

WELCOME

MEA YORK

MEMBERS

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS





WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS

5 Essential 21st Century Skills



WORKPLACE SKILLS

Essential 21st Century Workplace Skills

- **Thinking**
 - Identify root cause of problem
 - Analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims
 - Use wide range of idea creation techniques including brainstorming, challenging assumptions
 - Interpret information, draw conclusions based on the best analysis
 - Make decisions based on logic, practicality and values

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Essential 21st Century Workplace Skills

- **Communication**
 - **Write** Effectively to -
 - *Communicate and inform, request information, persuade and convince, provide an analysis or comparison*
 - **Speak** Effectively to –
 - *Inform and clarify, influence, reassure or persuade, instruct, engage and inspire*
 - *Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral and nonverbal communication skills*
 - **Listen** and ask questions to clarify and appreciate others' points of view

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Essential 21st Century Workplace Skills

- Teamwork
 - Determine purpose of project or meeting
 - Demonstrate open, flexible approach in dealing with differences, people and tasks
 - Know when it is appropriate to listen, speak and engage others' input
 - Share information, questions, concerns and insights
 - Leverage differences to help produce new ideas

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Essential 21st Century Workplace Skills

- **Problem Solving**
 - Assess situation, define problem
 - Seek different points of view, evaluate them based on facts
 - Evaluate solutions based on criteria used to assess solutions
 - Make decision on the right solution and how to implement it
 - Check and validate to see if solution works

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Essential 21st Century Workplace Skills

- **Resilience**
 - Deal with people, problems and situations with honesty and integrity
 - Cope with uncertainty and ambiguity in constructive ways
 - Set goals and priorities to balance work and personal life
 - Be willing to continuously learn and grow
 - Show interest, initiative, perseverance and effort

WORKPLACE SKILLS

21st Century Workplace Skills

“As infotech continues its advance into higher skills, value will continue to move elsewhere. Engineers will stay in demand, it’s safe to say, but tomorrow’s most valuable engineers will not be geniuses in cubicles; rather, they’ll be those who can build relationships, brainstorm, collaborate and lead.”

From “Humans are Underrated” by Geoffrey Colvin

FORTUNE, August 2015

SMALL TALK

in the workplace



SMALL TALK

in the workplace

SUMMARY

- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- Why do we make small talk?
- With whom do we make small talk?
- What do we talk about?
- Guidelines for effective conversation
- Starting, maintaining and ending a casual conversation

SMALL TALK

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WHAT IS IT?

- Informal type of conversation
- Conversation for its own sake
- Type of social communication
- Ability to make small talk is a social skill

SMALL TALK

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Can help build meaningful connections with other people (e.g. co-workers, supervisors, clients)
- Business success is based largely on relationships: connections generally start with small talk
- It makes you pay attention
- It's a gesture of respect
- The ability to initiate and maintain casual conversation will benefit people in the professional world

SMALL TALK

in the workplace

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

How would you get an opportunity to have a deeper conversation with anyone without using small talk?!

- Small talk is the first stage of communication
- Ensures friendly relations; signals good intentions at work
- Allows you to gauge the other person's personality and discover level of expertise
- Short-term social interactions can improve ability to solve problems and improve short-term memory *

** 2010 study by researchers at University of Michigan*

SMALL TALK

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WHY DO PEOPLE MAKE SMALL TALK?

- 'Break the ice' and start a conversation
- Keep a conversation going , fill in 'gaps' between pauses
- Show both speakers have friendly intentions
- To establish reputation and level of expertise
- Fill time while waiting for something
- End a conversation in polite, non-abrupt manner

SMALL TALK

in the workplace



SMALL TALK

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WITH WHOM DO WE MAKE SMALL TALK ?

- With co-workers (peers) and colleagues
- With/between managers and supervisors and their staff
- With clients and customers
- Outside workplace, with many different people (e.g. while standing in line at bus stop, while riding on the subway, or carpooling)

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WHAT DO PEOPLE MAKE SMALL TALK ABOUT?

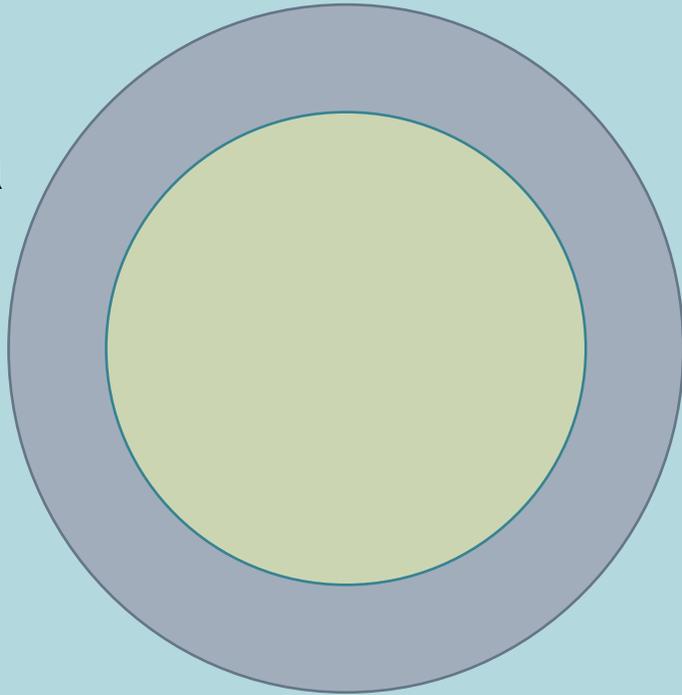
- Related to peoples' cultures and their 'public' and 'private' life spaces
- In Canada, people have larger *private* life spaces than people from other (e.g. East Indian or South Asian) cultures
- There are more topics Canadians are *not willing* to share with people they do not know well or at all

SMALL TALK

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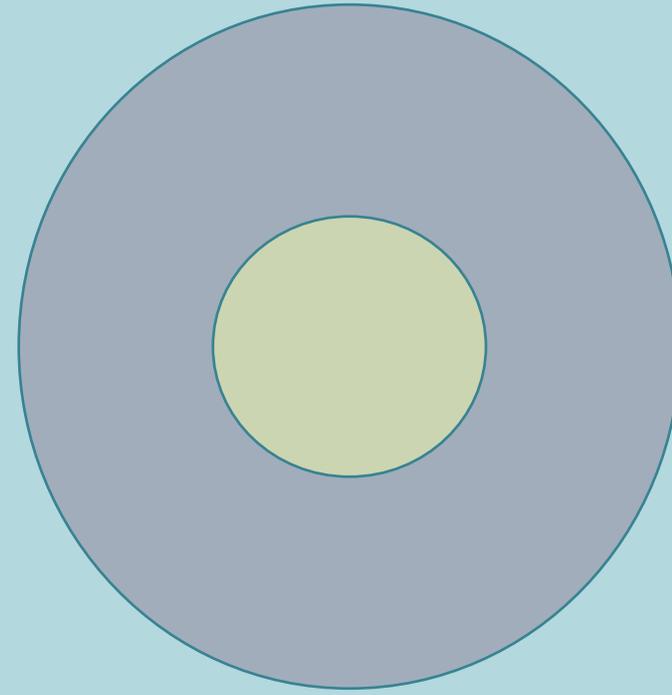
Public vs. Private Life Space

Canada



Southeast

Asia



SMALL TALK

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WHAT DO PEOPLE MAKE SMALL TALK ABOUT?

- In Canada, most common topic is weather
- Also current events/news (provided topic not controversial)
- Sports and entertainment
- Travel
- Present situation (waiting for bus or subway, standing in an elevator, etc.)
- Compliments about clothing or hairstyle

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WHAT TOPICS ARE NOT APPROPRIATE?

Topics not considered 'safe':

- ❖ Marital status
- ❖ Whether or not one has children
- ❖ Age
- ❖ Sex
- ❖ Politics
- ❖ Salary
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Positive or negative remarks about someone's body

SMALL TALK

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SMALL TALK

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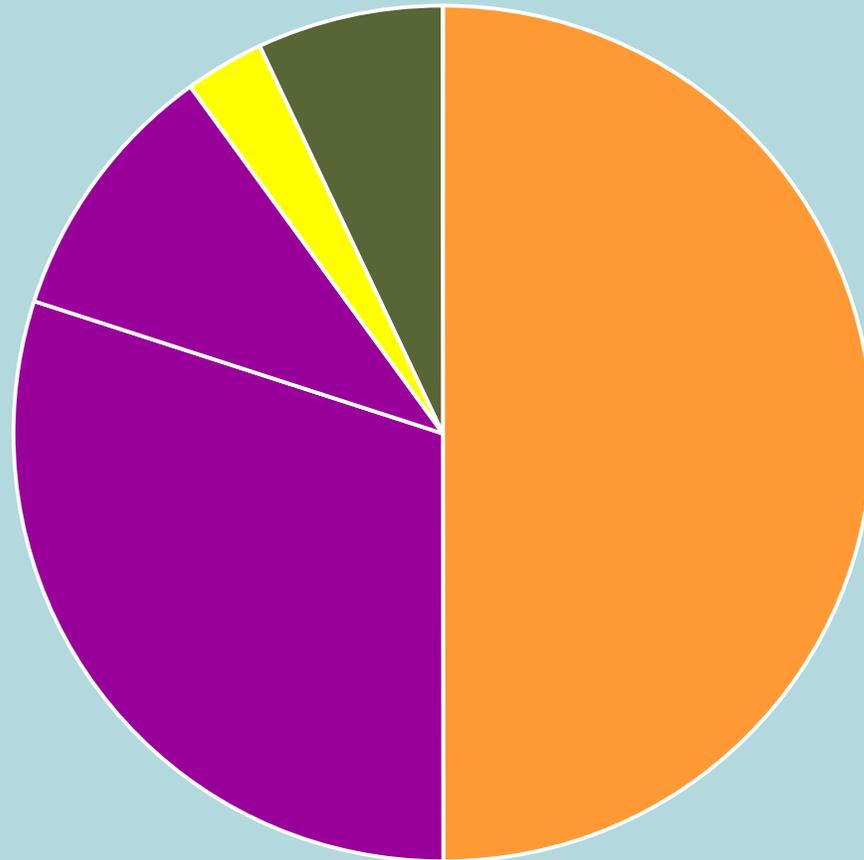
GUIDELINES FOR CASUAL CONVERSATION

- Make it positive, neutral and non-threatening: keep the tone of your voice friendly and upbeat
- Make your opening remarks begin with “you”
- Have approachable *body language*
- Ask open-ended questions to keep conversation going
- Do not interrupt the other person or other speakers; wait until they have finished and there is a pause

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%age of Communication



Body Language Tone min Tone max Other non-verbal Actual words

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GUIDELINES FOR CASUAL CONVERSATION

- Respect the other person's personal space
- Avoid long pauses, word repetitions, giving shorter-than-expected answers
- Keep the focus on the other person: Be an *active listener*
- If one person asks a question, he/she should always comment on the other's reply or ask another question
- Pay attention to your and the other person's *body language*
- Don't share too much information about yourself

SMALL TALK

in the workplace

STARTING A CONVERSATION

- Hardest part is knowing *how* to start
- Techniques include:
 - ❖ Greeting
 - ❖ Asking open-ended question (How -, What, When, Where, Why)
 - ❖ Making a statement; for example, giving a compliment
 - ❖ Using a tag question

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STARTING A CONVERSATION

- Hi, I don't think we've met. I'm _____.
- Hello, my name is _____.
- How long have you worked here, _____?
- How is your commute into work?
- What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

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STARTING A CONVERSATION

- That's a really nice tie/scarf you're wearing.
- That was an interesting talk about diversity in the workplace.
- I've been working here as a _____ for many years.
- It's a beautiful day, isn't it?
- The guest speaker gave an interesting presentation, didn't he/she?

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MAINTAINING THE CONVERSATION

Show interest using *verbal* responses such as:

- Oh, really? That's interesting.
- Wow, that sounds exciting. Tell me more.
- It's funny you should bring up that subject. I'm very interested in _____, too.
- Is that right?!

Use *non-verbal* cues to keep the conversation going:

- Maintain eye contact
- Keep smiling
- Nod your head to encourage the other speaker to continue
- Maintain an 'open' stance

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MAINTAINING THE CONVERSATION

- Use expressions to *politely change the topic*.
 - By the way, have you
 - Actually, you just made me think of
 - I heard you mention earlier that _____.
 - Do you mind if I ask you about something you said a few minutes ago?
 - You know, that reminds me of.....
- Take turns listening and talking

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ENDING THE CONVERSATION

- Pay attention to non-verbal cues from other speaker:
 - not maintaining eye contact
 - shifting from one leg to the other
 - 'fiddling' with something in pocket or elsewhere
 - keeps looking at his/her watch

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ENDING THE CONVERSATION

Use a polite phrase to signal your wish to stop talking and move on:

- You'll have to excuse me. I need to say hello to _____ It's been great talking to you.
- Well, it was good to meet you. I hope you enjoy/have_____.
- If you'll excuse me, I really have to go. It was good talking to you. I'd like to stay in touch.
- I found what you said about _____ really interesting. Perhaps we can continue our discussion another time.

It is *unwise* to try to continue the conversation if the other speaker has used any of these or similar expressions

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