



## Encouraging Small Talk Within Your Institution

performance employees pandemic

**Summary:** While small talk around the water cooler has been around for decades, the pandemic has reduced the opportunity for that exchange. Yet, it is still important to encourage small talk as it promotes connection, performance, and innovation while it fights Zoom fatigue. We give you three ways to build small talk into the work week so that you can keep your teams connected and strong through the transition to normalcy.

Since its launch in 1955, The Guinness Book of World Records has never failed to entertain, especially when it comes to some of the smallest things on the planet. For instance, the world's smallest living dog, Miracle Milly, is a female Chihuahua in Puerto Rico and measures just 3.8 inches tall. When she was born, she actually fit inside a teaspoon. Then, there's the world's tiniest fidget spinner, which measures only 0.20 inches, and took a team of eight people roughly two months to create. Guinness has no shortage of small things to talk about.

When it comes to topics such as dogs and fidget spinners, small talk can seem a bit ridiculous. However, in the work world, it turns out that small talk, such as what people did over the weekend, is a necessary component of building relationships, fostering creativity, and keeping people emotionally connected to their work. So, as the world continues to grapple with the new normal of remote and hybrid work situations, community financial institutions (CFIs) will want to actively work to factor in elements of small talk into various situations that warrant it.

### SMALL TALK'S BENEFITS

**Greater connection, performance & innovation.** Small talk between colleagues may often seem like a waste of time to managers. Yet, more often than not, it is a major factor in helping people feel emotionally attached to their work and the organizations that employ them. Small talk helps people to relax and serves as a springboard for transitioning to more serious work topics and issues.

Further, research has found that casual interactions between employees lead to better teamwork, performance, and innovation among employees. Long before COVID-19 or the need for widespread social distancing was on anyone's radar, a study from Deskmag found that casual social interactions between people working remotely or independently but within shared workspaces could be credited for everything from a [75% increase in productivity](#) to a decrease in their sense of isolation.

**Fighting Zoom fatigue.** In a world where Zoom calls have become the norm, small talk introduces an element of personalization into what can often feel like a very digital world. It can help people feel a bit less burned out. It can also be a better way to get people to relax than just giving employees short breaks between meetings. This is especially true since many still have to deal with managing "home" demands on their time during work breaks, such as helping kids who are still distance learning.

### So, how can CFIs build small talk into the work week?

Managers should consider different ways to implement time for small talk, since working remotely (or even in

hybrid mode) doesn't present the same organic options for small talk to occur that physically working alongside others every day does.

1. Set aside the first 15 to 20 minutes of specific meetings for small talk.
2. Utilize an online platform, such as Teamwork or Slack, for scheduled, virtual social gatherings. These and others allow managers to build in small talk and relaxed social interaction among employees on a regular basis.
3. Remember that while some people are good at naturally promoting small talk with their colleagues, it can be difficult for others. Having someone start the conversation with a fun question such as "Where is the first place you are planning to travel after the pandemic?" helps open up discussions more easily.

## Communicate the need for small talk

Since many CFIs are more close-knit than other organizations, they may find it easier to connect through small talk, regardless of location. Yet, some employees may feel that it is not professional or that they don't have the time. For these reasons and others, it is important for managers to educate on the importance of these small social interactions for overall mental health.

Beyond just adding small talk into scheduled meetings and events, CFIs may even want to consider encouraging employees to take daily social breaks with other colleagues through online apps created for this very purpose, such as Water Cooler. This allows employees to be social through a different channel, which may feel more acceptable.

Small talk is underrated. It is an important way to stay connected to those we work with. You are likely aware of this, but it is more challenging with hybrid work environments. As the recovery continues, small talk is an especially valuable way to transition through the pandemic as a strong and committed team.

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## ECONOMY & RATES

Rates As Of: 05/04/2021 05:15AM (GMT-0700)

Treasury	Yields	MTD Chg	YTD Chg
3M	0.04	0.03	-0.05
6M	0.04	0.01	-0.05
1Y	0.06	0.00	-0.05
2Y	0.17	0.01	0.05
5Y	0.84	-0.01	0.47
10Y	1.62	-0.02	0.69
30Y	2.28	-0.01	0.64
FF Market	FF Disc	IORR	
0.05	0.25	0.10	
SOFR	Prime	OBER	
0.01	3.25	0.03	

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