

30 Business “No No’s (12)

It is a “No No” to be a poor conversationalist!

*Congenial conversation—what a pleasure! The right word at the right time—beautiful!*¹ Solomon

“Conversation about the weather is the last refuge of the unimaginative.” Oscar Wilde²

1. Discover how to ask good questions and listen!

“There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And questions are the breath of life for a conversation.” James Nathan Miller³

I just love it when a person has gone through a tragedy and a report asks them how they are feeling. Asking good questions and listening without commentary is a tremendous skill in the business world. You can interview someone without them even knowing it and find out a lot about them and even determine if they are someone you can do business with. When you are engaging in a conversation you should know what kind of questions to ask.

First, ask “two footed” questions. What I mean by this is ask questions that have multiple possible answers. The purpose of two footed questions is to discover the values of the person you are talking with. Every conversation is an interview of sorts. You are gaining information and influence by listening and engaging with others.

Second, use Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How statements. By asking questions that ask for information you are filling in the blanks and getting general information on the table.

Third, ask questions that draw the other person out. A good question in a conversation between networking people may well involve a person’s passion and vision. What is it that they do that is their heart’s desire? You can learn a lot about a person by knowing what they are passion for.

During this process you are listening. Develop the ability to focus and use body language that gives the impression you are listening. Don’t divert your eyes to your watch. Don’t answer your phone if at all possible. Engage fully with your body as well as your ears.

2. Learn the rules from Master Shakespeare:

“Conversation should be pleasant without scurrility, witty without affectation, free without indecency, learned without conceitedness, novel without falsehood” William Shakespeare⁴

People do not know how to talk to each other anymore unless it is with their thumbs. We use capital letters to yell at each other over the internet. It is easier to manage old outdated relationships than to build live face to face relationships. We would rather text, e-mail, chat, twitter, and facebook with people from the past. However, in business, building new relationships is a big key to being successful. I know that these new tools are great for business but the art of conversation is being lost. It is absolutely essential to learn to speak to people face to face and to present your message in front of people.

Rule 1: Avoid all derogatory talk.

Scurrility is offensive, rude or abusive remarks.

Rule 2: Avoid showing off.

Affectation: Your speaking should be natural and free of attitude and all behaviors which are not natural or genuine. Your speaking should be “natural to oneself”⁵

Rule 3: Be free and comfortable. No fear!

¹ MSG, Proverbs 15:23

² <http://thinkexist.com/quotations/conversation/> May 20, 2009; 9:30 PM

³ Ibid. 2.

⁴ Ibid. 2.

⁵ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affectation/> May 20, 2009; 9:50 PM

Free: There should be a flow and smoothness to how you speak.

Rule 4: Avoid pompous unexplainable words!

Learned: You should use words that are not above your listeners and have the courteousness to explain words which may not be understood.

Rule 5: Be creative and fresh!

Novel: New and not resembling something formerly known or used.

Know the Comic’s Rule:

"According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy." --Jerry Seinfeld⁶ **If you can't speak you're better off dead!**

Suggestions for better public speaking

1. Say it to the mirror first

The one thing that people who speak will tell you is they never get over their nervousness. The key to being fluent is practice.

2. Smile

You would be amazed at how a smile can put your audience at ease. Smile a lot.

3. Strong start

You have about 60 seconds to get and keep your audience’s attention when you are speaking. A great illustration or story will draw your audience in.

4. Support with Props⁷

A key to successful speaking is to use props or images that illustrate both what you want to say and brand who you are.

5. Situations and spectators⁸

Know your audience and familiarize yourself with their culture. This will aid you in how you relate to them.

6. Know the subject

Act like you are the expert on what you are talking about.

7. Stay Brief⁹

Start strong, Say what you need to say, and sit down.

8. Stories

Tell stories, and spin yarns that effectively draw your audience in and give life to your presentations. Testimonies and life experiences are essential to bring freshness to your conversations and presentations.

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Round Table:

How well do you ask questions and listen? How do you feel when someone loses eye contact with you and checks their watch during a conversation or a presentation?

What is the best speaker you have ever heard? What are some notable things you remember about them?

Re read the comic’s rule by Jerry Seinfeld. Why is this so true?

What would you add to the list of suggestions for better public speaking?

⁶ <http://sbinformation.about.com/b/2008/08/17/fear-of-public-speaking.htm/> May 20, 2009; 10:05 PM

⁷ <http://www.magicpotofjobs.com/2006/11/02/185/> May 20, 2009; 11:05 PM

⁸ http://www.projectmanagementsource.com/2007/03/how_to_improve_.html/ May 20, 2009; 11:06 PM

⁹ <http://cultivategreatness.com/2008/05/07/3-steps-to-better-public-speaking/> May 20, 2009; 11 PM

