

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



498 Two Words to Launch Any Conversation

How are you at making small talk at those networking events, when suddenly you meet up with strangers and you have to find something to say? I'm Jerry Roberts and today I'll give you a simple way to get the conversation going. That's next on The Extra Point.

A lot of people are seriously challenged by the need to make small talk at networking events and other gatherings. They're uncomfortable trying to figure out what to talk about with people they don't know.

If that's you I get it. I completely understand because early on in my working life I was a horribly timid, scared, tongue-tied, absolutely reluctant networker who never wanted to get stuck in a group of people I didn't know. I won't go into all the details but trust me, my initial efforts to start up conversations and keep them going were pathetic and I could have used what I'm about to share.

If you're anything like I was then and want or need to make decent connections with people for your work, I've got an easy way to make those conversations go better for you. It works like this.

You're at a fiesta and the hostess introduces you to her brother, who handled the barbecue. You talk for a couple of minutes and then there's this uncomfortable pause where you both look at your drinks and try to think of something to say. Or maybe you're at a hotel for a business function and there's a 100 people in the room chatting away, and you start up a conversation with someone you'd like to know better and that same lag happens. What now?

I'm going to give you two words that are guaranteed to spark a conversation, one that the other person almost certainly will welcome. When you have these two words you can

attach anything you want to them and it will work. Are you ready? The two words are...

"I'm curious."

"I'm curious Bill, what's your secret with the barbecue? It's incredible." Bill now has the chance to launch into how the marinade was his grandfather's secret recipe.

"I'm curious Mary, what's it like to run a service department where all the mechanics are men?" Mary has the freedom to tell you a funny story of how she got off to a rocky start at the car dealership but overcame some obstacles and now has the confidence of her team.

The words "I'm curious" form an invitation to tell a story, their story, and people love to talk about themselves as well as the things they're involved with.

If you meet someone who owns a business and you can't think of a thing to say to even get the conversation off the ground, you might go with, "I'm curious, how did you get your start with XYZ Company?"

An interesting piece of psychology that ties into this is that when you allow someone to talk about themselves and what interests them, they'll see you in a more positive light.

Give this a try and let me know if you find that networking becomes easier when you're just a little bit curious.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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