



## **How To Know When to Stop Talking in Conversations with Colleagues**

Many people do not know when to stop talking and when it is appropriate to continue talking. This is an essential skill in the workplace because it affects how we are perceived by co-workers and higher-ups and can hinder us in other ways such as promotion opportunities.

### **When to Hold Conversations and When to Fold Them**

A study published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences "... discovered that conversations almost never end when anyone wants them to. ... Results showed conversations rarely ended when both parties wanted them to or when even one wanted them to. Only two percent of conversations ended at the time both parties desired, and only 30% of them finished when the pair wanted them to" (Robinson, 2021).

### **Why Does this Happen?**

- Ending conversations requires people to know information they usually keep from each other- this occurs because people are afraid that ending a conversation is rude so they let the conversation keep going even if it would be best for it to end.
- 69 percent of participants said they wanted the conversation to end before it did, and on average people wanted their conversations to be 50 percent longer or shorter.

### **When to Exit the Conversation**

- Your mind starts to wander away from the conversational topic and you do not want to appear rude.
- A colleague or employer continues to talk over you with a different point of view and you are growing frustrated.
- The other party interrupts your train of thought, contradicts you as you try to finish your sentences, or tries to finish your sentences by diverting the conversation in their direction.
- You are describing a personal situation, and someone steals your thunder to describe when the same thing happened to them.
- It feels like a manager or co-worker is stuck in predatory listening- itching to ditch your point of view to prove themselves right.
- The conversation gets heated and tempers flare because of political, religious, or other controversial points of view.
- You are engaging in hypercritical listening- you are thinking more about what your rebuttal will be than listening to the actual conversation.
- The other party has too much to drink and becomes verbally or physically inappropriate.

- Another person is determined to force their point of view by commanding, finger pointing or criticizing.
- You feel the other person may be ready to move on from the conversation, so you exit first out of courtesy.

### **Other General Tips:**

- Most social events are structured for small talk and most people do not expect long, in-depth conversations.
- Before a conversation, establish a polite escape hatch where you say something like “I enjoyed talking with you. I’m going to see who else I haven’t had a chance to catch up with. I look forward to talking with you again soon.”
- Don’t try to guess when the other person wants to leave the chat. You don’t know when the other person wants to leave so relax and enjoy the conversation!

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