



Resources: Small Talk

Conversation starters for navigating small talk

“Hello, we haven’t met yet”: it’s important to remember that in a networking situation, everyone has signed up to network. They want to meet you just as much as you want to meet them, they maybe just don’t know how. Take the lead by simply walking up to someone at an event and introducing yourself – you never know where it might lead.

“What do you do?”: a fantastic opening question for any event. Straight to the point it allows you to find out about them and their work so when it comes your turn to introduce yourself, you’re able to share the most applicable information based on what they do. This is also a great chance to learn from someone new, and potentially about something new so be sure to listen.

“Who do you work with?”: asking about the types of people, animals, businesses, academics, that they work with will give you further insight into what they do. It will also allow you to be thinking of people in your network that fit the bill and could make for a great potential introduction.

“How did you get into your role?”: this is a great question for opening the door to allow them to share more about themselves. Still a professional question but with the chance for them to share their personal journey into the work they do. Allowing people to open up a bit more about themselves, talk about things outside their current work such as where they studied or places they’ve visited, people they’ve met and how it led them to where they are today. It’s a great way to get to know the person behind the work and look out for things you have in common: commonality is a great way to build trusting relationships.

“Do you have any advice?”: if you’re speaking to someone who’s further ahead in their career than you, or has achieved things you aspire to, asking for their advice is a fantastic learning opportunity. People often love to share their experiences and advice with others, so giving someone the chance to do so can also be a great way of building relationships.

Ask and listen: all of the above are questions! Remember, the most valuable asset that networking provides is knowledge. Asking questions and listening with the intent to learn means you’ll always get value from events.