

Impromptu Networking

Impromptu Networking a [Liberating Structure](#)

Impromptu Networking - Virtual Form (15-20 minutes)

Rapidly share challenges and expectations. Build new connections.

Use at the beginning, or the end, or as “punctuation”. You can help a group connect to each other, get primed, and focus attention on problems they want to solve. Loose yet powerful connections are formed in 20 minutes by asking engaging questions. Everyone contributes to shaping the work and noticing patterns together.

STEPS:

1. Ask thoughtful questions. (or give prompts)
2. *Pairs, 4 mins to talk, 3 rounds.

*When calls are large/unstable, go to trios in case of connectivity/participation issues.

Put people in breakout rooms in pairs, 4 mins to talk, 3 rounds of connecting. You can keep the questions the same for all 3 rounds, or change them.

Sample questions.

- What are the challenges and opportunities of _____?
- What is most on your mind today regarding _____
- In your own words, what is _____?
- What’s going on now with regards to _____ that demands a fresh approach?

Impromptu Networking aligns with complexity science principles in several key ways:

Distributed Intelligence: Rather than relying on a single facilitator or expert to control information flow, Impromptu Networking activates the knowledge distributed across the entire system. Everyone in the room holds pieces of the puzzle, and rapid 1-on-1 exchanges allow that intelligence to surface and circulate quickly.

Weak Ties and Novel Connections: Complexity science shows that innovation and adaptation often emerge from connections between loosely connected parts of a system (weak ties) rather than tightly bonded groups. Impromptu Networking deliberately creates multiple brief connections, increasing the chance that people will encounter perspectives different from their usual circles.

Self-Organization: The structure provides simple rules (ask a question, find a partner, time limit) but doesn't prescribe outcomes. This allows patterns and insights to emerge organically from the interactions rather than being predetermined by an agenda or facilitator.

Non-Linearity: In complex systems, small inputs can lead to disproportionate outputs. A single 2-minute conversation might spark an insight that shifts someone's thinking or creates an unexpected collaboration—you can't predict which connection will be generative.

Pattern Recognition Across Scale: By having multiple parallel conversations happening simultaneously, the group can quickly identify recurring themes and patterns. What emerges across many pairs reveals what's salient in the system.

Requisite Variety: Complex problems require diverse responses. Impromptu Networking ensures variety in perspectives by maximizing the number of different connections made in a short time, building the group's collective capacity to understand and respond to complexity.