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## NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS: THE 3 PHASES OF SMALL TALK

In my mind, small talk basically consists of 3 phases:

1. The ice breaker
2. Get to know you better
3. Graceful exit

So let's go ahead and briefly touch on each phase and in turn give you some concrete takeaway strategies that you can apply immediately for each. **Phase 1: The Ice Breaker** So you attend a networking event... you make eye contact with someone you want to meet, you approach them and introduce yourself... now what? Well having a few powerful, open-ended ice breaker questions should certainly do the trick. For example:

- A tried and true ice breaker is the proverbial, "So Jeff, what do you do?" In other words "Jeff, what business are you in? Now people love talking about themselves and their business so the idea here is to get them started talking. Most people also love to hear the sound of their own voice so the ice breaker question is critical and essentially sets the tone and potential for the conversation.
- Another good ice breaker could be, "So Jeff, what brings you here today?"

Now notice on these sample ice breaker questions I've repeated the person's name. First off by doing this it will help burn that person's name into my head so I don't forget it. Secondly, people love the sound of their own name – so don't be afraid to use it throughout your conversation. **Phase 2: Get To Know You Better** Depending on the results of the ice breaker questions you should by now be able to determine whether or not it makes sense to get to know this person better. If not, simply skip this phase and go into your graceful exit. But if you do see a synergy here, by all means try some of these again open-ended, getting to know you better questions:

- So Jeff, how did you get into that business?
- What types of challenges keep you up at night?
- Jeff, help me out here, draw me a mental picture, what does success look like for you and your business?
- What's new in your industry these days? Any events or trends that are shaping it?

Now you can use one, two, all of these questions, or more if the situation permits. However, be careful here not to dominate and monopolize someone's time. If you're at a networking event, there's a good chance that they're there to network and meet other people as well, so it may make sense to go to the graceful exit phase and encourage that you two get together in the near future. **Phase 3: Graceful Exit** It's vastly important how you leave a conversation – as this is the last impression you make on that person. We're not looking to create any animosity here by rudely blowing someone off. The key here is as this phase's title states, is to exit gracefully. A key difference between the types of questions or statements you make in this phase as opposed to the previous two phases is that now you shift to using close-ended ones. For example:

- Introduce the person to someone else that may be of interest to them and then politely excuse yourself. The dialogue can go something like this: "Hey Cindy I'd like you to meet Jeff. Jeff's in the xyz industry as well and I just felt that you two should meet." Now they exchange pleasantries and you immediately exit the conversation by saying something like, "Well you two probably have a bunch to talk about. Cindy I'll catch up with you later and Jeff, it was great meeting you."
- Another example of a graceful exit may be: I can certainly see some synergy between what you and I do. Can I give you a call next week to set up some time to talk further?
- Or, it's been great meeting you, will I see you at future meetings?
- And lastly, wow, this is quite an event don't you think? Well we should probably keep moving... it was great meeting you Jeff!

So now you're aware of and armed with some actual strategies for the 3 phases of small talk. The key now is to get in the game and practice, practice, practice and you too can see the results you would like for your business.

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