

Title: **From conundrum to collaboration, conversation to connection: using networks to innovate**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify conundrums that can be solved by the power of networking
- Identify what networks (internal & external to the institution) they have that could help with their own conundrums
- Evaluate the impact of networks on their own practice
- Create an action plan / strategy to address one of their conundrums

Session Outline

We know that networks play an important role in academic life (Moron-Garcia, 2013) especially when dealing with the “unhomeliness” (Manathunga, 2007) of life as an academic developer, working across disciplinary and professional borders. This workshop will showcase an ongoing learning space collaboration that started over a casual conversation at a network meeting sharing conundrums and developed into a wider conversation across two institutions at different stages of learning space development. Between us, we will reflect on the power of conversation (Barrett et al., 2004), practices learnt and shared and highlight the importance of building inter-professional networks within and across institutions in order to inform and guide change (Pennington, 2003). As leaders in the academy academic developers are often given the tricky institutional conundrums to solve, however the delights of our role are the opportunities to build those networks, drawing on the generosity of our various communities enabling us to ask the awkward questions (Cousin, 2013) and answer them together working as a “critical friend in the academy” (Handal, 2008).

The activity will allow us to draw on our experiences of engaging in conversations for innovation. We will reflect how our motivations and purposes are different and will change throughout a collaboration, and how we sustain or conclude our work. A number of questions will be addressed with the aim of developing further collaborations among participants, sharing knowledge and establishing that you don’t need to know what you need to know before starting the conversation:

- How do you ask for help?

- Who do you ask for help?
- How do you build networks within and between institutions?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

Introduction and background (15 minutes)

- Our collaboration
- Conundrums, challenges and opportunities
- Reinvention, innovation and transformation (inc. Rogers, 1962; Wagner, 2015)
- Groups, networks and communities (Morón-García, 2013; Bali *et al.*, 2014)

Case Scenario (10 minutes)

- Learning spaces - dimensions of a complex conundrum as a focus for cross sector collaboration.

Activity (15 minutes)

- Drawing upon your own conundrums, experiences, perceptions and the examples presented, small groups will design and defend models for effective collaboration.

Plenary (5 minutes)

- What we can learn from the conundrum of too many collaboration models!

References

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