Reluctant or Bold? A Typology of Networkers in the UK Public Relations Industry

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Abstract

This paper offers a key finding from a recent study, which was one of the first inquiries into personal contact networks and networking in the UK's public relations industry. The study drew on a wide range of literature, including networks and networking, business relationships, small business, public relations and professional services. A qualitative methodology was used involving three techniques, those of in-depth interviews, network mapping and repertory grids. These were conducted with practitioners in UK public relations consultancies.

In focusing on personal contact networks, the aim of the main study was to identify key aspects of networking for public relations consultants in the UK. This included their networking drivers, which were the key drivers that influenced practitioners' propensity to network, as well as their motivations, perceptions and expectations. It also aimed to identify practitioners' networking actions, especially the content of their network relations in terms of their networking processes and practices, and to establish who they networked with and how. Finally, it explored the benefits of networking for public relations practitioners, and how far their personal networks contributed to the acquisition and retention of clients, and thus contributed to the competitive survival of their established firms.

The main study identified a number of key implications relating to the contribution of personal networks and networking to small firm success in the public relations industry, particularly in terms of client retention and acquisition. One such finding was the construction of a networker typology of practitioners in that sector, with which this paper is concerned. This typology is based on seven structural and interactional network dimensions which were inductively derived from the empirical evidence. These dimensions include practitioners' network size, networking drivers, networking actions, benefits of networking, and barriers to networking identified by respondents in the study.

This analysis enabled the development of a five-stage typology of networkers – referred to here as the Tonge Typology - which conceptualised five different stages of networking competence that public relations practitioners demonstrated. The five stages have been inductively grouped as: Stage 1 - the 'Reluctant Networker'; Stage 2 - the 'Tentative Networker'; Stage 3 - the 'Confident Networker'; Stage 4 - the 'Bold Networker'; and Stage 5 - the 'Dynamic Networker'. The Tonge Typology contributes to network theory by identifying differing 'types' of networkers amongst public relations practitioners, and thus offers a differentiation of networking competence in a growing professional service industry. Additionally, the structural and interactional network dimensions inductively derived from the empirical evidence offer new insights into the value of personal contact networks for professional services, and a richer understanding of networking for non-entrepreneurial employees in established small firms. They also address neglected areas of network theory in terms of the content of networking for small firms. The paper also offers a number of managerial implications of the Tonge Typology, including its use as a potential professional development tool, and to help managers devise training strategies and resource allocation to enhance individual's networking capabilities.

Keywords: personal contact networks, small business, professional services,
                   public relations, typologies

Literature Overview

Professional services and public relations

Professional services represent one of the fastest growing economic segments of most Western and European economies, expanding at an annual rate of 20 per cent (Boojihawon and Young 2001). The UK market ranks as the fourth largest concentration of professional service providers in the world (Nachum 2000), and includes the marketing communications industry, consisting of advertising, public relations, direct marketing, market research, exhibitions, conferences and sales promotion (DTI 2004b). In particular, the public relations industry has grown significantly in recent years, leading to the emergence of national and multinational companies. The UK public relations industry is the most highly developed in Europe, and accounts for approximately £10 billion of the world market (DTI 2004b). The industry more than doubled in size between 1988-2005, and current estimates are that 55,200 people are employed in public relations in the UK, with an annual income for consultancies of £345 million (CIPR 2005a). Further, the industry has a growth rate in jobs in at all levels higher than that of any management function in the UK over the last fifteen years (CIPR 2005a). Reflecting the growth of the UK public relations industry, its professional body was granted Chartered status in 2005 to become the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, regarded as official recognition of the important and influential role that public relations plays in UK business, government and democratic society (CIPR 2005b). Yet despite its growth and economic importance, there are comparatively fewer studies focusing on the public relations industry, and in particular the UK industry and its consultancies, than other marketing communications functions in the UK and beyond.

Small business success

The success and competitiveness of any business is dependent on a range of situational and contextual factors (Fielden, Davidson and Makin 2000). Chaston (2000) summarises factors influencing small businesses performance as often falling within four major areas - entrepreneurial personality and characteristics, organisational development, functional management skills, and sectoral economics. Studies on functional management skills frequently cite competence in marketing as influencing the success and failure of small firms, where the ability of established businesses to manage the marketing process and adapt to the marketplace is often a key determinant between success and failure (e.g. Schindehutte and Morris 2001). While adaptability may result from prior experience or business sector focus, MacGregor (2004) argues that in small businesses, adaptability often relies on partners within networks.

However, while a key factor in terms of small business performance may be networks, 'networking' can mean using a variety of networks for small businesses (Gilmore, Carson and Grant 2001). Such networking for small business activities involves companies joining together with a common objective, working together, and co-operating through the exchange and sharing of ideas, knowledge and technology (Dean, Holmes and Smith 1997). Indeed, over the past 20 years, the variety of network possibilities and the interest in the network approach has led to a proliferation of studies concerned with identifying the 'resource potential' of network activities and the 'types' of network structures that produce these resources. A number of studies in network, entrepreneur and small business literatures have identified a wide range of benefits of participation in social networks (e.g. Borgatti and Cross 2003; Burt 1992; O'Donnell et al. 2001) with business research illustrating effective usage of networking by small firms (Carson *et al.* 1995; Hill and McGowan, 1996).

Fletcher (2002) summarises this wide range of network studies, including: personal contact networks (Carson et al. 1995; Chell and Baines 2000; Knoke and Kuklinski 1982;); industry networks (Andersson and Soderlund 1988); exchange, production and communication networks (Szarka 1990); social networks (Shaw 1998; Starr and MacMillan 1990); formal, informal, prescribed, instrumental, and discretionary networks (DiMaggio 1992; Ibarra 1992); marketing networks (Piercy and Cravens 1995); business networks (Donckels and Lambrecht 1997); and owner-manager learning networks (Taylor and Pandza 2003). Other network studies attempt to characterise the motivations, features, and driving forces determining network structures, wholes or configurations by measuring different types of network linkages which enable firms to keep ahead of the competition, start up a new business, grow an existing business or stimulate access to resources, learning and market

opportunities at various stages of entrepreneur development (Aldrich and Zimmer 1986; Birley 1985; Butler and Hansen 1991; Larson 1992; Shaw 1998; Taylor and Pandza 2003). These studies represent important efforts to categorise *different types* of networks and their role in small business development processes, although few studies attempt to identify *different types* of networkers.

Network concept and small business research

Networks are thus seen to impact on the development of small firms in a variety of ways. In small business research, two strands dominate the field in terms of the network concept - namely 'inter-organisational' networks and the 'entrepreneur's personal network', also referred to as 'inter-organisational' and 'social' networks. An 'inter-organisational' or 'inter-firm' network can be described as a set of connected actors that perform different types of business activities in interaction with each other (Holmlund and Tornroos, 1997). An understanding of inter-organisational relationships in industrial markets is provided by the 'network approach', a theoretical extension of the IMP's interaction approach. This aims to make sense of what happens in complicated business markets (Olkkonen, Tikkanen and Alajoutsijarvi 2000) by exploring business networks, regarded as sets of connected firms (Miles and Snow 1992) or sets of connected relationships between firms (Hakansson and Johanson 1992). A growing body of literature deals with understanding and improving these inter-organisational relationships, including studies by Ritter, Wilkinson and Johnston (2004) and Holmlund (2004).

Within small business literature, the terms 'personal network', 'social network' or 'personal contact network' frequently appear and can be seen as interchangeable. Research into the process of entrepreneurship in its environmental context (e.g. Blackburn, Curran and Jarvis 1990; Donckels and Lambrecht 1995; Gilmore and Carson 1999) gave rise to the use of the personal network construct in entrepreneurship research. A number of studies revealed that the impact of networks within the social environment of a small business was also a potential growth factor (e.g. Chell and Baines 2000; Lechner and Dowling 2003). Social networks incorporate a wide range of social relationships which can be of an evolutionary nature and include family, friends and neighbours as well as customers, creditors and vendors bankers, accountants, lawyers, suppliers and consultants (Birley, Cromie and Myers 1991). Application of social network theory reveals that small businesses use their personal contacts to assist in business activities, including new venture creation (Curran and Blackburn, 1994).

A recurring theme in many studies is that networks, including social and personal contact networks, provide a valuable resource in terms of knowledge and information for small businesses, and provide access to incremental resources not available in the owner-manager's business operations (Chaston and Mangles 2000). Successful small business entrepreneurs and owner-managers are often members of complex information networks, where personal contacts such as financial advisers, friends and business associates provide access to a variety of information sources (Johannisson et al. 1994). For example, in her study of small advertising agencies, Shaw (1998) found that information contained in social networks assisted agencies' marketing effectiveness by helping widen their customer base and develop greater awareness of client needs. Indeed, Shaw (1998) points out that entrepreneurs with good cultural and social networks can attract more capital and are more likely to be successful than those with limited networks. Some linkages within these networks are planned, some are accidental and some are established with organised groups. However, it is worth noting that a review of social networking literature reveals that such research is more typical of smaller entrepreneurial firms and the creation of new ventures (c.f. Grandori and Soda 1995; Nohria and Eccles 1992) than established or non-entrepreneurial firms.

Neglected areas of network research

Thus a number of neglected areas also emerge in network research that require further exploration, including the content of networking, and networks of established firms. Much network analysis has concentrated on the structural dimensions of networks to the neglect of understanding interactional influences or the contents of relationships in which small and entrepreneurial firms engage (Shaw 1999). Indeed, appeals have been made to examine the content of networking (e.g. Joyce et al., 1995), which is thought to capture the meanings people attach to certain relationships (Mitchell 1969) and the quality of these relationships (Ostgaard and Birley 1994). These meanings incorporate

individuals' motivations, perceptions, expectations and outcomes of network participation (Curran et al. 1993). The neglect of understanding of the contents of networks, or interactional influences on them, in which small and entrepreneurial firms engage also includes the range of actions or activities individuals engage in, and the people with whom they network. A deeper appreciation of such interactional dimensions in different contexts will increase understanding of the process of networking (O'Donnell et al. 2001) and contribute to the development of network theory.

Furthermore, while many studies into networks and personal contact networks have focused on research into entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial firms and start-up ventures, this has been to the neglect of studies on networks in established small firms, and particularly in the professional services sector, where only a handful of studies exist - for example in advertising (Silversides 2001; Wilkins 1997) and advertising and design agencies (Shaw 1998; 1999). Although these studies suggest that professional service practitioners engage in networking which includes a variety of activities, prior to this research, no such studies had been undertaken on the networks and networking activities of public relations practitioners and consultancies.

Networker typologies

Finally, a review of small business and network literature reveals few typologies of networkers. One exception is that of Chell and Baines (2000) who investigated the survival and growth of business service microbusinesses in Newcastle and Milton Keynes in the UK. They identified a link between the type of owner manager and networking activity levels, where higher business performance was related to greater networking activity, particularly in terms of weak tie networking. Using a 'Chell typology' of business owners - comprising of entrepreneur, quasi-entrepreneur, administrator and caretaker - Chell and Baines (2000) identified five types of networkers among owner managers – these being highly active, active, slight, would-be-if, and rejecter. However, this typology was developed using only one variable – the extent to which owner managers participated in networks. Therefore it is limited in scope and application, albeit a useful indicator of the range of networkers in a small business community.

Research Methods

Using purposive sampling, seven UK public relations consultancies were selected to participate in the study. Consultancies were geographically dispersed and based in Manchester, London, Yorkshire and Cheshire, and included firms from within and outside concentrated clusters of public relations activity. Consultancies also operated in different client sectors, specialising in consumer, business-to-business, professional services, property and financial markets. Furthermore, small public relations consultancies were selected based on the DTI (2004a) definition of 'micro' and 'smallness'.

The study was conducted with three practitioners in each consultancy, working at different levels: a junior member of staff (account executive); a middle manager (account manager); and a senior director (account director, managing director or owner-manager). In total, empirical data was collected from twenty-one practitioners, including seven directors, seven managers and seven executives. In terms of gender, interviewees consisted of six men and fifteen women. These proportions reflect the fact that women constitute the majority of employees in the UK public relations sector. For example, of the seven consultancies participating in this study, two were owned and entirely staffed by women, and female employees largely dominated the remaining five. This employment trend is reflected in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' latest survey on public relations students, revealing that graduates entering the profession are 82% female and 18% male (CIPR 2004).

The study adopted an interpretivist approach, with data collected based on practitioners' perceptions, beliefs and experiences (Carson et al. 2001) and elicited using qualitative research methods (Bryman and Bell 2003). The main method was semi-structured in-depth interviews, analysed using template analysis and NVivo. These were supplemented with two additional research instruments. One was 'network mapping' which involved the interviewee constructing a network 'map', used as a framing device to elicit a full picture of practitioners' personal networks and their contacts within these networks, based on their strong ties, weak ties and ties with strangers (Granovetter 1973). The

mapping process allowed a pictorial representation of practitioners' networks to emerge and enabled the interviewees to describe more fully the contacts in their networks, how they knew them, the nature of their relationships with them, and the extent to which they perceived these contacts to help them in terms of their work. The technique was based on Granovetter's (1973) theory of network relationships, and proved both popular with the interviewees and as an excellent instrument for encouraging discussion and uncovering rich data.

The second research instrument used to elicit rich data was repertory grid (Kelly 1955). This is useful for investigating areas that 'are hard to articulate' (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 2002:97) and uncovering an individual's view of the world (Bryman and Bell 2003; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Holman 1996; Fransella and Bannister 1977; Goffin 2002; Stewart and Stewart 1981). The technique was analysed using visual focusing analysis (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Holman 1996; Stewart and Stewart 1981) and was appropriate for eliciting rich details of respondents' networking activities and their perceptions of these activities to supplement the in-depth interviews and network mapping.

Research Findings

The findings from the study enabled seven structural and interactional network dimensions to be inductively derived from the empirical evidence. These dimensions emerged from the in-depth interviews, network mapping and repertory grid methods used to elicit rich data from public relations practitioners, and were: (1) network size; (2) networking drivers; (3) barriers to networking drivers; (4) networking actions; (5) barriers to networking actions; (6) networking benefits; and (7) barriers to networking benefits. Analysis of these seven key dimensions enabled the development of a typology of networkers, which conceptualised five different stages of networking competence that public relations practitioners demonstrated. This provided a means of identifying five differing 'types' of networkers amongst public relations practitioners in the study, and is referred to as the 'Tonge Typology' to distinguish it from the 'Chell typology' explained above. The five networker types are detailed in Table 1 and further explored below. They are distinguished as:

- Stage 1 - the 'Reluctant Networker'
- Stage 2 - the 'Tentative Networker'
- Stage 3 - the 'Confident Networker'
- Stage 4 - the 'Bold Networker'
- Stage 5 - the 'Dynamic Networker'

Furthermore, as illustrated below, the findings also reveal, gender, age and position in the consultancy did not emerge as variables in determining which 'type' of networker a practitioner was and indeed, both junior and senior practitioners emerged in most categories, from the weakest Reluctant networkers to the strongest Dynamic networker types.

As a note on terminology used below in Table 1 and the following sections, the main findings indicated that practitioners experience 3 types of motivations or 'drivers' to networking – these were termed '*Psychological Drivers'* that involved practitioners' perceptions, motivations and feelings about themselves and their own capabilities; '*Situational Drivers'* which involved practitioners' working or personal life; and '*Social Drivers'* where practitioners' place in wider society enhanced their desire to network. The study also indicated a further area of new findings, namely barriers to networking which are detailed in a separate paper. In brief, there were three types of barriers – '*Psychological Barriers'* which involved practitioners' negative perceptions, motivations and feelings about themselves and their own capabilities, or about networking; '*Situational Barriers'* where practitioners' motivation to network decreased due to a situation in their working or personal life; and '*Social Barriers'* that involved practitioners' place in wider society which hindered their participation in networking.

- ***Stage 1 - Reluctant Networker***

As Table 1 below shows, Stage 1 indicates the first type of networker, inductively identified as the 'Reluctant Networker'. The Reluctant Networker has the smallest network – up to 40 contacts - and the smallest number of network ties, with up to 12 strong ties, up to 24 weak ties, and a maximum of 4 ties with strangers. They seem to have only two motivations to network, one Situational Driver of job necessity, and one Social Driver of company reputation. However, the Reluctant Networker seems to experience the highest number of Barriers to Networking Drivers – seven in total. With regards to actual Networking Actions, Reluctant Networkers are involved in very little networking activity. They rely heavily on colleagues' contacts and engage in little networking outside the workplace. Also, they do not use friends and family in their networking, and have few weak ties and ties with strangers amongst their contacts. At the same time, Reluctant Networkers face one of the highest numbers of Barriers to Networking Actions encountered in the study – eight in total. Finally, in Stage 1, Reluctant Networkers are uncertain about Networking Benefits and do not equate networking with enabling client retention or leading to client acquisition, plus they experience both Barriers to Networking Benefits.

In the study, four practitioners emerged as 'Reluctant Networkers' – a male account executive, a female account executive, a male manager, and a female director. As one Reluctant male account executive explained: *"I kind of shy away from it all really…I don't really like to go to networking events…I just think that perhaps they're a little false really….I haven't got the confidence to try and extract business from hard nosed businessmen. I can't do it. I really can't do it…."*

These sentiments were echoed by a Reluctant female account executive who expressed similar opinions: *"Don't think I can do it, don't enjoy it, don't think I'm very successful at it… it can be a bit daunting going up to business people...I'm a bit shy."* She explained her reluctance to network based on previous poor experiences: *"I've just had a bad experience networking in the past. I had to stand up in front of about two hundred people in Liverpool…Just out of the blue, I wasn't told I had to do it, about what we did as a PR company…it really, really put me off."*

- ***Stage 2 - Tentative Networker***

The second type of networker developed from analysis of the research findings is seen in Stage 2 as the 'Tentative Networker'. This type of public relations practitioner appears slightly more developed in a number of networking areas than the Reluctant Networker. Tentative Networkers have a larger network than Reluctant Networkers, with between 40 and 60 network contacts overall. They have up to 20 strong ties, up to 42 weak ties - nearly double the number of weak ties of the Reluctant Networker - and a maximum of 5 ties with strangers. Practitioners who were Tentative Networkers in the study have six motivations to network overall. Three are Psychological Drivers – compared to the Reluctant Networker who had none – which are limited positive perceptions, limited motivations to network with their own ties and more particularly with their colleagues' ties, and some expectations of networking. They also have one Situational Driver of job necessity, and two Social Drivers of company reputation and self-promotion.

In common with the Reluctant Networker, Tentative Networkers experience the highest number of Barriers to Networking Drivers – again, seven in total. In terms of Networking Actions, Tentative Networkers are involved in more networking activity than Reluctant Networkers, but this still remains at a low level. They too rely heavily on colleagues' contacts, but have also developed a number of their own contacts. They engage in a low level of networking outside the workplace and use friends and family, if only minimally. They also have more weak ties than the Reluctant Networker, but a low number of ties with strangers amongst their contacts. To their disadvantage, Tentative Networkers face the highest number of Barriers to their Networking Actions of all types of networkers identified in the study, with eleven barriers in total. Further, in Stage 2, Tentative Networkers also have a low recognition of Networking Benefits, but have established a number of their own contacts that help them to retain clients and lead to client acquisition. However, they still experience both Barriers to Networking Benefits.

Table 1   Tonge Typology – Five Stages of Networkers of UK Public Relations Practitioners

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Reluctant Networker	**Tentative Networker**	**Confident Networker**	**Bold Networker**	**Dynamic Networker**
Network Size: ▪ Smallest network: up to 40 ties ▪ Strong Ties – max. 12 ▪ Weak ties – between 5 - 24 ▪ Ties with strangers – max. 4	**Network Size:** ▪ Medium network: 40 - 60 ties ▪ Strong Ties – max. 20 ▪ Weak ties – between 29 – 42 ▪ Up to double ties of Reluctant Networker ▪ Ties with strangers – max. 5	**Network Size:** ▪ Large network: 60 - 110 ties ▪ Strong Ties – max. 15 ▪ Weak ties - between 44 – 98 ▪ Up to double ties of Tentative Networker ▪ Ties with strangers – max.. 20	**Network Size:** ▪ Very large network: 110 - 200 ties ▪ Strong Ties – max. 12 ▪ Weak ties - between 99 – 163 ▪ Up to double ties of Confident Networker ▪ Ties with strangers – max. 31	**Network Size:** ▪ Super network: 200 – 350 ties ▪ Strong Ties – max. 12 ▪ Weak ties - between 167 -338 ▪ Double or more ties of Bold Networker ▪ Ties with strangers – max. 115
Networking Drivers: **Psychological** ▪ No drivers **Situational** ▪ Job necessity **Social** ▪ Company reputation	**Networking Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Limited positive perceptions ▪ Limited motivation with own ties and networks with colleagues' ties ▪ Expressed some expectations **Situational** ▪ Job necessity **Social** ▪ Company reputation ▪ Self promotion	**Networking Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Fairly positive perceptions ▪ Some motivation with own ties and colleagues ▪ Evidence of self-confidence ▪ Expressed some expectations **Situational** ▪ Job necessity **Social** ▪ Company reputation ▪ Self promotion	**Networking Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Reasonably positive perceptions ▪ Higher motivation to network with own contacts ▪ Strong self confidence ▪ High expectations ▪ Enjoyment **Situational** ▪ Job necessity ▪ Encouraging consultancy **Social** ▪ Company reputation ▪ Self promotion	**Networking Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ High positive perceptions ▪ High motivation to network with own contacts ▪ Strong self confidence ▪ High expectations ▪ Enjoyment **Situational** ▪ Job necessity ▪ Encouraging consultancy **Social** ▪ Company reputation ▪ Self promotion
Barriers to Drivers: **Psychological** ▪ Negative perceptions ▪ Limited motivation ▪ Low expectations ▪ Lack of confidence **Situational** ▪ Negative experiences ▪ Discouraging consultancy culture ▪ Low position except for 1 practitioner	**Barriers to Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Negative perceptions ▪ Low expectations ▪ Some limited motivation ▪ Expressed some lack of confidence **Situational** ▪ Negative experiences ▪ Discouraging consultancy culture ▪ Low position except for 1 practitioner	**Barriers to Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Negative perceptions ▪ Some low expectations ▪ Expressed some lack of confidence **Situational** ▪ Negative experiences ▪ Some discouragement from consultancy ▪ Low position except for 1 practitioner	**Barriers to Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Negative perceptions **Situational** ▪ None	**Barriers to Drivers:** **Psychological** ▪ Negative perceptions **Situational** ▪ None
Networking Actions: Very little networking activity – relies heavily on colleagues' contacts; little networking outside workplace; does not use friends and family; few weak ties and ties with strangers.	**Networking Actions:** Low level networking activity – relies on colleagues' contacts and own; some networking outside workplace; low use of friends & family; more weak ties than reluctant networker; low no. ties with strangers.	**Networking Actions:** Stronger level networking activity – more reliance on own contacts plus colleagues' contacts; uses networking methods outside workplace; uses friends and family; double weak ties of tentative networker; higher no. of ties with strangers.	**Networking Actions:** Strong level networking activity – more reliance on own contacts plus colleagues' contacts; uses networking methods outside workplace; uses friends and family; double weak ties of confident networker; higher no. of networking ties with strangers.	**Networking Actions:** High level networking activity – main reliance on own contacts; uses networking methods outside workplace; uses friends and family; double weak ties of bold networker; very high no. of networking ties with strangers.
Barriers to Actions: **Psychological** ▪ Lack of confidence ▪ Boredom **Situational** ▪ Low position except for 1 practitioner ▪ Discouraging consultancy ▪ Time pressures ▪ Negative experiences **Social** ▪ Age ▪ Gender	**Barriers to Actions:** **Psychological** ▪ Lack of confidence ▪ Boredom **Situational** ▪ Low position except for 1 practitioner ▪ Discouraging consultancy ▪ Time pressures ▪ Costs ▪ Negative experiences **Social** ▪ Age ▪ Gender ▪ Appearance ▪ Ethnic origin	**Barriers to Actions:** **Psychological** ▪ Some lack of confidence **Situational** ▪ Some element of low position ▪ Discouraging consultancy ▪ Time pressures ▪ Costs ▪ Negative experiences **Social** ▪ Age ▪ Gender	**Barriers to Actions:** **Psychological** ▪ None **Situational** ▪ Time pressures ▪ Family ▪ Tiredness **Social** ▪ Age	**Barriers to Actions:** **Psychological** ▪ None **Situational** ▪ Time pressures ▪ Family **Social** ▪ Age
Networking Benefits: ▪ Benefits uncertain ▪ Little or no recognition of retention or acquisition benefits.	**Networking Benefits:** ▪ Low recognition of benefits ▪ Some establishment of own contacts leading to client retention & acquisition.	**Networking Benefits:** ▪ Mixed recognition of benefits. ▪ Established some rewarding ties with contacts leading to client retention & acquisition.	**Networking Benefits:** ▪ Higher recognition of benefits. ▪ Established strong rewarding ties with contacts leading to client retention & acquisition.	**Networking Benefits:** ▪ Very high recognition of benefits. ▪ Established strong rewarding ties with contacts leading to client retention & acquisition.
Barriers to Networking Benefits: **Psychological** ▪ Lack of recognition of networking value **Situational** ▪ Discouraging consultancy culture	**Barriers to Networking Benefits:** **Psychological** ▪ Lack of recognition of networking value **Situational** ▪ Discouraging consultancy culture	**Barriers to Networking Benefits:** **Psychological** ▪ Some lack of recognition of networking value **Situational** ▪ Discouraging consultancy culture	**Barriers to Networking Benefits:** ▪ None	**Barriers to Networking Benefits:** ▪ None

Source: Tonge (2005)

Four practitioners could be categorised as Tentative Networkers – a female account executive, a female manager, and two directors, one male and one female. As the female account executive commented, she only accessed a restricted network and was only just beginning to widen her sphere of contacts and networking activities: *"I tend to network with people who predominantly work in the financial industry. I think amongst my peers and my friends I'm now beginning to network more with them …"* Furthermore, the Tentative female director had a slightly stronger understanding of why networking was of value to her and her company than the Reluctant networkers exhibited, albeit in a limited way. She explained that she networked to: *"…sort of increase my awareness of who's who in the city, increase the sort of awareness of somebody who might be able to assist me in the future or just sort of make myself known as well."*

- ***Stage 3 - Confident Networker***

The third type of networker inductively developed from analysis of the research findings is seen in Stage 3 in Table 1 as the 'Confident Networker', who appears more developed in networking practices and understanding than either Tentative or Reluctant Networkers. The Confident Networker has a larger network than Tentative Networkers, with up to double the number of network contacts overall at between 60 and 110 ties. They have up to 15 strong ties, up to 98 weak ties - double those of the Tentative Networker - and a maximum of 20 ties with strangers, which is four times as many as the Tentative Networker. Confident Networkers in the study have seven motivations to network overall - compared to the Reluctant Networker with two and the Tentative Networker with six motivations. Four are Psychological Drivers, including fairly positive perceptions, some motivation to network with their own contacts and with colleagues' contacts, evidence of more self-confidence about their networking abilities, and some expectations of networking. Confident Networkers also have one Situational Driver of job necessity, and two Social Drivers of company reputation and self-promotion.

Yet as with the Reluctant and Tentative Networker, the Confident Networker also experiences Barriers to Networking Drivers, albeit to a slightly lesser extent, exhibiting six barriers in total. With regards to their Networking Actions, Confident Networkers are involved in a higher level of networking activity than Reluctant or Tentative Networkers. They are more reliant on their own contacts, although still use colleagues' contacts. They engage in networking activities outside the workplace and access friends and family in their networks. Furthermore, they have double the number of weak tie contacts than Tentative Networkers, and a higher number of ties with strangers. However, the Confident Networker still faces a high number of Barriers to their Networking Actions – eight in total, although this is fewer than Tentative Networkers' eleven barriers. They also exhibit a mixed recognition of Networking Benefits, and have established a number of rewarding ties with their own contacts that help them to retain clients and lead to client acquisition. However, as with the Reluctant and Tentative Networkers, Confident Networkers also experience both Barriers to Networking Benefits.

Five public relations practitioners could be categorised as Confident Networkers – a female account executive, and four female managers. One Confident female manager explained her positive attitude to networking: *"I enjoy meeting people and getting to know them, so that they know me. I really enjoy it…I like meeting people."* The was echoed by a second female manager who explained: *"I know of a lot of people and I know where I could go and get help and advice… I've got friends in all sorts of different industries and if I need to know something in particular I know I could call a number of people…."*

The extent to which Confident networkers could happily access a wider range of contacts than either Reluctant or Tentative networkers, and the ease with which they explained how they approached this, is revealed by two female managers. One commented: *"For one client, I work with interiors people, journalists on certain magazines so I have lists of contacts for different kinds of stories, product news and that kind of thing who come to me for product requests. In terms of contacts, I've got more journalist contacts than anything else, because on the networking side in terms of public relations, if they can help me finding a supplier or recommend a journalist to speak to, they are the main things for me. And the journalists I've found a lot of the time myself…. Interiors journalists… There are absolutely millions of them."* The key role of media contacts was also emphasised by a fourth female

manager: *"We speak to a lot of journalists, nationally, regionally and locally… There's lots of journalists…there's always going to be those you have that you don't use a lot, like 20 or so but you know them enough to pick up the phone. When we do have a story, you can go to them and they can also put you on to other people or other journalists on other publications."*

- ***Stage 4 - Bold Networker***

A more 'evolved' type of networker is then identified in Stage 4 as the 'Bold Networker', who appears yet more developed in terms of networking practices than Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers. The Bold Networker has a very large network of contacts compared to Stage 1 – 3 networker types. They have up to double the number of network contacts of Confident Networkers, with between 110 and 200 ties overall. Further, Bold Networkers have up to 12 strong ties, up to 163 weak ties – nearly double that of the Confident Networker - and a maximum of 31 ties with strangers, which again is more than the first three types of networkers.

Bold Networkers also have nine motivations to network overall - compared to the Reluctant Networker with two, the Tentative Networker with six, and the Confident Networker with seven. Five motivations are Psychological Drivers including reasonably positive perceptions, a higher motivation to network with their own contacts, strong self-confidence about their networking abilities, high expectations of networking, and enjoyment of networking which the other types do not identify. The Bold Networker has two Situational Drivers, job necessity and an encouraging consultancy – which again the other three types do not identify – and two Social Drivers of company reputation and self-promotion. However, as with Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers, Bold Networkers experience Barriers to Networking Drivers, although to a much lesser extent. Whereas networker types in Stages 1 – 3 indicated between six and eight barriers, Bold Networkers only experience one barrier.

As Table 1 shows, in terms of their Networking Actions, Bold Networkers are involved in a higher level of networking activity than Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers. They rely on their own contacts, although still use colleagues' contacts. They engage in a range of networking activities outside the workplace, and access friends and family in their personal networks. Bold Networkers also have double the number of contacts who are weak ties than Confident Networkers, and have a higher number of ties with strangers. Yet even Bold Networkers face Barriers to Networking Actions, albeit only four compared to between eight and eleven barriers for networkers in Stages 1-3. Furthermore, Bold Networkers have a higher recognition of Networking Benefits and have established strong rewarding ties with their personal contacts that lead to both client retention and acquisition. Unlike the Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers, Bold Networkers do not experience any Barriers to Networking Benefits.

Four public relations practitioners were categorised as Bold Networkers and occupied a range of consultancy positions – a female account executive, a male account executive, a male manager, and a female director. A Bold female account executive explained her attitude to networking as: *"…you have to be proactive calling people, finding out what they are up to... It is also quite enjoyable. I like ringing people up and having a chat and finding out what they have been up to…".* She also benefited from a positive ethos within her consultancy regarding the role of networking, the importance of regular contact, and building long-term relationships with key people: *"Journalists have helped me get contacts with many magazines or newspapers, help me get in touch with other journalists and help me build up lasting relationships which have a domino effect and rebound onto other clients…. As a company, we very much pride ourselves on building up these relationships, and maintaining these relationships with the clients as well as the journalists. I will phone my client every single day…just to say hello… it is very relationship focused, and we do have great contacts with journalists. I think it is because we are speaking to them so often because we have so many different clients that fall under their areas.".*

A Bold female director also described her enthusiasm for networking and her positive approach to it: *"I love networking events, they can be very enjoyable, senior people, opening events or last night of the*

proms, that's the sort of thing that I really, really do like. But this isn't a hard sell. I wouldn't be doing a hard sell at a business event. I would just be there to be seen and that's why I like the formal events." Finally, a Bold male manager identified what he thought the qualities of a committed networker were: *"I think being inquisitive is networking as well…if you're an inquisitive person and like to speak to people, know how to push their buttons, what they like doing, what they don't like doing, that's personal social networking…"*

- **Stage 5 - Dynamic Networker**

The fifth type of networker inductively developed from analysis of the research findings is seen in Stage 5 as the 'Dynamic Networker', who is the most developed networker identified. Compared to Reluctant, Tentative, Confident and Bold Networkers, Dynamic Networkers have the largest network of contacts. Indeed, they have far more network contacts than their nearest comparable 'type', that of Bold Networkers, with between 200 and 350 ties overall. Dynamic Networkers have up to 12 strong ties, up to 338 weak ties – double the number of the Bold Networker - and a significantly higher number of ties with strangers with up to 115, more than the ties with strangers of the other four networker types combined.

Public relations practitioners who are Dynamic Networkers have nine motivations to network overall – the same as Bold Networkers but more than Reluctant Networkers with two, Tentative Networkers with six, and Confident Networkers with seven. Five motivations are Psychological Drivers, including high positive perceptions, high motivations to network with their own contacts, strong self-confidence about their networking abilities, high expectations of networking, and enjoyment of networking. Dynamic Networkers also have two Situational Drivers of job necessity, and an encouraging consultancy, and two Social Drivers of company reputation and self-promotion. As with Bold Networkers, Dynamic Networkers experience Barriers to Networking Drivers to a much lesser extent than Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers who identified between six and eight barriers, and only exhibit one Psychological Barrier.

As Table 1 shows, the Stage 5 Dynamic Networker is involved in a much higher level of Networking Actions than other networker types. They almost entirely rely on their own contacts in networking, and engage in a wide range of networking activities outside the workplace. Dynamic Networkers access friends and family in their personal networks, and have double the number of weak tie contacts than Bold Networkers and the highest number of ties with strangers of all the networking types identified. However, even Dynamic Networkers face Barriers to Networking Actions, albeit to a lesser extent, exhibiting three compared to between eight and eleven barriers for Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers, and four for Bold Networkers. Furthermore, Dynamic Networkers display a very high recognition of Networking Benefits and have established very strong rewarding ties with their personal contacts that lead to both client retention and acquisition. Unlike Reluctant, Tentative and Confident Networkers, Dynamic Networkers share with Bold Networkers in lacking any Barriers to Networking Benefits.
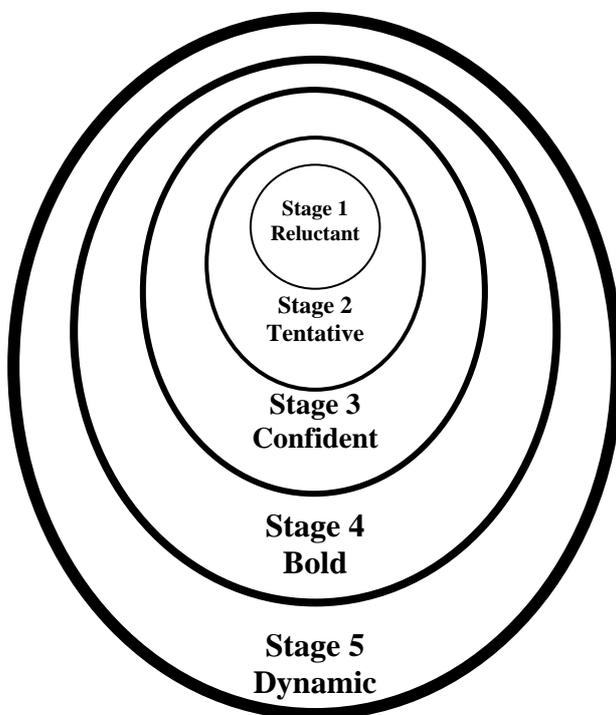
Four public relations practitioners were categorised as Dynamic Networkers – a female account executive, and three directors - one male and two females. The public relations practitioner with the largest network of over 350 ties, of which over 300 were identified as weak ties in his network, explained his key source of personal contacts: *"I've had a lot of clients, two hundred, something like that".* A female account executive also recognised the reasons behind her Dynamic networking activity and explained her motivations as: *"The job I do, the more people I know in terms of journalists and production people and clients, that is only going to help me…."* Furthermore, the high level of networking activities carried out by Dynamic networkers were identified by one female director, who explained: *"From a networking point of view, I go out with a lot of people. A lot of our current clients, so we tend to go out for dinner with them on a regular basis, keep them abreast of issues, challenges, and problems on client side or problems on our side. I do a lot of that."*

Conclusions

Analysis of the findings from this study enabled the development of a typology of networkers as a conceptualisation of five different stages of networking competence that public relations practitioners demonstrate. This concept is illustrated below in Figure 1. The five stages and 'types' have been described as: Stage 1 - Reluctant Networker; Stage 2 - Tentative Networker; Stage 3 - Confident Networker; Stage 4 - Bold Networker; and Stage 5 - Dynamic Networker. This typology was inductively drawn from the total sum of the findings regarding networking drivers, actions, benefits and practitioners' barriers to these, illustrated in Table 1 above. The five-stage networker typology can be offered as a means of identifying 'types' of networkers amongst the public relations practitioners interviewed during the research. Furthermore, the findings reveal that gender, age and position in the consultancy did not emerge as variables in determining which 'type' of networker a practitioner was. As illustrated above, junior and senior practitioners emerged in most categories, from the weakest Reluctant networkers to the strongest Dynamic networker types.

Although there are limitations with such typologies, and in the end they are generalisations of certain 'types' to emerge from the respondents in the study, nevertheless this conceptualisation makes an important and original contribution to network theory. It is based on empirical evidence and demonstrates a link between a practitioner typology and the qualitative differences identified in terms of their networking drivers, actions, benefits, and in particular the barriers to these which practitioners in this sector experience. Few typologies of networkers have been developed in network or small business theory, an exception being Chell and Baines' (2000) networker typology linked to the 'Chell typology' of business owners. No such typologies have been developed for professional services, or indeed the public relations sector, and thus the study's findings make an original contribution by offering what is here called the 'Tonge Typology'.

Figure 1
Tonge Typology - Five-Stage Networker Typology of UK Public Relations Practitioners

In particular, this typology contributes to network theory by offering a differentiation of networking competence within professional services, and particularly the UK's public relations practitioner population. Further, it facilitates a more detailed scrutiny of the relationship between public relations practitioners and their engagement with the process of networking. Additionally, the structural and interactional network dimensions inductively derived from the empirical evidence offer new insights into the value of personal contact networks for professional services, and a richer understanding of networking for non-entrepreneurial employees in established small firms. They also address neglected areas of network theory in terms of the content of networking for small firms, particularly with networking drivers and activities.

Finally, the 'Tonge Typology' also has managerial implications. It can be used as a professional self-development tool, whereby practitioners can identify which type of networker they are and what networking 'stage' they occupy, ranging from Reluctant to Dynamic Networker. This may enable them to understand their networking strengths and weaknesses, and devise appropriate strategies to 'move up' to the next networker stage as their abilities improve and barriers diminish. Furthermore, public relations consultancies could use this 'typology' to gauge what type of networkers their employees are and identify barriers they may face, so allowing them to identify appropriate training for practitioners, to help them develop their skills and become more accomplished networkers. The Tonge Typology could be used in a similar way in other service or industry sectors to identify networker types and devise training strategies and resource allocation to enhance individual's networking capabilities.

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