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# The Fine Art of Small Talk

MMANC Annual Conference

October, 2007

Resort at Squaw Creek





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# What Makes Small Talk Difficult?

# Why is it so difficult?

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- It's risky!
- It takes effort
- The worst time to think of something to talk about is when there is nothing to talk about!
- We don't practice it - we avoid it!
- As kids we were taught to refrain from engaging in conversation with strangers

# Change your childhood thinking

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- In safe situations, make it a point to talk to strangers
- Don't wait - Introduce yourself
- Think of silence as impolite
- Good things come to those who go get them!
- It's up to you to start the conversation

# Why??

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- Small talk matters!
- It establishes rapport and opens doors
- It will get you noticed
- In fact, the ability to converse has a greater impact on future success than grade point average

# Getting started

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- Smile!
- Be the first to say hello
- If you don't feel comfortable with a large group, look for someone standing alone or a small group
- Take your time with introductions
  - Names really matter
- Assume the role of host

# Engage!

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- Be prepared – have topics ready
- Use “Common ground” questions
  - What do you hope to get out of this conference? What did you think of today’s keynote speaker?
- Don’t worry too much about having the “perfect icebreaker” – effort counts

# Engage!

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- Show interest by actively listening
  - Give verbal feedback
  - Maintain eye contact
  - Don't let your eyes wander around the room
- Play the conversation “game” – help the other person
- Showing genuine interest is flattering and essential to conversing

# Engage!

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- Listen more than you talk
- Use open ended questions
- Be aware of your body language
- Don't assume you will have nothing in common
- Observe “free information”
- Fake it ‘til you make it!

# Free Information!

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- Answers to open-ended questions
- Appearances
- Location & Occasion
- Behavior

# Exit Gracefully

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- Be prepared with exit lines
- Put the focus on you
- Show appreciation for the exchange
  - Be sincere and end on a personalized note
- Don't melt from conversations. Leave with a firm handshake and say goodbye
- An authentic farewell will actually enhance the relationship



# Exploring the Commons!

# Remember...

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- *The simple act of truly being interested in the other person has an amazing effect on conversation*



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**For more information or to bring this  
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