain so for the entirety of the webinar. Your chat feature is located at the bottom right of your screen. Use the dropdown feature to communicate with either the panelists only or panelists and attendees. Please direct all questions regarding the webinar content to the Q & A section.

Be advised that this meeting is being recorded and will be available to you on our website once it has been transcribed. You can access our website at www.FletcherGroup.org. Also, at the conclusion of today's session, there will be a short survey regarding the [00:02:00] webinar content. Your participation in that survey is greatly appreciated and will only take a few moments to complete.

Our speaker today is Karen Atkins. Karen is the Public Information Officer at Kentucky River Foothills Development Council Incorporated, a community action agency that assists individuals to attain self-sufficiency. Karen is an accomplished senior level public relations professional with 24 years of a demonstrated experience working in the public media relations and marketing fields.

She is experienced in crisis management, speech writing, branding, social media, event sponsorship, fundraising, grant writing, and research. Karen also oversees Foothills Rural Communities Opioid Response Program or RCORP, as the RCORP Implementation Project Director. She is responsible for the management of the HRSA funded federal grant, including working with community partners to build regional planning capacity to reduce the morbidity and [00:03:00] mortality associated with opioid overdoses in Madison County, Kentucky.

This is accomplished by leveraging skills, expertise, and assets of existing local, sub-regional, and regional institutions and stakeholders, monitoring grant activities and projects, tracking accomplishments and reporting requirements.

Karen, the floor is yours.

[00:03:25] **Karen Atkins:** Good afternoon. Uh, thank you Michelle. Um, and thank you for allowing me to be here today. I love and support recovery housing, and I'm excited to be with so many like-minded people. When my career began, I did not understand networking. I thought it was attending a Chamber of Commerce event and collecting as many business cards as I could.

Um, I thought the only valuable contacts at work that I needed were to make contacts with members of the press. [00:04:00] I was intimidated to go up to a stranger. I lacked the confidence to make a good impression. And quite honestly, it was uncomfortable. But the



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more that I realized there were the value of high value relationships and how to become a person that is high value, was the turning point

when I learned how important networking was. It was not a skill that you learn in school. It's not something that you can learn by reading a book. It's something that you do by practicing. And practicing a lot. And often I force myself to network when I don't feel like it. And I also say yes to opportunities that I know will advance either myself or the agency that I work at.

So again, I'm Karen. Um, [00:05:00] Kentucky River Foothills has been around for 60 years. Um, our core service area is Clark, Estill, Madison, and Powell. And since we began, we've expanded our services to 30 other counties. We work tirelessly to help people meet their basic needs, overcome substance use disorder, obtain GEDs and college degrees, um, obtain emergency shelter, rental assistance, and purchase homes, receive weatherization and be provided access to jobs, services, recreational opportunities, and other things through public transportation.

So, I want to use our time together to share lessons that I've learned around building high value relationships and partnerships. As [00:06:00] Michelle stated, I am the RCORP Project Director. RCORP is Rural Communities Opioid Response and Empowerment and is funded by the US Department of Health Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. Our, RCORP program is called MORE, it's the Madison Opioid Response and Empowerment Program, and we have three primary goals, and those include prevention, treatment, and recovery.

I'm married, live in Lexington, love to work out, hike, garden, and read. So now I want to do a quick icebreaker in unison on the count of three. Type your name in the chat and tell me where you're from. 3, 2, 1.

[00:06:58] **Janice Fulkerson:** Erin the, the messages [00:07:00] are coming in. We have people from Chicago and Tennessee, and Illinois. Virginia. Idaho, Vermont.

[00:07:17] **Karen Atkins:** Well, this is a great icebreaker and if we were in person, it would be so neat to have everyone in unison say their names out loud, and I would have the opportunity to look you in the eye and say, great. Now we're all friends.

So, one of Kentucky River Foothill's long-term strategic plan goals is to respond to the opioid epidemic and to increase support services to individuals and families that have been affected by substance use disorder. We do this in a variety of ways, including operating Liberty Place Recovery Center for Women. A center that was designed to reduce the [00:08:00] state's drug problem and resolve some of the state's homeless issues.

Liberty Place is one of 14 centers across the state established as part of the Recovery Kentucky Initiative. Recovery Kentucky was started by Governor Ernie Fletcher, who was also the founder of the Fletcher Group. At Liberty Place, we help women recover from substance use disorder and gain control of their lives so they can eventually reside in



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permanent housing. And I'm highlighted to use Liberty Place as examples in this presentation because everyone here is passionate about recovery housing.

So networking is not the information, sharing information with others. And networking is certainly not about begging for favors. [00:09:00] It's about establishing and building nurturing long term mutually beneficial relationships with the people you meet. Whether you're waiting to order your morning coffee, um, you're at a restaurant, working out of the gym or attending a conference. You don't have to join professional associations or attend every networking event that comes your way to be a successful networker.

And I do hope that this session provides useful tools to help build a meaningful network. Not just to meet people, but to develop those meaningful relationships and partnerships. So, I want you to spend just a moment reflecting on this statement. My biggest networking fear is blank. And if you're comfortable, please include that in the chat.

So again, my [00:10:00] biggest networking fear is...Not being prepared for a conversation. Approaching new people. Forgetting a name. Names are hard.

Being asked something I don't want to answer. You might know the answer, but you don't want to answer it. Yeah. Having a, a little brain freeze, forgetting what you're talking about. So, in, in effort to be candid, some of my biggest networking fears include not speaking when opportunity is there, feeling uncomfortable in front of new people, um, a lack of self-confidence, feeling like you're not supposed to be there. Imposter syndrome.

Small talk and meaningless [00:11:00] conversation. Lack of genuine energy. Phony people. Rejection. And I'm skipping over one because I honestly, my biggest fear is feeling trapped in a conversation that I cannot escape.

So, I agree with this statement. That over your career that your network will be valuable in your success. It is. That is just, that has helped me understand networking for years. And to me, networking is dedicating time to make those meaningful connections. Um, you know, building a relationship is not something that's, that's taught.

I mentioned, you know, it takes practice. It's a skill that's acquired. And let's face it, meeting [00:12:00] new people, as adults, meeting new people, making new friends is hard. But networking is more about advancing your professional goals than getting people to like you. So, I want to share some simple strategies that have helped me and, um, this resonates with me so much that I have learned that people will forget what you said.

They will forget what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel. So, where to start. Be your authentic self. Like personally, I do not admire cleverness. I admire authenticity. Um, I encourage you in your conversations to be candid, honest, vulnerable, so that you can have those great conversations.

To me, that moves, that means like moving small talk, [00:13:00] um, to going deeper into your conversations. And to me, vulnerability does not mean sharing your deepest, darkest secret. It just means bringing up something lighthearted with someone so that it is relatable. And an example of this is, professionally, um, I was talking to a coworker, a weak tie, and she told me how hard it was to meet via Zoom.

She lacked the energy and, uh, um, just the, the physical, uh, just being in a room physically with other people and that, that, you know, that was just missing during Covid. And so, I shared with her that once on Zoom, I had a hot mic. Meaning that I said something embarrassing that everyone else on the call could [00:14:00] hear.

And so, what that example shows is that light vulnerability created an opportunity for emotional connection. Like we're all human. And so, I tell you this story to remind you that people do not connect by being perfect, and it's okay to let your guard down. So, add stories and antidotes and color and emotion into your conversations. And be consistent.

Networking is not about going to, um, one event and gathering business cards. Rather, it's about meeting new people and then fostering those relationships over time. You have to stay consistent in your networking efforts to reap the benefits of building professional connections.

That effective networking is a two-way. Um, I like to give [00:15:00] value to my relationships. Um, I think that an impactful example of this is by making, um, maybe mutually beneficial introductions. Like if your strength is connecting people, do that for as many people as you can. Another example is to be supportive and do good work.

When you're helpful and supportive of others and you do good work, your network will naturally expand. And give. Give more than you take. I like to think of this as building a bank, uh, of goodwill. Um, I believe that you have to make deposits before you start making withdrawals, and that is what builds trust.

And what I mean by this is for every favor, whether that's an introduction or a funding request, be sure to return with something of greater perceived value. That could be a handwritten [00:16:00] note or, um, a social media post.

Intentionality. This might be the hardest because it requires listening and engaging and talking less. The mark of a good conversationalist is not that you can talk a lot, but that you can get others to talk a lot. In my experience, networking can lead to donations. That does not equate to fundraising, but it helps significantly.

And follow up. A great example of this, um, uh, I had a conversation with a donor last week. I attended a Chamber of Commerce breakfast, and a gentleman approached me that works at a local bank and had, um, told me that, uh, recently they made donations to five area nonprofits, and Liberty Place was one of them.

[00:17:00] And when he was telling me this, he was almost apologetic that it wasn't more money. He, you know, I'm sorry it couldn't be more. And of, of course, you know, that was irrelevant. We, we, we love them and they've been a partner since we opened. And what stuck out from that conversation was that he said that not only did he get one thank you note, but that he got five handwritten thank you notes from Liberty Place residents and nothing from the other four nonprofits.

So that is the importance of following up. And I do want to throw this in, that you can connect and build your network with unlike minded people. Just because you have different religious views or political views, you can be friends. Um, and I think that a mark of a good friend, professionally or [00:18:00] personally, is that they don't hold your beliefs or your values against you.

So where to network? Again, I'm going try to make this as interactive as possible. Um, spend a few moments and reflect on where you think the best places to network are. And if you're comfortable throw those in the chat. Everywhere. That's a good one. Community events. Conferences. I love conferences. Mm-hmm. Coalition meetings. I love [00:19:00] it. I'm seeing a lot of everywhere. Absolutely. So, I listed a few of mine and always I have loved, um, I know that Chamber of Commerce's might be different from area to every area, but I love, um, our Chamber of Commerce events. Um, I love being a part of a professional association when I can.

Um, the office. We're going to talk about networking with your coworkers, but that is, should not, um, you should always be networking with your colleagues. Um, you know, um, volunteering is a great way to meet new people. I'm going to skip over a few of these. Um, but really pull out the ones that resonate with me.

Health clubs, and I mean, I like to talk to a lot of people during breaks. Um, I love to get involved in things at my church, at a small group that has provided, that has [00:20:00] opened so many doors and it's actually brought so much, um, support for Liberty Place is through my connection with people that I see off of the clock.

Um, don't forget about your family and friends. And your clients. I think we don't think that our clients could be someone that we could network with, but they certainly are.

So, I want to talk briefly about networking via social media and Covid. And we have lived in a bubble for the last three years and we, we've been there and we're here today. Uh, if you're stuck, you know you're not alone. Half of all Americans feel lonely and left out. A recent study published by the Global Health Service Company, Cigna, found that 46% of US adults [00:21:00] report sometimes are always feeling lonely.

And 47% feel left out. People feel disconnected from people they used to be dis, connected to. And if you're trying to meet um, meaningful, if you're trying to create meaningful conversations with people, I always suggest that first one-on-one meeting to be a Zoom meeting so that you can see each other face-to-face.



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Um, if you hold virtual events like today's webinar, embrace and use the chat feature like we're doing today. And I would encourage you that if you see someone, another attendee on here that you wanted to, to, to reach out to or connect with, to, to do that after the meeting. Um, I don't know if this feature is, um, available on today's webinar, but you may be able to send that person a direct [00:22:00] message here.

So, I really believe that. Lasting relationships are built live in person, and that if you do put time and effort into social media, it can be beneficial. You know, it's easy to look up job seekers, see job postings, find volunteers, make funding requests. But to me, connecting with random strangers is weird.

If I have not met you face-to-face and I receive a LinkedIn invitation, I will not accept you as a friend. Um, and I do believe that LinkedIn is inundated with some of the toxicity that Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms have. There's not one best social media platform, but what I would encourage you to do if you don't have a LinkedIn account already [00:23:00] is to, well, A, create one and then B, make sure that it is updated.

Because when I go to a conference or an event where I, I connect with somebody and I want to go deeper, or I want to just set up a, I just want to know a little bit more about them, I immediately go to LinkedIn and look them up. And I know a lot of people do that. And so, um, I do want to share a few social media tips that will protect you.

Um, and it sounds like, um, um, uh, everything that we should know, right? Like before posting anything on any site, stop and think, will this hurt or improve my professional career or my personal life? Avoid negativity, especially if you're a professional or a leader, or aspire to be a leader. And I said this earlier, just be selective about who you [00:24:00] accept or connect with on those social media platforms.

You know, the goal of social media is not to have so many connections, friends or followers, but to have those quality, meaningful connections. And I like to perform a relationship audit every year. It's usually in December. And what I do is I examine all of my contacts on all of my platforms, and I delete or hide any, any of those contacts that don't serve me.

Let's talk a little bit about networking with your coworkers. I think that internal networking is so important, and it should not be overlooked. So, in addition to making connections outside of your program, outside of your agency, network with your coworkers. You know, casual conversation it builds trust, it builds rapport, and it reinforces a sense of belonging.

When thinking [00:25:00] about networking with coworkers and volunteers, make a list. Um, identify who you want to network with; people in other departments at higher levels or on projects and teams that you would like to work on. A few months ago, I identified a partnership with a coworker. So, for the past few months, we've been planning an expungement clinic and utilizing each other's community connections. Alone we wouldn't have been able to pull this off, but by partnering with each other, other staff and community members, we are anticipating a widely attended successful event later this month. I like to



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schedule check-ins. I set a recurring block of time on my calendar for check-ins and conversations and make it a priority to talk to people that I don't directly work with.

And I do this because if I know you, like really know you, [00:26:00] then I care about you. I would encourage you to identify your coworker's communication style earlier. You know, there's this dance of, of following someone's lead back and forth. And, and, and what I mean by that is when I stop by someone's office, I feel like I've heard to, uh, I'm pretty good at, uh, recognizing the signals to either come in or to keep walking.

And I also want to, um, encourage you to, uh, learn communication style that's not limited to physical contact. Meaning identify their email style, uh, their texting style, and even how they want to be reached out by on the phone. Um, you can share, utilize break time. Um, personally, I like to bring my own lunch and not spend money weekly on lunch going out.

Um, I have for years felt guilty about [00:27:00] turning invitations to lunch down over and over again. I know that there's networking opportunities there, but I just don't want to go out to lunch. And so, I have felt guilty for turning those down, but I've realized that that kind of networking for me, that's not my style.

And so, I share that because I think it's important to know who you are, um, and know what your own strengths and weaknesses are. So earlier we thought about and discussed our biggest networking fears. Um, and here are a few practical, uh, tips on how to overcome, um, your fear of networking. Um, you know, if you're shy, start with, um, your friends, your relatives. Um, as I mentioned, you can network with people at work that you rarely have an opportunity to talk to.

Um, and in your spare time [00:28:00] just work on being the best version of you. And when you do that, other people will take notice. Um, meet people where they are, join a community or take part in volunteer activities. Maybe this is a church small group or a book club or volunteering. Maybe it's volunteering within your own agency where there are familiar faces. And meet people where they are.

That means meeting people with a shared passion because that combines socialization with opportunities to meet high valued people. Some of my best networking that led to part, partnerships happened off the clock. Um, a good illustration of this is exercise. I go to the gym, I go with an open attitude, meaning that I smile, I, I show up with energy, I strike up conversation.

And by doing this, I've been able to create a social circle through exercise that has expanded into my [00:29:00] professional network. Meaning I have developed a friendship with one of our banking partners outside of work. And through that connection, I've been able to ask and receive financial contributions for Liberty Place.

And I've given meaning that I've also been able to introduce another friend who is a yoga teacher. That also works at the Alzheimer's Association to many people in my professional network that I think would be a really good partner for her.



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Practice conversation starters. So, what brings you here? That was a great talk. What did you think about it? Um, remember, not, don't try to be too clever. It's more important just to say hello. And um, again, we talked about this earlier. You can practice striking up a conversation with anyone, your Uber driver, a cashier at the grocery store, restaurant server, your [00:30:00] barista.

I am actually going to share a link to a small talk cheat sheet later in the presentation. And another one, if you're shy, is to take a close friend to a networking event. So that makes stepping out of your comfort zone a little easier. It'll help you break ice with strangers, and it will help just generate your own conversation circles. Um, and remember to send those right signals. Smiling.

Um, open body language, eye contact. Um, a Harvard study revealed it typically takes eight subsequent positive encounters to change a first bad impression. So, if you repel someone one time, it's going to take up to eight times to turn that person's opinion of you around. And take care of yourself when you know when to leave.

This was really hard [00:31:00] for me because I do feel like one of my biggest fears is feeling trapped. And I have learned that you don't have. I just, if I want to leave, I will just say I'll be right back. Or excuse me, and just leave. And if they're it, it's hard. But if you're in the middle of a conversation and you, you only have five minutes left at an event and you really want to see the person across the room and you're stuck, you have to get unstuck and you have to do it fast.

And remember that, you know, growing your network authentically takes time. And that network is a lifelong activity that in the end, is all about building those relationships that are honest, sincere, and of value to both parties.

So, let's talk about weak ties. So weak ties can be massive to your career, [00:32:00] success. Um, and it's a weird term, right? Weak ties sound weak. Um, although strong ties are the ones you're closest to. Strong ties are the people that you have dinner with, that you go on vacation with. Weak ties are those people who you know just enough to be considered an acquaintance. That, um, they are people that you see at community events or maybe at a mutual friend's birthday party.

These might be people that you work with, but not particularly well. Your weak ties are essential in the fact that these same individuals can become allies over time. And knowing this information is key in your career. And so I have a few homework assignments, if you will. And so after this session, um, I would like for you to make a list of your weak [00:33:00] ties and challenge you to create a habit of regularly reaching out to them, um, and try to create a genuine reason to get in touch without being too pushy.

Um, look out for those free networking events and socials and turn up, determined maybe to leave with one to two new connections and then follow up with a greeting. So, before we go into partnerships, I'd like to spend a few moments on developing your networking plan. Um, I will share this worksheet with attendees after the session. You can take a screenshot of it



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now, but I want you to take, we'll just take one minute, um, for you to think about developing your own action plan.

And at the end of the session, maybe we'll share an example or two. [00:34:00] And so here, and I'm not going to go over, um, all of the steps now, I will at the end. But an action plan sample here is by April 2nd. That's 30 days from today. By April 2nd, I will interact with at least five new people at work-related casual gatherings and get to know them, and I will continue to do so for six months. Simple. It's specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound. So, let's take one solid minute for you to think about one thing that you can write down as a action plan for to to have done in the next 30 days.

[00:34:58] **Janice Fulkerson:** Karen, while they're doing that, [00:35:00] I'll just mention that the slides in this webinar will be available on The Fletcher Group website in two weeks. So, people can come back and look over the slide. So, if they don't capture this networking plan today, they can find it in a couple weeks on The Fletcher Group website and the link is in the chat.

[00:35:20] **Karen Atkins:** Awesome, thank you. Well, we are definitely, we're going to come back to this at the end. So now let's talk a little bit more, uh, uh, about some partnerships. Um, partnerships are important because we're stronger collectively than alone. Uh, partnerships provide additional resources such as, um, enhanced community standing, an increased volunteer pool, and a wider influence. You should always be meeting new partners in networking and partnerships all weave together.[00:36:00]

So, think about the people that you know. Who know the people you want to meet. Um, another homework assignment, if you will, is to make a list of your ideal partners. At Liberty Place, we've partnered with various community groups including law enforcement. Um, the house frequently hosts events such as cookouts for first responders.

We've been fortunate to have strong support from our faith-based community. Um, I mentioned earlier about opening doors through my small group, and because of a deep personal relationship, um, one local church has done so many things for Liberty Place. They have sponsored a New Year's Eve party. They've adopted women for Valentine's Day.

They have adopted women for free dental services through their Adopt A Smile program. They've [00:37:00] sponsored two bedrooms in the house and for years, Liberty Place was a line item in their line, um, in their annual budget. Um, so businesses at Liberty Place, we've been able to work with various vendors and suppliers to reduce the rates of goods and products purchased for the house.

Therefore, strengthening our budget. Um, at Liberty Place, we take advantage of hosting fundraisers, which not only, uh, raises essential funding for the program, but also public awareness. Um, I encourage you to host an event or at least have that open door policy for the community to come in and visit any time because you want to publicize your program and you want the community to learn about the good work that you are doing and how they can help.



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You [00:38:00] know, we continually educate, uh, the community about Liberty Place and how they can make a difference for their, the women that live there, um, uh, and their families who are seeking recovery. Um, I love leadership programs and encourage you to participate in one if the opportunity is there in your, in the area that you live.

And self-promotion. You know, we take every opportunity to speak at meetings, city commission, fiscal court, Rotary, Kiwanis. Um, don't just look for those opportunities, but reach out and ask to speak at those meetings.

So, when we opened Liberty Place, and this was in 2008, we developed an advisory committee. And the purpose of developing this [00:39:00] committee was to create community awareness of this new radical program, cause remember this was 15 years ago. We carefully selected people from faith-based community, law enforcement, city and county government, and people with lived experience to help advocate for the program, as well as dispel any miss or rumors associated with the programming. And many of those advisory committee members have remained strong supporters of the program.

One very unique thing that we did before opening Liberty Place was seek partners to adopt, uh, a room at the center. Um, this project allowed us to partner with over 56 individuals and businesses to equip our center with the furniture and soft goods like bedding and towels and artwork to ensure that our center was safe,

[00:40:00] comfortable, and it was a home for women to go through long-term recovery. I have heard so many women say that this is the nicest place that they have ever lived. And that that makes me happy because that was our goal, is to make it feel like home. And so we did this when we opened in 2008, but we also re, readopted all of our spaces in 2018, you know, citing a need to replenish and refurnish spaces.

So, this project alone raised over a hundred thousand dollars in 2008, and then again in 2018. And if you were to come into Liberty Place, which if you, if you have the chance, please, we'd love to have you. You will see that each room there displays a plaque recognizing each donor who furnished the room.[00:41:00]

So, I just want to spend a moment and talk about some partnership benefits. Um, you know, they bring in more donations. They bring in more volunteers, more resources. They allow you to take on bigger projects because when you have two or more like-minded people working on things, amazing things will happen.

Partners bring extra brain power. And while it's good to find partners with, it's so, with complimentary skill sets, it's so important for you to expand your own wheelhouse. You know, partners, their strengths, compliment your weaknesses. And I personally have learned so many techniques from working with partners that has helped me significantly over my career.

Partnerships build management skills. I believe that you should treat your partners the [00:42:00] same as you would a coworker or a friend. Um, look, just like coworkers. Pay

attention to your partner's communication style. Stay in touch. Ping them often with an email just to keep that relationship warm. You don't want to be known for only reaching out when you need something.

Um, practice, you know, reciprocal relations. Ask yourself often, what can I do for them? This is a great way to cement a relationship. Um, partners can help influence your community in, in a good and in a bad way. Um, partners can also increase a greater recall of brand. Um, partners can add things to an existing project that make it better than originally designed.

Um, and you know, we spend a lot of time at [00:43:00] work. So, it's fun when you have great partners. We want it to be fulfilling and meaningful, and we are all in recovery housing because when you're passionate about helping individuals maintain and sustain recovery. And lastly, it just builds long-term stability, you know, by lifting others up and helping them succeed, we will succeed. You will succeed.

And remember that you are the guardian of your program. We talk a lot about this, um, within our agency because we are a community action agency. There are 23 of us in the state, over a thousand nationwide. Um, and that means that you are, everything that you do for your recovery housing effort, speaks to other people in other communities that are doing like-minded [00:44:00] work.

And so just make sure your partnerships are a good fit. That they're mutually beneficial. Um, ensure compatibility and make sure that your values are aligned. Think about your partner's reputation and remember that all partners are not good partners. Stay persistent, but stay polite and remember that relationships, they don't happen overnight. And constantly gauge the temperature of that relationship and that project, and address small issues before they become big problems.

And if a partnership feels forced or it begins to fade, it's okay to let it go and to not take it personally. For example, it's hard to understand why maybe a long-term donor or a long-term volunteer suddenly stops. [00:45:00] It's going to happen and it's okay. Um, one donor confided in me recently that they were focusing their giving on cancer research and thanked us for being good stewards of their money for, for years.

Um, the local church I mentioned earlier that did so much for us. They had to take us out of their annual budget because their annual giving was down. But I did not take those decisions personally, nor would I have taken them personally if I did not know the reason why. And I will continue to connect with them, leaving, leaving an open door to future projects, future partnerships, and future endeavors.

This is very interesting. So, um, I, you know, I, I say a lot like I believe, and this is what I think, but when I was putting this presentation together, I was curious and asked [00:46:00] some of my, um, uh, friends, my weak ties, my colleagues, what do you look for in a partner? What makes a good partner and what would burn a bridge?



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And this is a response from an AT&T connection, and I'm, and I'm going to read it because it's pretty powerful. Um, the nonprofit should be strategic in their community service, not duplicating services that are already available in the community. The nonprofit should be responsive, not just to the community, but to the donors.

I can't tell you the number of times I've asked for, for paperwork necessary to complete a grant, and I get no response. I have to move on to other organizations. The nonprofits should be organized and willing to recognize the partnership, donation and publicity, if the donor requests publicity. The closest thing I've had to burning a bridge was the PR person

for an organization we have supported with charitable funding. [00:47:00] Someone that she sees on a monthly basis and considered a friend, um, completely trashed my company on social media, completely ignoring the times we've helped his organization. He thought he was attacking a big national company, but I represent that brand locally.

And his words negatively affected me, reflected on me. If he had reached out to me first, I could have helped solve the problem that he was experiencing. But he went on Facebook and Twitter, on a Facebook and Twitter rant, and the relationship will never be the same. So, the four things that I pulled out of this, and this is a partnership that we have with AT&T is that she wants us to be strategic, responsive, organized, and she wants publicity. And we will give her publicity.

Another, uh, and I only have two. Um, a second one is a [00:48:00] connection that I have at PNC Bank. Um, and she stated, A great partnership to me is when organizations are open, transparent, and discuss how all parties involved can achieve their goals. We support nonprofits who meet our funding priorities and help enhance the lives of com of our community members.

Making our communities better places to live, work, and play is a major goal for us. Constant communication between partners is also pretty essential and important to me. A bad partnership is when everything is one-sided. Some organizations only come when they need something and don't give back in return.

Giving back means sharing information, staying in touch, open communication, perhaps banking opportunities. So, the, the four things that I want to pull out from this partner is that she values, um, the partner being open, being transparent, co, commonality [00:49:00] and communication.

So, it's really important to think about, um, how all of your relationships, your networking, these partnerships, they can lead to funding opportunities. And a few of them include corporate, co, uh, corp, uh, foundations. You know, many businesses and banks, um, uh, have foundations in our area. Um, an example of that would be the Keeneland Foundation, uh, the Bluegrass Community Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Um, health conversion foundations. There are over 400 nationwide. And these are health legacy foundations set up from the sale of hospitals, from nonprofit to for-profit. And the idea



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is to give back to the area where wealth [00:50:00] generated from. And in our area um, an example of that might be the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

Um, there's family foundations. This is a narrow corridor, but possible. I would suggest to start small, maybe \$5,000 and work your way up if you can. And this has worked well for us. Invite someone to sit on your board of directors or advisory council advisory committee. You got your local and state government.

If you are not already having conversations with your local leaders about how opioid abatement settlement dollars can expand or help your program. You need to start. And individual donors. This might be a three to five year journey, even in rural areas. So, you know, do your research, and I don't even know how many homework assignments I'm up [00:51:00] to, maybe three, maybe four. But identify foundations, identify businesses and individual donors. Spend some time to think what is your ideal philanthropy plan, philanthropy plan, um, also, what's your ideal mix of funding?

And remember that donors attract other donors. Discover your partner's, focus and pinpoint their timelines. I can't tell you how many times I have been told next year reach out or call earlier. And regarding wording. I rarely use the word sponsor in a funding request. Instead, I might say, this is a wonderful opportunity for the region to assist in the coordinated effort to confront substance use disorder.

Please join us in *equipping* this amazing facility that helps women searching for answers and healing. Just that one word, equipping and not sponsoring has [00:52:00] made a world of, uh, uh, a world of difference in my proposals. In whatever you do, don't exaggerate your budget in hopes of getting more money than you ask for, and always be prepared to show receipts.

So, remember that reputation management is important and that we are all responsible for each other. When you're building, um, support for your recovery housing program, like I mentioned earlier, you are building commu, community supporters and allies locally, statewide, and nation, uh, nationwide. And as we wrap up, I'd like to encourage you to continually share your mission and tell your story. Build your website.

Um, increase your social, uh, social media presence. Identify like what works for your program and be creative. Um, do as much as you can [00:53:00] to toot your own horn and become a self-promo, promoter. Um, make those requests. Ask to be a guest on a podcast, a radio show, a TV show, or, um, speak at a civic club meeting. In an effort to, we might come back to this, but in an effort to stay on time, um, um, we, this might, uh, be a slide that we come back to, um, the developing your own networking plan. And again, I will send this out.

But I did want to share some things that have helped me. Um, a few book recommendations. Um, A, uh, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has been on the bestselling list since, you know, the day it was published. And there's a reason why. I mean, it's, it's, it's the, it's the old, it's the OG of networking, right? Like, that's how you network. Um, and as far as [00:54:00] self-help books go, *Atomic Habits* is one of the most actionable ones that I have



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come across. Um, to me this is the most comprehensive guide on how to change your habits and get 1% better every day. Um, the main message of Atomic Habits is that small changes,

when performed consistently can lead to massive improvements. So, at the end of the session, you might make a goal of become a better networker or develop more partnerships, but that's not enough. This book offers guidance on how to develop systems, which are processes that lead to results. So, in networking and partnerships, our systems may include acquiring the skillset of listening, uh, maintaining balance, and getting the timing right, um, or practicing the art of giving.

These are two great podcasts. I listen to [00:55:00] 'em all the time. Um, the Art of Charm, it digs deep into human behavior and the science behind it. Um, it dis, demystifies what we do and why we do it. And they discuss networking and partnerships a lot. The Tim Ferris Show deconstructs world class performers to extract, um, some of the tools and the tactics and the routines that, that, that, that, that they use, that you can use. So, it's just practical, short advice.

And then here is that easy tool that I referenced earlier to help you become an incredible conversationalist. Um, it's called The Captivating Small Talk Cheat Sheet. Uh, you can download it on your phone. Um, the address is right there. It's, uh, [theartofcharm.com/small talk](https://theartofcharm.com/small-talk). And this cheat sheet provides access to the simplest, most [00:56:00] effective ways to make small talk at your fingertips. And I want to just finish before we have a few minutes for Q&A, is to remember that the key to success is getting people to say yes. Don't underestimate your own abilities. And find a way to stand out.

So, I think we have five minutes for Q&A, or if anyone wants to share something that might have worked for them, that I might not have brought up.

[00:56:42] **Janice Fulkerson:** Um, Karen, thank you for that. We have a couple of questions that I think I'll, uh, try to pull out and then, um, we will be mindful of the time and end on time today. So, you know, earlier, uh, when you had people put some of their fears in [00:57:00] the chat, you know, the ability to say, I'm uncomfortable answering that question. You know, if you're in an environment and, you know, particularly for people in recovery, um, sometimes talking about their personal story and their personal recovery, they might not want to do it in that particular setting.

So, what are your thoughts? One of the, one of the, um, Participants is asking, what do you think about that? And, uh, do you have any, uh, response to how to answer a question without answering the question?

[00:57:30] **Karen Atkins:** Yeah, absolutely. So, we control our narrative, right? Like we control everything that we want to share. And that goes with, the same if in someone's recovery story. Um, you might be comfortable telling one person something that you might, may or may not feel comfortable telling someone else. Um, they don't, unless they know your story from someone else. Like, but why would they, they're not going to [00:58:00] know what you're not telling them. So, you only share what you're comfortable sharing.



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And when you practice becoming a good conversationalist and you're, you're put on the spot, or you're asked a question and you're just fearful of what to say, just change the subject. I doubt that they're going to come back and pound you for an answer.

[00:58:25] **Janice Fulkerson:** That's great advice, Karen. I think having the ability to say, you know what, I'm not, I'm uncomfortable answering that question, but what I can talk about is, and then talking about something related to the mission or the organization or ask them something about their interest, a book, a piece of music, you know, something that's happening at the event. Yeah. Just having the ability to do that. Okay. Um, do you recommend, here's another question from, uh, the audience. Do you recommend having an elevator speech and a brief, uh, summary or [00:59:00] three or four different ways of talking about your mission, and would you have them written down you?

[00:59:06] **Karen Atkins:** Absolutely, especially if you're first starting out, because if you have to look at that cheat sheet a few times, I guarantee you're, it will become so organic over time that you won't need that anymore. And don't be afraid of using notes. Uh, we have our own internal leadership academy at Foothills where we, um, um, take in maybe 10 or 15 staff members at a time and they learn different things about the organization. And that first thing that we talk about is creating that elevator speech and, and communicating what you want to communicate.

Because as community action, it is hard to, to summarize what you do in two or three minutes because, you know, we have 40 programs, you know, 30 counties. Uh, there's so much that we do, but I. When I give my elevator [01:00:00] speech, I don't pull out program specific. I just say that I work at Community Action Agency that helps people attain self-sufficiency. And we do that in a variety of ways. We have 40 programs, and then if they seem interested, I keep on talking.

[01:00:15] **Janice Fulkerson:** That's fantastic. And speaking of that, I want to thank you for being here today. We're coming up on time. This has been a really great, um, opportunity to talk about not only personal networking, but organizational networking as well. Personal branding and the way that we present ourselves.

At Fletcher Group, we focus on expanding the capacity and quality of recovery housing and the recovery ecosystem. And we work in rural communities all across the United States. So, if anybody's interested in learning more about the Fletcher Group, they can go to FletcherGroup.org. The slides and presentations will be available next week on our website along with all of our other previous webinars that we've had.

Um, and at the end of this, we'll [01:01:00] have a couple of questions if you feel compelled to stay on and respond to how you liked today's presentation. So, thank you, Karen. Thank you for all the work you're doing, um, for your organization and around the world. Thank you.

[01:01:16] **Karen Atkins:** Thank you.