



CONVERSATION CUES

NETWORKING > BUILDING NETWORKS

When it comes to networking events, professional association happy hours, or career fairs, “small talk” can actually make a big impact! Small talk can seem pointless (why should you discuss sports when you just need a job?) – but it is helpful way to build a connection with someone. When meeting people for the first time, it is important to view the conversation not as a transaction, but as the start to a mutually beneficial relationship. Discussing a current event, a personal interest, or even the weather can help you to forge a bond with someone who could become a future colleague, manager, or client. The art of small talk is no small task, so consider these steps while preparing to attend an event!

HAVE APPROACHABLE BODY LANGUAGE

If you want to make a person feel comfortable, the best thing to do is to have an “open stance” and direct your body toward that person without being too forceful. Make eye contact, smile, face your shoulders toward that person, and keep your arms uncrossed. Doing so will invite the person in. Avoid checking your phone or watch – remember that you are at the event to meet people.

GIVE A FRIENDLY GREETING

If you see someone you already know, say hello and greet the person by their name: “Hi, Joe, it’s good to see you.” This statement is simple yet direct and lets the person know you are excited to talk. If you do not know the person, introduce yourself first so that you feel more confident and in control of the conversation. Simply say, “Hi, I’m Emma, what’s your name?” Repeat the person’s name to help commit to your memory. Repeating someone’s name once or twice throughout a conversation, as well as being able to introduce them should someone else join you, will make that person feel valued.

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION

Maintain a distance of about two feet from the person – close enough so that you can hear each other clearly, but not so close that you overwhelm the other person. Do not make it look like you are just killing time until your friends come along – ask questions! Avoid anything too controversial, such as religion and politics – focus on your surroundings and the person’s interests. Inquire about their affiliation to the group hosting the event, where they work, or how they spend their time outside of work. Ask follow-up questions about details that they share, such as what they most enjoy about their work or how long they have participated in a particular group or hobby. Additionally, alternate questions with statements about yourself – aim to find things in common. Perhaps you are both new to the city, speak French, or play the piano. Finding these connections will make the conversation flow more naturally.

KEEP THINGS LIGHT & POSITIVE

Conversations are just as much about an exchange of energy as they are an exchange of information. If you are upbeat, ready to smile, and laugh, then you will make the other person want to keep talking to you, and will increase the likelihood that you stay in touch – which could yield to further introductions, advice for your job search, or even a job lead. On that note, end strong. State that you enjoyed speaking with them, ask to exchange contact information, and follow-up within a day of the event to stay at the

KEEP THINGS LIGHT & POSITIVE (CONTINUED)

top of that person's mind. Finally, the key to maintaining a great relationship is to thank others for their time and insight, and seek ways to help them in return.

Small talk is an essential aspect of networking and relationship building, and becomes easier with practice. To increase your comfort level with the art of conversation, consider introducing yourself to a classmate you have not yet spoken to, joining a student club, or meeting with a Career Coach in your school's Career Development team.