

## *Breaking The Ice*

Sarah Michel ©2012

Recently A brilliant friend and colleague described to me how she felt attending a professional meeting where she didn't know anyone sitting around her as being, "awkward and painful," when she found herself at a loss for how to *break the ice* with someone she doesn't know. Here was someone who has so much to offer anyone lucky enough to engage in conversation with her but her reluctance to initiate interaction caused her to avoid eye contact and retreat inward and miss out on the potential network relationships sitting around her. These are the people that keep me up at nights.

I have had a life-long fascination with people who have a natural preference for introversion and think that they're really bad at breaking the ice and talking to people they don't know. These people (you know who you are) also think their bad at networking which couldn't be farther from the truth. In my experience, they may not work the room and come away with the most business cards but the few people they do meet they will make a meaningful connection with that actually has a high chance of continuing on after the first meeting. That is how you build a great network, one relationship at a time.

In today's constantly changing, crazy busy world, your success will be determined by the breadth of people you know and how quickly you can get the information or resource you need to do your job faster, better or easier. The more people you meet who live in worlds you don't even know about yet, the stronger your network will be. No matter if you're breaking the ice online or in person, how you phrase your first opening question to capture the attention of the receiver is critical because you have less than 15 seconds to do it. People are moving at warp speed and you simply won't break through the million thoughts running through their mind or get them to stop and pay attention to you if you're not compelling.

As you prepare for joining us at Sage Summit 2012 next month, I hope you have reviewed last month's video and article to help you prepare your powerful 17 second introduction. However, once you've introduced yourself, you need to "break in" to see if there is a potential connection or resource you might have to share. By asking open-ended questions, you will draw the other person out which will give you time to listen for common interests, where your networks might intersect or realize how you might be able to support each other.

Here are ten proven ice breakers to help you *break in and make out* at Sage Summit 2012:

- "This is my first time at a meeting like this, how about you?"
- "What has been your favorite session at Sage Summit so far?"
- "Tell me about yourself and how you spend most of your time?"
- "What has been the best part of your week so far?"
- "What do you like doing when you're not at work?"
- "What do you love about your profession?"
- "What's the most interesting project you've worked on in the past year?"
- "What keeps you up at night, what's your biggest challenge?"

- “What’s your number one customer’s biggest concern right now?”
- “Who do you most admire in your company and why?”

I encourage you to have 2-3 ice breaker questions that you like, in your back pocket before you reach Nashville. If you're prepared, you will have more confidence to start conversations with new people that will lead to amazing connections for you if you've willing to give it a try.

The world is waiting to meet you!

*Sarah*