

Small Talk, Big Results

Small talk is an important skill which develops rapport and relationships, demonstrating your approachability and genuineness. Here are a few strategies you can use to come across as both interesting and interested.

1. Get to know your audience before you go to the event. Google the people you intend to meet. Know something about their occupation, what inspires them, what their interests are, who matters to them.
2. Know how you want others to “experience” you. Picture being that. What is it? How do you “do” that? Be the experience you want others to have.
3. Comment on a topic that you have in common in the moment: Talk about the room/venue you’re in, or about the same people you know. You can bond over the similarities you share, and it allows you to be positive. “Did you know this organization employs 32 therapists?”
4. Comment on a topic of general interest: Scan the newspaper, search Google, or pull from a national broadcast (for example, the Olympics). This is a good conversation starter and can prompt additional conversations. Know something political, social, sports.
5. Ask open ended questions: These kinds of questions allow individuals to answer as they like and talk freely. People like to talk about themselves, so try asking a question like, “What have you been up to lately?” “Tell me about the other charities you support.”
6. Ask getting-to-know-you questions: Answers to these questions reveals interests and goals. This information creates bonds over similar passions or generates new conversations. “I’d love to hear about your last vacation” or “What did you do for fun this summer?”
7. React to the person’s responses: Laugh if someone tells a joke. Seem surprised by a “did-you-know” fact or statistic. Be sure to act genuinely and avoid sarcastic responses and reactions.
8. Follow someone’s conversational lead: If someone drops a hint or mentions a topic, pick it up. They will appreciate that you are listening and that you’re interested in discussing a topic they’ve brought up.
9. Follow up afterwards. Send them a “nice to talk to you” note. Later, send a link to an article you know they’d like to read, etc.