

# Conversation Starters

## 1. Introduction

Great conversation starters put the focus on your client, not on you or what you are selling. Taking the time to research and craft a great conversation starter helps to

- form an immediate connection between you and the client,
- establish a relationship from which business can be generated,
- demonstrate that you understand the client's needs, and
- increase conversion of cold calls to face-to-face meetings, as well as responses from voicemails and emails.

This document covers the following:

- Finding Conversation Starters
- Successful Conversation Starters
- Conversation Starters to Avoid

## 2. Finding Conversation Starters

Conversation starters have to relate to the client's needs and interests. Here are some great resources for learning about a client's business:

- Company website
- A personal connection
- Industry trades
- Media trades
- Google Alert and Newsreader

Possible conversation starters include:

- Company news specific to the client
- A special feature on the client's website
- Industry or consumer trends affecting the client's business
- A recent client advertising campaign in another medium
- A contact or connection to share with the client
- Positive feedback about their product or service

## 3. Successful Conversation Starters

Great conversation starters give the client something to feel good about: a compliment, research, a connection, or an idea. The goal is to establish a relationship, not to make a sale.

### Example 1

"Hi, this is Juan Ruiz from WSTU. I was just reading about your plans to open your first store in our area. If you have a few moments, I'd like to give you a snapshot of our local marketing trends to help guide your launch plans for the new location."

This conversation starter works because it

- shows a specific understanding of the client's business,
- offers the client something she needs—free marketing consultation, and
- establishes the account executive as a local marketing expert.

## Example 2

“Hi, this Maggie Sanders from WKRP. I was just visiting your website and noticed you have a great video archive of advice for first-time home buyers and how to choose the right mortgage for their needs. This is great information that I'd like to help you make available to a larger audience. Do you have a moment to discuss some ideas on how we could extend your reach?”

This conversation starter works because the account executive took the time to find a special feature on the client's website that could help the client achieve a clear marketing objective using the client's own content. There is so much fantastic content buried deep on the Web, but it serves no purpose if no one can find it.

## Example 3

“Hi, this is Bill Morrison from WWXR. I noticed your new billboard campaign targeting new students for your university's fall semester. I wanted to see if the web was part of your marketing mix. If it's not, I'd like to show you some calculations on how it might be a more efficient buy than your current billboard campaign.”

This conversation starter works because the account executive didn't take the lazy approach, for example, “I noticed your billboard campaign and wanted to talk about your marketing plan.” Instead, he took the extra step of offering calculations to ensure that the client is getting the most bang for their buck. Clients appreciate it when they feel you are look out for their best interests rather than just trying to make a sale off of them.

## 4. Conversation Starters to Avoid

### Example 1

“Hi, I'm Mike Barron from WXYZ and I wanted to see if I could talk about all the great advertising opportunities we have to offer.”

This conversation starter doesn't work because the focus is on the account executive and his station instead of the client. There is no attempt to build a relationship or understand the client's needs.

### Example 2

“Hi, I'm Donna Morrow from WYSP and I wanted to see if I could learn more about your marketing goals.”

At first glance, this may seem like a reasonable conversation starter since the focus is on the client. However, it's actually a lazy starter because she didn't take the time to understand a unique need or opportunity for her client. She used a generic catchphrase that shows no genuine interest or understanding of the client.

### **Example 3**

“Hi, I’m Deshaun Owens from WMMR and I’d like to tell you about a great deal we’re offering on our advertising right now.”

This conversation starter sounds like a pitch from a used car salesman. There is no attempt focus on the client or relate to the client’s needs. Even worse, it cheapens the value of the advertising. He should have taken the time to build a relationship with the client, fully explaining the real value of advertising and how it can help achieve the client’s goals.