

Big tips for successful small talk

If you are anything like me, you view small talk as a slow and painful form of torture. It is the ultimate test of multitasking, as you listen, respond and scour your mind for the next clever subject for conversation. It's just so much! But small talk is a valuable resource for attorneys. These brief encounters offer a useful opportunity to market your practice and potentially attract a new client. Don't let small talk anxiety keep you from promoting your firm. Instead, follow some of these useful tips to get all the benefits of small talk.

[Forbes magazine](#) recently published a list of tips to help introverts tackle the challenges of small talk. Let's look at some of the suggestions from a legal perspective.

Confront your resistance

The first step is to figure out why you hate small talk and confront it head on. Maybe it makes you anxious or you had a bad experience in the past. Whatever the case, make an effort to identify the source of your opposition and then change the conversation in your head. I know it may sound kind of touchy feely, but mindset really is important when changing a behavior. Instead of thinking about how much you hate small talk, start focusing on the benefits to your law practice.

Have a purpose

Small talk occurs in a variety of environments. Random conversations at the grocery store serve a different purpose than those taking place at a networking or business-related event. While grocery store small talk can absolutely turn into a new client, it may not be appropriate to start these

conversations with the purpose of marketing your firm. On the other hand, networking events are tailor made for this type of small talk. While you don't want to head into these events with a small talk script, it's okay to prepare a few key points to relay about your practice, should the opportunity present itself.

Open ended questions

Open ended questions offer a great opportunity for discovering information about your small talk companion, while also helping to draw him or her into the conversation. Most people love talking about themselves, so give them a chance to do just that. One important tip though. Especially if you're a litigator, you understand the important difference between an open and closed ended question. Use those legal skills to ask questions that solicit more than a yes or no response, which can prematurely end the entire conversation.

Elaborate on your answers

One word answers do nothing to advance the conversation, regardless of who gives them. So, don't be that person. Elaborate on your answers with pieces of information that will engage your small talk partner.

Don't resist small talk. Embrace it as an effective (and free) resource for marketing your firm. With a few mindset changes and preparation, you can become a pro at turning small talk into paying clients.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.