

30 Networking Conversation Starters

Networking is one of those areas that job seekers tend to avoid. We feel vulnerable and don't want to impose ourselves on others. The reality is, that in difficult economic times, it is not what you know, it is who you know, and the best way to get to know someone is to talk with them.

So how can you begin a conversation with someone you are meeting for the first time? For many people this is difficult, but once people start talking, a settling in begins, common interests are discovered, and the conversation takes off from there.

Think of things that you already have in common with the other attendees. When you are at a networking event, the event is what you have in common: the venue, the food, hearing a speaker, weather outside, industry/sector, city/town, transportation/parking. Here are some conversation starters to help get past those awkward first few moments:

- "What brings you to this event?"
- "This is a great venue. Have you been here before?"
- "How did you hear about this event?"
- "The (food/drink item) is amazing. What have you sampled from the buffet?"
- "Wow, there are a lot of people here today/tonight. Do you mind if I join you here where it's a bit quieter?"
- "Hi, my name is (name) and I (what you do), what are your passions?"
- "So, what do you do?"
- "Wow, I just can't believe all the crazy news headlines today. What a week!"
- "It's so hot (or cold) in here." Hey, maybe it is, maybe it isn't, but the person will either agree or disagree, and pretty soon you're talking about weather patterns, your best umbrella, and then your career goals. - *Jessica Gordon for The Muse*
- "I'm feeling pretty overwhelmed by the deluge of info that's being fire hosed at us today. Is there one nugget of brilliance that's really resonating with you?" - *Alexandra Franzen*
- "What a beautiful venue. Have you been here before?"
- "Did you catch the game last night?"
- "As we're both here at the (buffet, bar, waiting room), I feel I should introduce myself. I'm (name) from (company)."
- "Any chance you know a great sushi place around here? I'm not familiar with the area, and I'm headed to dinner after this."

Take a deep breath and make the first move by introducing yourself or asking a question and remember others are feeling nervous or uncomfortable too!