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## How to spice up networking skills



Money Market speaks to Bibiana Crocitta, founder director of Cook Your Business, also known as the The Ibero-American Business Network, on how London-based entrepreneurs can gain access to Latin American business opportunities against the odds of language barriers, culture differences and a global recession.

**Money Market:** Bibiana, many British and US-based entrepreneurs have a business idea or even an existing business, but a language barrier keeps them at bay from doing business overseas, such as in Spain or Latin America. How can people initially get over this mind block or obstacle to making first connections?

**BC:** English is the language of businesses. Most people in Spain and Latin America speak at least some English and most businesses will have fluent speakers. Whilst they will appreciate your efforts to communicate in Spanish, most will be happy to conduct meetings in English and a lack of Spanish or Portuguese should not be a barrier to you making first and long lasting connections. Of course when it comes to concluding a significant business deal, it will pay to employ a good translator and lawyer who are familiar with the local market.

In our Ibero-American Business Network we have many overseas companies looking to make connections with UK based businesses, and all networking is conducted in English.

Spain and Latin America are great places for entrepreneurs and businesses with plenty of new opportunities to develop.

**Money Market:** What are some of the common concerns entrepreneurs have at your workshops when it comes to doing business with Latin American or Spanish companies?

**BC:** Aside from the language, their biggest concern is usually about culture differences. However, I always mention that it is better to focus on similarities rather than differences. What entrepreneurs share in all countries is the impact they generate in a new situation in life, like starting a business.

Behind each entrepreneur's initial concern is generally something further and more specific to them or their business idea; when they can identify that during our sessions that is when they are ready to move forwards in business.



**Money Market:** If a female British entrepreneur wants to make contact with a specific Spanish, Portuguese or Latin American company, what is the best way of going about it to ensure the best success in landing a meeting? Is there a certain protocol that works best that may not necessarily work in the UK?

**BC:** As the world economy continues to struggle, individuals and organisations face many critical challenges. More than ever it is important to build up and maintain a network of business contacts that will help your business to develop and grow.

As the old expression goes, "it is not what you know, but who you know."

For networking to be most effective and productive, it should be focused on reaching out to specifically targeted people. The best protocol I can recommend is to be yourself, be clear about what you can offer or deliver and be passionate about what you do.

Cook you Business recently held a networking meeting in London focused on the passion, spirit and leadership of Ibero-American business women. We had the support of private and governmental organizations, which help businesses to grow and unlock their potential.

**Money Market:** What type of Anglo-Iberian business networking opportunities can entrepreneurs and other interested businesses find in the UK?

**BC:** All our events offer the opportunity to make connections, exchange ideas, do business and solidify your vision with other like-minded female and male business leaders, executives and decision makers from all sectors and from all regions with an interest in the Ibero-American market.

In addition there are a number of UK governmental organisations (e.g. UKTI, Think London) offering networking, advice and business support as well as Chambers of Commerce and Embassies who offer information, promotions and further networking opportunities.

### Events Calendar

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Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30					