



SKIVRE Training Module 7:

VALUE ADDING THROUGH NETWORKS

Inclusion of local, regional and trans regional partners.
Collaboration and negotiation

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This training module is a part of SKIVRE training scheme containing 10 learning modules in total, which has been developed within the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership **SKIVRE - Skills Development for the Valorisation of European Religious Heritage**.

In SKIVRE a team of 6 European institutions – all linked to religious heritage preservation - developed a training scheme for manufacturing and marketing of high-quality handcrafted products of European monasteries. The training contents at a glance:

SKIVRE Training Scheme
Module 1: Introduction Module
Module 2: Marketing Strategies
Module 3: Monastic Products
Module 4: How to Sell Monastic Products Authentically
Module 5: Distribution Channels
Module 6: Social Media and Communication
Module 7: Value Adding Through Networks
Module 8: Creating a Strong Brand
Module 9: Financing Strategies
Module 10: Aspects of Sustainability

You can find more information at the homepage: www.skivre.eu

Front page picture: Collaboration in the region. Author: Angela Ivanova

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About the module

Training description

In this module you will learn what types of networks exist, necessary competences and useful methods for setting up/enhancing a network.

The training module for SKIVRE networking is about setting up different networks of local, regional and trans-national partners adding value to monasteries and their products. Networking is a very important activity, which should not be underestimated, for partners to learn from each other, to share experiences and expand economic activities.

Objectives of this training module

After studying this module, you will understand which competences you should have (or have trained to have) to be a good networker on a personal level. This will give you valuable transferrable skills to be used as follows:

- To know which organisational skills you need to establish or participate in networks
- To understand the various types of networks
- To learn about networks and how they work with regional development concepts.

Target groups

This training module is designed to fit the training needs of the monks and nuns, management, staff and volunteers at European monasteries, no matter if they are run by their Catholic or Protestant Orders or Orthodox Church, by public or private operators. Specifically, the module targets those who have production activities, who are active in and for monastic product shops, directly linked to local providers, stakeholders with vested interest, and supporting volunteers.

All modules are relevant for these groups of people, but some have a more specific character. They are all interconnected, even if they are not formally complementary. They differ in terms of information and competence level and address three groups:

- **Target group 1:** For people working on the implementation level like those in monastery shops three modules are recommended: Module 1 as introduction to the training, Modules 3 and 4 about monastic products and authentic selling of monastic products. People who want to start considering certain strategic aspects may be inspired by Module 7 on adding value through networking.

- **Target group 2:** For people with a special knowledge or experiences or a certain background and/or specified tasks in the monastic management, Modules 2 on marketing strategies, Module 5 on distribution strategies, Module 8 on creating a strong brand, and Module 6 on social media and communication offer learning content and reflection.
- **Target group 3:** People on a strategy decision level with a highly specialized / experienced background and respective responsibilities in a monastery (Modules 9 on financing strategies and Module 10 on sustainability aspects).

Gained knowledge and skills after finishing this module

After this unit you will

- Understand your own networking abilities and which ones you need to enhance;
- Be aware of the importance of networking for your organisation and for the people in it;
- Know key skills for networking;
- Understand the various types of networks and their values to your organisation;
- Have learned about good practice and why it is important..

Training method

SKIVRE focuses on an interactive training approach, whether you use it as a self-learning course or instructed by a trainer. This training module includes:

- Individualized self-learning - a powerful learning method that enables each learner, on the basis of his/her own experience and knowledge, and on the basis of newly acquired knowledge, to reach development decisions on his/her own;
- Self-assessment - ongoing self-assessment tests or homework that learners send to their trainer prior to the commencement of each subsequent module;
- You might also work in small groups of 2 or 3, e.g. if you decide to implement this module with colleagues as a self-learning group in your monastery or supported by an external trainer.

You gain knowledge individually or in a group using:

- Training material like this module;
- Training material in nine other SKIVRE training modules which are closely linked to this module;
- The interactive SKIVRE online training platform: www.skivre.eu/training;

- Facilitated training sessions for learning in a group with a professional trainer.

Training content





Unit 1.

What is Networking and Why is it Important for You?

Without thinking, we all network, whether making new friends or neighbours or in the work situation making new contacts. Start by looking at yourself and your organisation. How does it help you in your job to meet and contact others? How does it help others to meet you and expand their knowledge and ways of working? How can these be used to start a local network for information, for expansion of local tourism, for the marketing of products?

1.1. What is Networking?

Networking can be interpreted in different ways and comes in different shapes and in different forms. However, overall it is about building relationships and enjoying them on both sides. It builds on the notion of helping each other and sharing significant knowledge between parties.

Networking is not a simple task; however, it is of particular importance when positioning a product or organization within society and the market. Furthermore, it offers a unique opportunity for expansion, development and innovation, which cannot be reached individually.

1.2. The Practice of Networking

Networking can be done in multiple ways and on almost every occasion. For instance, when you go to a lunch meeting, a conference, or any other social event. It is of importance to always keep the question in mind of 'Who can I help today?'. Look for a Win-Win. When you help others, the offer is often returned. Long-term rewards in terms of relationships and information can come from networking.

Networking is a task done individually at first hand; therefore, some personal skills need development when becoming a successful networker.

1. Be generous!

When you are networking it is important that you are willing to share your knowledge of certain topics in order to help others. You are now a resource of information for others. When you are sharing your knowledge, you will develop contacts, which in some cases can provide you with information on an underdeveloped topic on your side. Listening to others and establishing their needs can help in establishing lasting relationships.

2. Be interesting!

Do not be shy and try to engage in a conversation by asking questions, offering comments, and sharing your observations. You will attract interesting people when you show how helpful you are and how relevant your own information is.

3. Be positive!

Your attitude determines how you come across to potential partners. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you, for instance, smile when you walk into the room and react with enthusiasm. Try to enjoy this process of relationship building.

Besides the skills mentioned above networking also requires some organisational skills. In order to network in a successful and effective manner you need (1) a strategy to acquire plausible partners or people to network with, and (2) a follow up strategy to implement after you have met those plausible partners or persons.

In order to determine your strategy to network you could ask yourself several questions.

■ As an individual:

What do you think of as your key skills? Can they be useful in networking?

Are you a doer or a listener? Do you go out to meet people at events and meetings and immediately connect with people or are you a person who likes to listen and judge before you make connections? Are you happy to interact with all sorts of people or is this something you might need to learn?

■ As a member of your monastery:

What collective skills might be useful in starting to network and to build local connections? What knowledge have you of your locality that is useful for starting a network? Does your environment already offer conditions that meet customers' needs (e.g. through tourist activities, through an existing network of on-farm outlets, through the promotion of small producers, etc.)? If not, how would you start bringing visitors in?

Who has PR and marketing skills? Who has production skills and is sure your products are ready to reach a wider audience? Do the products look professional and are things that people would want to purchase? Who is the natural leader of the group and ready to promote and link to other producers, so you have a natural local grouping? It is essential that whatever products you are promoting as a local network are of a high standard and beautifully presented.

1.3. Basic Networking Strategies

There are some basic tips and tricks to consider while networking which are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of your networking activities.

1. **Make yourself known** – It sounds obvious. However, it is very important to establish yourself among potential clients. When you are known, people will more easily contact you or pay you a visit.
2. **Never be shy!** –Ensure you are easily accessible as a person. A trick to establish this is to ask the other person to tell a little bit about themselves and their experiences on a certain topic of interest. Most people have a unique story to tell and it makes them open up to you even more. By establishing this personal connection, you can judge their needs and measure these against your own needs or your established network needs.
3. **Come prepared** – It is of the utmost importance to present your or your monastery's aims and values within a three-minute timespan. When you can profile your case in such a short time the chance increases that the person you are talking to will remember the information you provided. If you can present your core business and the reason you are networking, you have made significant progress in getting your message across.
4. **Do not be short sighted** – When a person or party is not able to help you or provide you with information which is valuable to you today, this does not mean that this cannot happen in the future. Try to think within a long-term perspective and determine whether certain parties can become of interest to you and your activities further ahead.
5. **Ask others what you can do for them** – Networking builds on social capital, it is a game of give and take.
6. **Be a volunteer** – Being a volunteer opens several doors for you to network as you enter society directly and you make yourself known.
7. **Use active and passive networking** – With passive networking you research a party or person of interest on for instance the internet and gain information through certain media. Passive networking can be used as an established base for active networking and meeting someone in person or actively approaching an interesting party.
8. **Follow up!** – Never forget to follow up after you met with someone. You can just send them a thank you email or move on certain things you have discussed. Make sure to maintain certain contacts in order to be able to ask for something in the future.

1.4. Common Networking Pitfalls

Networking can be a challenging task, and for some people it comes more naturally than others. Here are some common pitfalls presented in order to prevent you from falling for them in the future.

1. **Only asking and not giving** - Networking must happen on a mutual basis, you cannot just press yourself onto someone. As mentioned above it is a game of give and take, when you take too much you will most likely lose your newly established network partner. Both parties must have the feeling the relationship can be beneficial to both.
2. **Being too passive** – Even though you might be more of a listener it is important while networking to put yourself out there. You also must profile yourself and establish yourself to be an interesting party to interact with. Be assured that a monastery as a networking partner is interesting!
3. **An overdose of information** – Make sure you do not bombard the other party with all the information at once. You want to keep them curious and coming back asking for more. Furthermore, when you flood them with information it is more likely they will not remember your key message or main question.

The importance of Networking

Putting an effort into networking always pays off. Please have a look at Good practice 12: [The Norbertine Monastery of Sint Catharinadal Oosterhout, The Netherlands](#). Have a look at how they are building relationships to guarantee a wide range of products for their monastery shop and how networking has supported innovation and development.

Tag for Unit 1:

Networking, Skills, Personal, Networking Strategy, Contacts, Mutual

Further reading:

Ainscow M., Muijs D. & West M. (2010) 'Why network? Theoretical perspectives on networking', School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Vol. 21, No. 1, 5–26

Dodd S. & Patra E. (2002) 'National differences in entrepreneurial networking', Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 14, 117-134

Griffin K., Gorman C., O'Halloran. E., & Stacey J. (2008) The Use of Networking in Developing and Marketing the Irish Ecclesiastical Product'. Failte Ireland & Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin.

Derek Coburn, 'Networking is not working'. (2014) Idea Press

Unit 2. What is a Network and Why is it Important to Your Monastery?

When you have successfully exercised your networking skills the next is to establish a network, from which you and the members of your monastery can benefit. Networks come in different shapes and different forms, and it is important to decide which is best suited to the aims of your network. Different types may require different administrative and organisational skills.

2.1. What is a Network?

Within a network, the individual partners work together on one goal, which results in mutual trust as a definitive basis for success. Partnership in a network thus leads to a different understanding of competition and a feeling of belonging together. This promotes innovations and creates opportunities to strengthen your own monastery and/or products, such as the creation of new joint offers that would not be possible for isolated providers. Networks come forward in different forms and can be identified as hybrid.

2.2. Types of Networks

Networks can be ranked in different ways and can be formed through different means. First, networks can be categorised by **function**:

1. **Horizontal Networks** – These are where organisations in the same field work together on a network. In the network common achievable goals and standards of e.g. production are agreed and all work to achieve these.
2. **Vertical Networks** – Putting together completely different organisations maybe a monastery and a hotel; a monastery and a mountain railway. These are very different organisations but there are synergies that could be built on.
3. **Lateral and cross-sectoral networks** – Such as religious heritage and tourism. These are used when a common topic is in focus, maybe food and how it features in religious heritage and in tourism. How can this topic be used to enhance the religious heritage and to encourage tourism?
4. **Economic networks** – Aimed at generating income for the members and focus on business opportunities for the network on a wider scale than just local.
5. **Volunteer networks** – Would be organised as 'as and when'. Bringing local people together to plan for events and other local activities which enable more people to be

involved with the network and show communities how a local network can benefit them.

Second, by **use of space**. This focuses on the area the network focuses on or is covered by its members. When established by space, it can be international, national, regional, local or even virtual.

Third, networks can be formed according to a **legal position**. There are different sorts such as alliances, dynamic networks, heterogeneous networks where control is distributed, and sub-hierarchical networks, where there is one dominant actor.

With any network the challenge is the overcoming of a strong individuality of one organisation (i.e. your monastery) over others. All organisations need to subsume this so that they can work together equally. One organisation will start things off and will reach out to others and will probably need to remain as the leader until the network there can be reaching out to other local networks to make up a regional one.

The Importance of a Network

A very good example that showcases the importance of being part of a network is the International Trappist Association. It unites 20 Trappist Abbeys throughout the world, in which Trappist nuns and monks produce a variety of products for sale. It is a non-profit organisation whose sole task is to assist the members in the production of good and in the pursuit of standards of excellence. Please have a look at Good Practice 3 [“The International Trappist Association - International network to protect brand and values”](#) to learn more.

Tags for Unit 2:

Network, Members, Types of Networks,

Further reading:

Cameron A. F. & Street C. T. (2007) ‘External Relationships and the Small Business: A Review of Small Business Alliance and Network Research’, Journal of Small Business Management 2007 45(2), pp. 239–266

Grant A. (2013) ‘Give and take’, London: Penguin books

Turak, A. (2015) Business Secrets of the Trappist Monks. Columbia Business School Publishing

Unit 3. Building successful networks

There are no set concepts for setting up networks, e.g. such as for rural areas or high-density areas like in some metropolitan regions. If your monastery is located in a rural area, be aware that transfer of urban ideas for networks should not be used – rural and urban are totally different. Before setting up local networks you really need to know your area and your local communities well. You also should make sure that everyone locally will be happy with what is being planned. There is nothing worse than not getting total support locally.

3.1. How to build a Network

There is no specific blueprint on how to establish a network. However, there are certain measures and good practices which give an insight into what to consider when building a network. From existing examples of good practice, the following might be helpful:

- Successful networks are long-term initiatives based on solid financing models, which are developed co-operatively over the years.
- Networks need patience and a chance for growth and development in small steps.
- These networks are often led by strong personalities, people who understand that networks are sensitive bodies which need strategies, rules and sustainable structures.
- Leading and organising a network is not a voluntary job but needs time and professional commitment.
- Successful networks are based on a common understanding of the needs of local representatives. Networks have to cope with individual ambitions. It is essential to be aware of and sensitive to the fact that they can destroy a process of mutual trust and understanding.
- Networks are open to new partners and never organised as a “closed shop”. They encourage and welcome new members as friends and contributors, not as competitors.
- They could be strongly linked to public authorities and regional planning organisations.
- They encourage their members into further education or offer their own training programmes.
- They meet according to a clearly defined and reliable schedule without big gaps.
- Networks also have a social dimension and encourage friendships.

3.2. Ensuring the Endurance of your Network

In the long run it is important members keep being attracted to the network, and all members gain some benefits. Therefore, sustainable networks need (1) **a structure**, (2) **formal commitments of its members**, (3) **a person responsible** who can fulfil full-time/part-time work, and (4) **a financing model**.

The **structure of your network** is a variable factor and can differ per topic of interest or legal requirements. Every country has its own legal rules and guidelines, which are applicable to such formal networks. Such rules and regulations are crucial for the endurance of a network and the process of establishing it. Especially when you want to have legal commitment of members. It is therefore advisable to proof read and consider any legal issues, most regional and national authorities in European member states offer free brochures and consultations.

As the **commitment of members** is one of the most important things in order to maintain a network, you as a monastery must invest together with all the members. Commitment can be made in different manners, such as buying shares, a membership fee, or a donation.

When a network grows it can be of value to establish **a person who can be found responsible** for the day to day tasks of the network. It helps preserve the network and enables it to keep growing.

Finally, when the network is becoming more professional a **financial model** is required in order to keep it running and be beneficial for its members. The most often used model is for membership fees or other financing opportunities via local or regional authorities.

Tags for Unit 3:

Network Building, Commitment, Endurance, Sustainability, Financing

Further reading:

Büchel B. & Raub S. (2002) 'Building Knowledge-creating Value Networks', European Management Journal Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 587–596

Ferrazzi K. & Raz T. (2014) 'Never Eat Alone, Expanded and Updated: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time', Hardcover

Carnegie D. & MacMillan A. (1988), 'How to win friends & influence people', New York, Simon and Schuster Audio

Gerber S. & Paugh R. (2018) 'Superconnector', Hachette Audio

Good Practices

There are several good practice examples referred to in this module:

- Good practice 3. The International Trappist Association - International network to protect brand and values
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP3-EN>
- Good practice 9. Klösterreich - Feel Free to Step Away from Your Daily Routines
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP9-EN>
- Good practice 12. St. Catharinadal Monastery, Oosterhout, The Netherlands
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP9ь12-EN>
- Good practice 19. Route of Delights Wertheim, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP9ь19-EN>

Check your Knowledge

Exercises

Exercise 7.1.

Select what elements are important for successfully building a network

- Long-term initiative
- Wait for others to contact you
- Know what you need from a network
- Have a well branded product
- Time and professional commitment
- Establish personal connections
- Don't tell anyone details about your ideas/initiatives
- Only focus on public sector representatives

Exercise 7.2.

What personal skills/competences are helpful when networking?

- Be passive
- Ask others what you can do for them
- Capacity to follow up
- Only contact people that can help you
- Be accessible
- Only think about short-term solutions
- Provide as much information as possible
- Use active and passive networking

Exercise 7.3.

Regarding Good practice 3 “The International Trappist Association - International network to protect brand and values”, explain in a sentence how the monastery successfully established networks.

Answers: Build relationships, networking events, support club, volunteers, cooperation

References

■ Study Materials

Ainscow M., Muijs D. & West M. (2010) 'Why network? Theoretical perspectives on networking', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 5–26

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Turak, A. (2015) *Business Secrets of the Trappist Monks*. Columbia Business School Publishing

The SKIVRE Partnership: Empowering monasteries to harvest the potential of monastic products

SKIVRE is an Erasmus+ project aimed at empowering management, staff, monks, and nuns at monasteries with a most interactive training approach in gaining relevant skills for raising revenues for the preservation of religious heritage sites:

The **SKIVRE** homepage www.skivre.eu (including access to many social media tools) provides you with an inspiring multi lingual blog on monastic products, data and analyses, training material and training events in seven European countries.

The partnership comprises a multidisciplinary European team, which represents the target groups and expertise needed for training development:

media k GmbH | GERMANY (coordinator)

media k GmbH offers long-year expertise in religious heritage preservation and in the management of heritage preservation projects.

www.media-k.eu

Future for Religious Heritage | BELGIUM

Future for Religious Heritage is a non-faith organisation open to all. It brings together those working to protect religious heritage all over Europe.

www.frh-europe.org

GUNET | GREECE

GUNET is a Greek specialist in creating online learning platforms, which offer different kind of learning experiences adapted to different topics.

www.gunet.gr

INI-Novation Bulgaria OOD | BULGARIA

INI-Novation is an education provider specialised in generating economic effects from cultural heritage.

www.ini-novation.com

Bronnbach Monastery | GERMANY

Bronnbach monastery is a former Cistercian monastery now operated by a public authority in the German Tauber valley. The monastery started to develop monastic products based on the history of the site.

www.kloster-bronnbach.de

Wissenschaftsinitiative Niederösterreich | AUSTRIA

Wissenschaftsinititative is an education provider with longstanding experiences in developing learning platforms and learning material for heritage preservation.

www.wissenschaftsinitiative.at

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