

FORM framework

Another way to think about engaging someone in conversation and beginning to build a relationship is to use the acronym F.O.R.M. as a framework.

F: family...inquire about the persons family...immediate, extended, relatives living in the area.

O: occupation/organizations...does the person have a job outside the home? What do they like/dislike about the job? What organizations do they belong to?

R: recreation...what does the person like to do for fun and relaxation? Do they have a hobby? Do they participate in team or group activities?

M: motivation/money...a focus on what is important to the person

Consider the following set of suggested questions from a blog by Diane Windingland:

One of the best approaches I learned long ago for building rapport and getting the other person to talk is the FORM approach. FORM is a acronym that stand for Family, Occupation, Recreation and Motivation. The "FOR" talk helps build rapport before you delve into the "M," what motivates the person. Start with "FOR"ing people and work up to "FORM"ing them. When you find out what motivates a person, you can better connect with them and sell yourself, your ideas or your products. FORM can be adapted to business, social and dating situations.

Family. *Ask about the other people's families and tell them a little about yours.*

Tell me about your family...

What is it like being the only girl/boy in the family?

How did you meet your husband/wife?

What's it like have twins?

Where did you grow up?

Do you still have family there?

Why did you move?

Occupation/Organizations: *Ask about what they do for a living and tell them about what you do. Talk about how your jobs are alike of different. If you want to keep it wide open and not put someone in an awkward position who may be between jobs, you can ask, "How do you spend your time?" Other examples:*

Tell me about your job/business?

What is the best part of your job?

What is most challenging?

How did you choose your job/profession?

What would you tell someone just starting out in your profession?

Recreation: *Ask about what they do for fun (sports, hobbies, volunteering, kid's activities) and talk about things you have in common or that you would like to try someday.*

What do you like to do in your spare time/for fun?

How did you get into that?

What did you do for fun as a kid?

What is your favorite type of food/restaurant?

Motivation: *Ask questions to determine what is important to the other person. Aside from work and recreation what is really important to you?*

If you didn't have to work, what would you do with your time?

If time and money were no object, what would you do?

What in the past has made you the happiest?

If you were given 5 minutes to talk with the President, what would you say?

If you had a month to live, what would you do?

If you could do X all over again, what would you do differently?

Use questions to guide the conversation. The person doing all the talking isn't the one guiding the direction of the conversation. The person asking the right questions can guide the conversation. (The five "W's" are a good place to start. "Who," "What," "When," "Where," and "Why") However don't just ask questions, share appropriately about yourself as well. You want a conversation, not an interrogation. Start FORMing people to build the foundation for a lasting relationship. (13)

(Use FORM to Keep the Conversation Going, Windingland, 2010)