

IDIOM OF THE MONTH:

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

This means that you have received the information directly from the original source:

*e.g. One of the main advantages of being **in a social network** is that members receive the latest news on interesting topics straight from the horse's mouth.*



SMALL-TALK

Small talk or 'chat' is the icebreaker which warms the waters when you meet someone for the first time. It helps you to get to know the other person and provides a safety zone for contact and agreement before serious business discussions start.

It is interesting that there is no equivalent German word for 'small talk' – and, indeed, there is nothing 'small' about it! In England, we talk about the 'art of conversation' and not everyone is an 'artist', not even in their own language. In task-oriented cultures, such as in Germany, it is quite normal to get straight down to business. But in relationship-oriented cultures, it is usual to build up personal contact before starting business discussions.

Here are some useful tips for practising 'small talk'

1. Be open, friendly and show an honest interest in the other person.
2. Keep to 'safe' topics of conversation.
3. Ask questions to encourage the other person to talk.
4. Offer your own opinion on the subject. Share an experience or an anecdote
5. Show interest in what the other person is saying: nod, make interested 'noises', use words like "really!", "how interesting!", "tell me more!"
6. Ask questions. Use question tags: "It's nice weather, isn't it?"
7. Don't just give one-word answers. Offer more information and then ask the other person about his or her experiences: "And you?"; "And what about your holiday?"
8. Develop a wide range of interests that you can talk on many topics.
9. Keep a balance between talking and listening.
10. Include everybody in the group in the conversation.

Useful small-talk expressions

Icebreakers (non-personal topics)

*Nice place. Is it a typical FPN venue?
Beautiful day, isn't it!
Is this your first visit to to an FPN event?
How was your flight?
How was the weather in Hamburg?
How is your hotel?*

Small-talk topics (general / personal)

*How did you get to hear about FPN?
Have you been any other FPN events?
What's your connection to payments?
Are you interested in sport?
What do you do in your spare time?*

Conversation openers (personal)

*How was your last holiday?
Do you like music?
Do you have any pets?
Where did you live as a child?*

