Conversation Triggers

You are primed, pumped, and ready to rock. You've got your introduction down; you know your agenda for the long and short terms. You're looking good, feeling good. You are not hungry. You're ready to effectively network!

Now, here are some sample conversational openers to get you thinking nimbly:

- “Are you a sports fan?” (Try to relate sports questions to the particular locale in which you find yourself.)
- “What are some of the athletic skills you wish you had mastered?”
- “Do you enjoy movies?” (“I heard an interview on NPR about movies that make men cry…”)
- “What do you think is the greatest movie you’ve never seen?”
- “Did you grow up in this part of the country?” (“Such long, dark days are new for me here in Seattle; are you used to them?” “What kind of weather are you used to?” “What was it like to grow up there?” “What brought you here?”)
- “I don’t know anybody here. Do you?”
- “On my way here, I noticed…”
- “Breakfast is my favorite meal of the day. What is yours?”
- “What was the last purchase you made that made you feel like a grownup?” (One person told me it was actually purchasing a bag full of rubber bands, because she’d been used to trying to save them from newspapers, etc.)
- “What, to you, is the most useful invention of last 25 years?” (Grocery bags with handles, suitcases with wheels, etc.)
- “What exactly do you do in your job, day-to-day?”
• “What are the most interesting aspects of your work?”

• “What do you find to be the two or three greatest challenges you face?”

• “How do you relieve the stress of your work? What do you like to do when you’re not working? What do you do for fun?”

• “How did you get into your line of work? Tell me about your career path.”

• “If you weren’t a __________, what would you be?”

• “In your educational training, what were the most useful things you learned?”

• “What books have you read that have been helpful in your career?”

• “What brought you here today?”

**Note:** Now, remember, you don’t just charge up to a person or a group and start firing at will. Wait for a break in the conversation, or for someone to turn to you for a comment or introduction. Remember that, in order to engage another person, it is important that you share something of yourself. And be ready to think on your feet!