



Conversation Openers

By:

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You are in the car, on your way to a networking event. That old familiar fear keeps popping up. “What will I say when I meet somebody?” you ask.

Probably the easiest and most successful conversation opener is, “Hi. I’m Susan Smith.” If you say it with enthusiasm, it projects that you are happy and interested in talking with the person.

But you can also do some preparation ahead of the event by developing some conversation openers. Networking experts, Anne Baber & Lynne Waymon, co-authors of *Make Your Contacts Count* (NY, 2002, American Management Association), and co-founders of **Contacts Count**, suggest that you become “prepared to be spontaneous” and identify some questions you can ask.

For example, look in the following resources:

- Magazines – spend time covering “hot” topics
- Articles in professional journals – ask for opinions
- Newspapers – what interests you personally, then develop follow up questions
- TV & Radio – watch interesting shows such as those on the Discovery Channel
- Books – new or helpful one
- Movies
- Life experiences – what have you done in last few months that is interesting, such as a trip

Have some questions in your mind before walking in the door. Practice them in the shower or in the car. Then your mind won’t freeze as you start your conversation.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

About Meeting

Is this the first time you've come?
How did you find out about the meeting tonight?
Have you been to these events before?
Are you a member of this organization?
What brought you here today?
Why did you come to this meeting?

Professional

What have you been working on lately?
How did you first get interested in that?
What's a typical day like for you?
How did you get started in business?
When did you start your own business?
How did you come up with...?
What other jobs have you had?

Safe personal questions to ask:

How do you spend your time?
Where are you from?
Where have you lived?
What vacation spots would you recommend?
What are some of your favorite movies and/or TV shows?
What's your favorite hobby?
How to answer the question: What do you do?

Being prepared with questions to ask will help you maximize every networking opportunity.

Marcia Hall, the *Reputation Pro* with **Reputation COUNTS**, is a Certified **Contacts Count** Presenter, who helps you develop your most powerful asset - **your personal reputation**. To learn more about building your networking skills, please visit <http://www.reputationcounts.com/networking>