Blueprint
Speed Networking Event

London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) Blueprints

Welcome to the LEAN Blueprints. We created 5 blueprints to help schools and businesses create effective opportunities for students to learn about careers. We've included suggestions and ideas for everything we think you'll need to plan and run successful and impactful careers projects.

In this Blueprint you'll see information on:

1.   What is a Speed Networking event?
2.   Why run a Speed Networking event?
3.   How to run a Speed Networking event

What is a Speed Networking event?

At a Speed Networking event, small groups of students meet business volunteers to ask them questions about their career and industry. The students (or employers) rotate to a new table every 5-7 minutes, meeting up to 12 different business volunteers in an hour.

This type of event is highly adaptable as they can be run for different age groups and group sizes (up to 100 students). The event can also focus on different themes like work experience, GCSE options choices or employability skills.

This activity can help schools and colleges towards meeting Gatsby Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees.

BENCHMARK 5

Why run a Speed Networking event?

Speed Networking events help your students meet a wide range of business volunteers in a fun, fast-paced environment. Other benefits include:

•   Students can find out about a wide range of different roles and industries in a short amount of time.
•   Students can quickly improve their interpersonal skills through introducing themselves repeatedly to the business volunteers.
•   The fast-paced nature of these events means students are highly engaged.
•   It requires a limited amount of a volunteer's time and they don't need to do much preparation beforehand.

Making it meaningful – The Careers & Enterprise Company

Look at the Careers & Enterprise Company's 'Making it Meaningful checklist' for ideas on how to ensure your event is embedded in your school's wider careers strategy and programme. Search 'Making it meaningful checklist – Careers & Enterprise Company'

**THE CAREERS &
ENTERPRISE
COMPANY**

How to run a Speed Networking Event

1. **Choose the students and select your learning outcomes**

Choose the students that will be involved and the learning outcomes you want them to achieve. The group size will impact the number of business volunteers you will need to recruit. You should aim for a maximum ratio of 1 volunteer to 7 students.

2. **Agree the date, time and venue**

When you are selecting the venue, try to secure as large a space as possible. This helps the rotations of students/volunteers run smoothly and ensures that the small group conversations can be heard.

A class size group working with 4-7 employers can (just about) be accommodated in a normal classroom.

3. **Create a list of employers to invite**

Work with your Enterprise Adviser, Enterprise Coordinator or a colleague to create a list of employers to contact. Use Eventbrite or create an online Google form to give interested volunteers a quick and easy way to sign up.

For further tips and templates see our volunteer recruitment guide.

4. **Keep in regular contact with volunteers**

To reduce the risk of last-minute dropouts, keep in regular contact with your volunteers. Send them briefing notes one week before the event and offer them the opportunity to speak to you on the phone if needed.

Use our template for volunteering briefing notes.

5. **Prepare staff ahead of the event**

Provide support staff with a short event briefing. Maintaining good student behaviour is important but these events benefit from being interactive and fast-paced. Staff should encourage students to be inquisitive, chatty and open.

Ensure there are enough staff supporting the event to manage student behaviour, distribute water and escort volunteers to the toilets during the session.

Make sure that support staff are aware of any adaptations needed to ensure SEND students can participate in the activity. Speak to your SENCO if you are unsure what support is needed.

6. **Prepare the students for the event**

Prepare your students for the event by explaining what they will be doing, what they will learn from the experience and what is expected of them.

Use our Speed Networking student booklet which includes activities students can use to prepare for the event.

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

7. Welcome and brief your business volunteers

Welcome your business volunteers at reception and take them to a waiting room. Provide them with refreshments if possible. Ensure you have staff to support you as volunteers without a DBS check need to be escorted by staff.

Deliver a briefing to the volunteers 30 minutes before the event including:

- Background information on your students
- Housekeeping i.e. toilets, refreshments, fire alarms
- Safeguarding rules

- Clear instructions on their role
- How they can get your support with poor behaviour
- Tips on working with your students

8. Run the event

To start the event, introduce your business volunteers and lead a warmup activity, like student bingo, to help students quickly overcome any shyness. Remind the students of your expectations before starting the speed networking.

Place each business volunteer on a table with 4-7 students. Give the students 5-10 minutes to question their volunteer before rotating the volunteer (or students) to the next table. Loudly signal the changeover each time and try to make clear at the start of the event the direction they should move each time.

To prevent repetition, introduce themes for each round by placing suggested questions on the board or tables.

Ask staff to monitor behaviour and support volunteers that are struggling with their group. Provide water at regular intervals to the volunteers and students.

9. Collect feedback

Collect feedback from all the students, business volunteers and teachers as soon as possible. Ideally collect this before they leave the room and leave time to make sure it's not rushed.

Online forms are a great way to save time and effort, just make sure you highlight that this will be sent to the participants at the end/after the event.

Go through the feedback and identify key learning points. Record these and use them to improve future events.

10. Post event follow up

Thank your volunteers at the end of the event and contact them soon afterwards, sharing any positive student feedback you received. Use this as an opportunity to signpost them to any other ways they can volunteer at the school or college.

If they are enthusiastic about volunteering again, log their details on [Compass+](#). Record the event and students' attendance on Compass+.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Case study: Explore Your Horizons – Speed Networking Event

An event that is held each year at Lords Cricket Ground and run by LEAN, Explore Your Horizons invites hundreds of students in Years 9 & 10 to speed network with business volunteers from across London.

Students learn about a wide range of careers and industries whilst also developing their ability to present themselves in a professional manner.

Volunteers from large businesses like Vodafone, TfL and JP Morgan took part alongside small business owners, freelancers and apprentices. This variety of backgrounds gave students a wide range of career experiences to hear from.

"*The best part was getting knowledge of different careers that I wouldn't have considered and learning how I can involve my favourite subjects*" – Year 9 Student

Key results:

100% of the students reported that the event had helped them understand more about the different career pathways and sectors with **85%** stating they understood a lot more.

89% of students reported feeling more confident about discussing careers with an adult in the future, with **83%** reporting that they were more likely to ask in the future.

LEAN Blueprints

Don't forget about our other blueprints available at www.london.gov.uk/LEAN:

Gatsby Benchmark 5 blueprints
(for schools or colleges)

- Speaker Series
- Professional Interview Day

Gatsby Benchmark 6 blueprints
(for employers)

- Employer Insight Visit
- Work Experience

If you have any ideas on how we can improve these blueprints, please contact enterpriseadvisers@london.gov.uk

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY