



# Mastering the Art of Small Talk

WVCA Conference



Participant Guide



Tracy Butz  
Owner  
Think Impact Solutions

Tracy@TracyButz.com  
www.tracybutz.com  
920.450.2118

*As a speaker, author & consultant, Tracy Butz empowers others to live more productive, passionate and purposeful lives.*

## Program Overview:

Have you ever wondered how some people can enter a roomful of strangers and strike up a conversation with practically anyone, yet others struggle just to say hello?

Learn some effective tips and techniques for engaging in casual conversation, helping you to appear more approachable and friendly to others, while feeling a greater sense of comfort and confidence.

## Learning Outcomes:

- Realize why the skill of engaging in small talk is important in networking situations and also in both establishing and maintaining relationships.
- Learn how to spontaneously start conversations, while creating rapport with greater comfort and confidence.
- Discover how to maintain stimulating discussions, change topics gracefully, and end conversations tactfully.
- Learn effective strategies to more easily get to know someone, create a positive first impression, and gain self-confidence in the process.

## Six Steps to “Getting to Hello and Beyond”:

1. Identify possible topics *before* the event.
2. Search for \_\_\_\_\_ individuals and establish eye contact.
3. Be the first to introduce yourself and ask an easy, open-ended question.
4. Actively listen and explore the other person’s interest.
5. Share aspects about yourself and highlight \_\_\_\_\_ interests.
6. Restate something you found interesting and end with an invitation to meet again.

“The human connection in communication is the key to personal and career success.”

~ Paul J. Meyer,  
Founder of Success Motivation® International

**Step 1: Identify possible topics before the event**

- F – Family
- O – \_\_\_\_\_
- C – Commonality
- U - Unusual
- S – Scenery
  
- N – News
- O – \_\_\_\_\_
- T – Trips
  
- F – \_\_\_\_\_
- E – Environment
- A – Admiration
- R – Recreation



***Questions to ask yourself and prepare answers for in advance of event/gathering:***

- What have I read lately that I enjoyed or found thought-provoking?
- What movie, play, or performance tickled my funny bone or captured my imagination?
- What restaurants could I recommend to someone who shares my tastes in food?
- What recordings or concerts have I heard that may interest other music lovers?
- Where have I traveled that exceeded my expectations?
- What new challenges am I setting for myself?
- What are my current hobbies?
- What plans do I have for this weekend or over the next holiday?
- What insights can I share about my work that might be interesting?

**Step 2: Search for receptive individuals and establish eye contact**

Search for people who are already talking or appear as though they want to chat.

Connect using casual eye contact and a warm, friendly smile. This demonstrates your interest and desire to communicate.



### **Step 3: Be the first to introduce yourself and ask an easy, open-ended question**

By taking the initiative to say “hello” first, you are demonstrating confidence and showing an interest in the other person. It also allows you the opportunity to guide the conversation.

Most people in social situations are happy to chat if someone approaches them in an easygoing way.

- Begin by introducing yourself.
- Ask an easy open-ended question about something in your immediate surroundings, encouraging the other person to talk:
  - “How do you know the host?”
  - “What do you think of this spectacular view?”
  - “Could you explain to me how this ... works?”
  - “What is your opinion of ...?”
  - “Why do you think ... happened?”
- Ask a “Have you ever ...?” question, linked to something related to the event, discussion, surroundings, etc.

#### **Activity:**

Read the scenario below and determine what “Have you ever ...” questions you could ask.

*Scenario:* You are attending a local networking event with people in similar job roles. The appetizer buffet includes, sushi, pigs-in-a-blanket, and a chocolate waterfall with mini desserts for dipping. There is an ice sculpture, a DJ playing top-40 hits, and a dance floor with five people dancing, while most are hanging out at the bar or sitting down eating at the tables.

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_

- Start a conversation by offering a sincere compliment with a follow-up question or by making a lighthearted comment.
- If you haven’t introduced yourself yet, wait for a pause in the conversation—smile, make eye contact, shake hands, and say, “By the way, my name is ...”

## **Step 4: Actively listen and explore the other person's interests**

- A. Listen carefully for the other person's \_\_\_\_\_ and use it in the conversation.
- B. Closely listen for facts, interpretations and feelings.
- Tune into key words that suggest topics of interest or common experiences.
  - Listen for phrases or words that create a mental picture:
    - "...going on a dream vacation."
    - "...excited about a new job."
    - "I can't wait to..."
- C. Explore other person's \_\_\_\_\_ by encouraging him/her to talk.



## **Step 5: Share aspects about yourself and highlight mutual interests**

- Share information about yourself so the other person doesn't feel bombarded by questions.
- Casually add a bit of your background and experience, revealing who you are in a positive and interesting way.
  - "When I was growing up in ..."
  - "In my spare time I enjoy ..."
  - "One of my favorite things to do is ..."
  - "I spent about 10 years in the industry before starting my own business."
  - "I've been working as a ... for many years."
- Spend more time talking with people you like and emphasize areas of commonality/mutual interests.
  - "It's always great to meet someone who is interested in ..."
  - "It's rare that I meet a person who enjoys ... as much as I do."
  - "I love it when I meet someone who is as excited about ... as I am."

## **Step 6: Restate something you found interesting and end with an invitation to meet again**

This format for ending conversations will help leave a positive impression on the people you meet:

1. Say a few words about an interesting topic that the other person discussed.
2. Add that you've enjoyed the conversation/chat.
3. Look at the person, \_\_\_\_\_, shake hands, and use his/her name.
4. Suggest that the two of you talk again soon.
5. Offer your business card or contact information.
6. Ask the other person how you might reach him/her.

### **Example:**

*"Pat, it was really fun talking about the mystery you are reading. By the way, I belong to a book club where a small group of us sit around and talk about what we've been reading. If you are interested in meeting some other book buffs, I'll let you know the time and place of our next get-together." [Look for a nod, smile, and agreement to this invitation.]*

*"How can I get in touch with you?"*

*"Great! Well, talk to you later."*

## **Do's and Don'ts for Making Small Talk**

*Directions:* Read each statement and determine if it is a tactic for making small talk or not and then place an "X" in the correct box.

DO      DON'T

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Make sure people are interested in a topic before talking too much about it.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Look over a person's shoulder as you talk to him or her.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Stick to upbeat subjects.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reintroduce yourself to an old acquaintance.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Make negative snap judgments about the people you meet.                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Be willing to talk about subjects that you know little about.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Indulge in endless shop talk or industry gossip when non-industry people are present. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Expect other people to carry the conversation.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Stay in one area or speak only to one person.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Balance the amount of talking and listening.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gossip about the other guests.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Find out what other people enjoy discussing.  |



### *Speaker Biography*

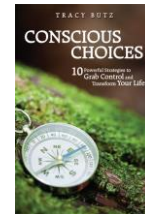
Tracy Butz is a devoted wife, an energetic mom of three adventurous young men, a successful entrepreneur, a captivating author and a true inspiration to many. Whether it is for an audience of 7, 70 or 700+, she is the speaker of choice who has inspired thousands of individuals to “Create the Life You Want to Live.”

As a highly sought-after speaker, Tracy has delivered powerful, life-changing messages, encouraging her audiences to identify what is most important to them and focusing their decisions in that direction, creating a positive difference in their work, families and communities. She is well known for her captivating and dynamic delivery, where audiences can be found sitting on the edge of their seats, laughing aloud and brushing away tears as she masterfully recounts each story, aligned with a key point, an impactful meaning, and an enduring message.



Tracy’s experience actively engaging both large- and small-size audiences includes clients such as the US Army, McCain Foods Ltd, SEEK Careers/Staffing, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, American Trust Savings Bank, Bemis, Plexus, Great Northern Corporation, Women’s Leadership Network, Motorola, Festival Foods, The Store and Subway Restaurants, just to name a few.

Tracy is also the proud author of three books, all published since December 2010. The newest *book*, “*Tame the Turbulence: Avoid Losing It. Fly Through It.*” helps you to stop stress from spiraling out of control and better prevent, reduce and cope with stressors, allowing for a more balanced, productive and meaningful life. “*Conscious Choices: 10 Powerful Strategies to Grab Control and Transform Your Life*,” focuses on how to overcome obstacles, make better decisions, and view setbacks with a new perspective. Lastly, “*The Perfect Pair of Jeans: Design Your Life to Fit You*,” guides you on how to design and live your life in a way that is aligned with your dreams and what matters most, rather than letting it happen to you by default.



Beyond speaking and writing, Tracy also has significant experience in an organizational development environment, including 10 years as Director of Learning and Development for a regional mutual insurance company, leading the company’s training and organizational development initiatives. Known for consistently earning stellar performance accolades, Tracy is skilled in the areas of leadership development, candid conversations, embracing change, employee engagement, and interpersonal communication, to name a few. Tracy loves life and is continually challenging herself to share her talents, message and inspiration with others. She is poised to provide solutions for your organization's needs. Tracy truly delivers the tools for today’s world, propelling her audiences to live more productive, passionate and purposeful lives.