



Effortless Networking: Conversation Starters

By Sri Dasgupta

I hate “conversation starters”!

Recently I was asked to write an article for an organization, and they suggested I provide some sample conversation starters. From my strong reaction to that innocent suggestion, I realized just how much I disliked “conversation starters”! I dislike them for many reasons, but mostly because I don't like to be on the receiving end of it.

Conversation starters aren't bad. It is possible to use conversation starters successfully, and many people do so, I'm sure. However most often they are misused. There are 2 main problems with using conversation starters:

Not knowing or understanding the principle behind the technique.

Often, conversations fizzle out even before they get started simply because people use tips or techniques without knowing how to use them. (It's hard to use any technique without understanding fully the principle behind them.)

For example, a common tip is to ask people what their biggest challenge is in their work.

However, if you don't know what to do with the answer you get when you use this “starter”, where will the conversation go?

Using someone else's words or way of talking.

Sample conversation starters, by definition, are someone else's words.

I don't know about you, but when I try to speak or write in a manner that's not my own, it doesn't work.

It sounds fake and forced to me, which then makes me feel awkward. And neither of these makes for a good conversation.

So what's the solution?

First, talk or ask about things that you're genuinely interested in.

When you're truly interested in something, you naturally know what to say and what questions to ask.

And if you must use a "sample conversation starter" or technique, make sure you understand the principle behind them.

In other words, why are you asking the question that you are? What will you do with the answer? Do you even care about the topic?!

Second, figure out what you want to say. Then use your own words and your own way of speaking to say it.

It's much more powerful than using any script.

You'll be able to express yourself better – you'll be able to explain why you're asking the questions you are, what you find interesting about the topic, and so on.

And you'll not be distracted by the awkwardness of using someone else's way of speaking.

Don't take my word for it though -- try it out for yourself and see what happens.

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Srirupa Dasgupta is the author of [Effortless Networking: Everyday Wisdom to Transform your Business and Life](#). She helps small business owners, entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals build, sustain and leverage the professional and personal network that is necessary to succeed.

To get a free 15-page guide on the "5 simple ways to Network Successfully", visit her website at <http://www.EffortlessNetworking.com>

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