



# POWER PITFALLS

What you need to avoid in a conversation

BY LAURA SCHWARTZ

As a senior in high school I was—and this comes as no surprise to my friends or my friendly opponents on the Fox News Channel—voted Most Likely To Never Stop Talking. (No one is happier than my parents that all that talking has finally paid off!) But I don't look at what I do as simply "talking"—I look at it as "conversing." "Talking," is just the rattling off of prepared talking points or gossip. "Conversing" is intriguing, it's investigative, it's discussing, it's a sharing of information and ideas.

Let's face it—if you can't converse in the workplace or at the restaurant, you're not going to find yourself climbing any corporate ladders or even going out on a second date. By simply avoiding the dangers of "talk," you'll find yourself in the most powerful conversations you've ever had. Remember—whether at a "social" event or professional conference, you're on the virtual clock. Because although your job may be 9-5, your career is 24/7, and as social as any event may appear...it's business.

## FOUR "TALKING" HABITS TO AVOID

### Cocktail Talk

When your cocktail's doing the talking, all bets are off. Go easy on alcohol if you want to make a solid first impression. It's better to make the right impression initially than come off as the office lush and have to work your way back. Keep in mind too, in this day of You Tube and cell phone cameras, *you* may forget the night before but nobody else will! Your social performance (aka lack of restraint at the open bar) will affect your professional performance and potential for promotion.

### Loud Talk

Why are some people simply *not* aware of their own volume? Whether in their home, the office or at a restaurant—they speak in the same octave in every situation. Be aware of your surroundings. It's more captivating when you use voice inflection and tone to command the attention of others instead of volume.

### Over Talk

Isn't it annoying when you're making a point and someone chimes in over you to make his or her own before you're finished? Great. Then don't do it to others! The easiest way to earn respect is to show respect. Hold your point until you can slot it in at the right time. You won't annoy anyone, and you'll make a much larger impact on your audience at hand.

### Babble Talk

How many conversations have you been in when the topic just won't die? When intoxicated colleagues try and make themselves an expert on something by paraphrasing what's already been said? When this happens, gracefully exit or turn the page!

Now that you know what not to do, get out there and talk it up! It'll pay off in raises, promotions, friends, dates or maybe even a mate! \*Next month I'll dish on 10 more conversation habits you need to avoid. ■

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