

Best Buddies Leadership Academy



Networking on Behalf of Best Buddies

Materials: Writing utensils, notebooks, facilitation notes, PowerPoint, AV access, internet

Goal: To help participants find their “why,” and use that message to promote the Best Buddies mission. To teach participants how to guide conversations about Best Buddies to capture larger audiences in more meaningful ways.

Introduction: The Best Buddies Mission 5 minutes

The Mission: “...dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with IDD”

What does it mean?

- Focus on creating natural avenues for a more inclusive world
- Gives our buddies the opportunity to engage in meaningful experiences that promote integration and community-wide inclusion

What is the importance of furthering your education about Best Buddies?

- No matter who your audience is, you will always know how to promote the Best Buddies programs to appeal to the widest range of people possible
- Deepens your own understanding of and connection to the Best Buddies mission

Breaking Down the Best Buddies Programs: 15 minutes

Use this time as an opportunity to let people in the room show what they know. Guide discussion quickly through each program, but allow time to use impact stories as a way of deepening understanding.

Friendship programs:

- Middle school, high school, college, citizens, eBuddies
- Discuss the importance of the 1-1 connection. How does that connection further advance our mission?
- History and growth of the program:
 - Best Buddies’ first program was a 1-1 friendship program at Georgetown University in 1989. Since that time, we have grown to over 2,100 chapters and nearly 110,000 chapters in all 50 states and across 48 countries.

Leadership

- Ambassadors, promoters



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- Ambassadors: provides people with and without IDD the opportunity to gain speech writing and public speaking skills, as well as the confidence necessary to advocate and network on behalf of themselves and their peers.
- Promoters: empowering youth to become involved in the disabilities rights movement through event planning and consistent involvement in BB initiatives to help improve and begin more programming in each region.
- Leadership Academy: graduate level Ambassadors program geared toward people with and without IDD who want to help promote the Best Buddies mission across multiple platforms

Jobs

- Integrated employment for individuals with IDD – specific focus on participants' interest and abilities, rather than any available placements.
- Best Buddies is not only focused on the best interests of its participants, but also considers the best interests of the employer with which we are working. Best Buddies helps fit the needs of employers with dedicated, hardworking employees that increase productivity and enhance the overall workplace
- Employment support is provided by Best Buddies staff to ensure maximum success throughout the duration of a participant's career

How does the Best Buddies mission differ from other organizations that serve people with IDD?

- Best Buddies does not do things to, at, and for the participants, but *with* the participants.
- Focus on individual interests – there is no program in which all aspects are completely laid out for volunteers and participants alike. We provide the framework and work within that based on individual interests, needs, and abilities.

Effective Communication – Leading and Listening: 15 minutes

Leading the Conversation

- Ask the participants – why do we talk about the things we love? What do we hope to gain from that?
- We have all had situations in which we walk away from a conversation wishing we had the chance to say something we didn't. Maybe there was a point we didn't get to make, or questions we didn't ask. What can we do to prevent this? The first step is being clear in our messaging, and we can't do that without understanding our why.
- The Golden Circle
 - Start with your why. Why do you all do what you do for Best Buddies? Why is it important to you? Why do you believe in it?



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- How: How do you make this happen? What are your real action steps that help you achieve, or closer relate to your “why?” How are you impacting your why?
- What: What does this all add up to? What are the concrete things that have happened to you since you started that reiterated your why?

Give participants a few minutes to put this all together. Ask for examples from the audience – lead a few participants through the steps of drawing out this message. *Example:* I participate in Best Buddies because I know that all people have what it takes to be a friend. Our chapter has grown from 25 people last year to 40 people this year because of our leadership efforts throughout the school. More buddies are matched with peers, and our school has a deeper respect for people with disabilities. As a result, our entire school community has a more inclusive mindset than ever before. No one eats alone in the cafeteria, and everyone has a friend.

Don't be a passive participant in any conversation! Know your message so anytime you have the space to share, you know exactly what it is you want to say. Don't wait for someone to ask the right questions, just have the right answers!

Listening

- When communicating, people want to feel that they are being treated fairly and are understood, no matter the content.
- Be mindful that not everyone you talk with will be familiar with Best Buddies. Not everyone will have had experience working with people with IDD. They may have follow-up questions about the program, or want to share their own similar experiences. Listen to what they have to say to make them feel valued.
- Ask thoughtful questions about their experiences and/or opinions. Read their body language and behaviors to know if they seem to be trying to wrap the conversation up, or if they want to continue chatting

Mock Networking: 10 minutes

Do's and Don'ts of Networking

- DO: Make eye contact; say hello and introduce yourself with a firm handshake; stand up tall and speak clearly
- DON'T: Nervously glance around the room; slouch; have a limp handshake; mumble

As the presenter, give an example of a bad introduction. Be slouchy, mumble, and give a weak handshake. Invite everyone to try this at least once to see how different it feels to be greeted with a great and not-so-great introduction.

Give everyone a few minutes to stand up and practice these introductory points. Everyone should provide some constructive feedback for their partners! Let them know how their handshake was, how their tone and volume are, etc. After about 3 minutes, ask for some examples of how these situations felt. Is it awkward at first? Did you learn something new about how you communicate/follow an example from your partner? Did your partner have a great handshake or a very welcoming introduction?



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In groups of two, use the new information learned today in real conversation with your peers in the room. Each pair will get 2 minutes to discuss the question prompted, and then we will switch pairs. **DO NOT WORRY ABOUT GETTING OFF TASK!** That is how conversations work! As long as the conversation is still Best Buddies centered, keep talking.

1. What is Best Buddies and why is it important?
2. What is your favorite Best Buddies program and why?
3. How has Best Buddies impacted you? How has it impacted your community?
4. My occupation is _____. How can I get involved? What will that look like?
5. There are so many organizations to be involved in. Why should I dedicate myself (my company, my school, etc.) to Best Buddies?

Wrap Up: 5 Minutes

- Do you feel that you understand the Best Buddies mission in a deeper way? Does this help you understand your “why”? Ask for examples.
- Have a few people share some of their favorite parts of the session. Do they feel their networking abilities have improved because of this session?
- **THANK YOU!!**

