

How To Start A Conversation

Relax. Everyone is there to connect.

Remind yourself that everyone is there to connect with new people, and you're doing them a favor by initiating a conversation!

Talk to the person seated beside you.

Fight the urge to get on your cell phone while at the event. Instead, sit next to or near someone who is alone and start a conversation. You can ask them simple things like which office or practice they are from.

Approach someone who asked a great question.

Pay attention during the Q&A portions of presentations to see who speaks up to ask a question. When there is a break, strike up a conversation with that person regarding their question or the presentation itself.

Pay attention to your body language.

When we're uncomfortable, our body language shows it. We cross our arms, look away, etc. Be careful to showcase body language that is inviting rather than off-putting.

Hang out near the food and drink areas.

Most people will take a moment to grab a refreshment. Use that as an opportunity to say hello and connect with them while they're assembling their plate or grabbing a drink.

Bathroom conversations don't have to be off-limits.

While in line for the bathroom or washing your hands, strike up a simple conversation with the person next to you. Ask questions like "Is this your first time in Pittsburgh?" or "Have you been to the Step Up Your Game Conference before?" See where the conversation goes!

Sit in the lobby.

If you have a conference badge on, hang out in the lobby of the hotel. Many folks will go there to work, take a call, or a breather. Finding a low-key environment can allow for a less distracted conversation.



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Don't scan everyone's badges.

Looking to strike up a conversation with a specific person at the conference? Rather than scanning all the name tags in the room, acquaint yourself with their picture (check CybEr_C!) ahead of the conference.

Get introduced.

If you don't feel comfortable approaching someone, find a wingperson! Ideally, this is someone who already knows that person, or has interacted with them before. This person is in a position to say "Have you met my friend?" and create an opening for you.

Set up appointments.

If there are people attending the conference (or people in Pittsburgh) with whom you would like to connect, don't be afraid to reach out beforehand and ask if they'd be willing to meet one-on-one.

Utilize pre-planned networking time.

The conference will have breaks and time for networking in the evening. Everyone is there to mix and mingle, so take advantage!

Be open to everyone.

Be friendly and open to everyone you encounter, whether it's the person manning the food stations, the admin at the front desk, or the young professionals attending the conference. Not only is it good practice, but you never know what may come from those interactions.

Be yourself.

Even if you don't truly connect with everyone, that's okay! Ask questions and respond in ways that are authentic to who you are. Follow up and stay in touch with those with whom you connected, as yourself.

