

## The Art of Small Talk and Networking with Debra Fine

**Description:** Networking Conversations – whether you love them or hate them, we all have to participate in them. What feels like a gift to some can be torture for others, but it doesn't have to be that way. Our guest today believes that anyone can learn how to be an exceptional conversationalist. Today our new host Michele Padilla, Director & Senior Leadership Consultant at FCCS is joined by Debra Fine, conference keynote speaker, trainer, and bestselling author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk* for a discussion about the power of conversation skills, building rapport, and networking.

Debra is an instructor in the FCCS Leading Leaders course, and as an engineer, she has transformed her admiration for people who have the gift of easy conversation into a simple formula that anyone can follow. The skills in her conversation toolbox range from conversation starters, conversation killers, and the questions you can ask anyone to more fully enjoy your conversations, build your network, and earn the trust and possibly even the business of others.

Episode Insights Include:

### The why behind honing conversations skills

- + There's no getting around it- everyone has to participate in conversations.
- + What seems like a natural gift for some can be learned by anyone.
- + Introverts and extroverts have different strengths in conversations.
- + Too many people don't pay attention to their conversation skills because they have never learned how to hone them.

### Benefits of learning small talk

- + Small talk is the appetizer to any relationship.
- + Referrals will come more readily when small talk comes easy.
- + Small talk creates a culture that people enjoy being in.
- + Companies who have an environment of easy small talk rise above competitors.

### Traits of the best conversationalists

- + They assume the burden of other people's comfort.
- + They introduce themselves to others first.
- + They offer conversation topics that others can join in on.
- + They ask open-ended questions that encourage continued conversations.

### **How to start a conversation with anyone**

- + First, notice whether someone is already engaged in a conversation with someone else.
- + Break into a group by introducing yourself first and offering some self-disclosure.
- + Remind yourself of things you can discuss about the other person.
- + Walk up to people and just say hello- make it a task if necessary.
- + Move away from your desk or seat and make your way around the room.

### **The value of networking as a leader**

- + You don't know where you might be in three or five years from now.
- + Networking has to happen before you need to rely on your network.
- + Building a network is key to building rapport within your organization.
- + People are much more interested in working with someone who is interested in them.

### **Key networking habits of successful leaders**

- + Take ownership of your responsibility to connect with others.
- + Leaders introduce people to other people.
- + Leaders show a genuine interest in a person through their eye contact and body language.
- + You may not be able to mentor everyone, but you can take 3-5 minutes to connect with anyone.
- + Ask for referrals to get your company on other's radars.
- + Use Google Alerts to stay in touch with key happenings.
- + Leaders don't keep the conversation centered on themselves for long- keep the ball moving back and forth.

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## **Resources**

[The Fine Art of Small Talk by Debra Fine](#)  
[Leading Leaders](#)



## Get in touch

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## Tweetables

"You have to find those communication skills so people feel good about interacting with you." — Debra Fine

"Small talk is the appetizer to any relationship." — Debra Fine

"Be the person that's genuinely interested in other people." — Debra Fine