

### Visitors

You're now in someone's personal space. See what you can learn. People are *extremely* revealing in what and how they choose to create a personal environment. *First*—notice. *Then*—comment.

Everyone loves their precious or meaningful objects to be valued and admired by others (especially if they display them on the walls and shelves of their offices). Look and you can discover *personal passions* (fishing; photography); *other human dimensions* (family, kinds of books, antique furniture); *awards, diplomas* (is *that* where she's from!); *controversial subjects* (he's a member of the National Rifle Association and you're against handguns!).

These personal observations can have several beneficial results:

- Bonding: "I see *you're* a skier, too. Where do you usually ski? We have a house (or do day trips, etc.) at . . ."

Contact! You've opened a conversation vein, discovered something in common, and gotten the opportunity to tell him/her something about yourself, too.

- Personal (to someone you know): "Gee, the family's really growing up! (Most everyone has family pictures around.) Doesn't that give you a turn, when your boy starts borrowing your ties?"

Contact again! You can spend a few moments listening to his attitude toward the passage of time (comfortable or not) and something more about his family (everyone has something to say about *that*). It also lets you share something about *yours*, and you . . .

Or: "You know, we're expecting a child next month. Think I'll pop in for some advice!" Again, opening a third dimension before you zero in on just business.

These kinds of personal asides are a much smoother transition into your subject than just an abrupt "getting down to business."

- Informational. You can also ask questions: "What's the story behind that picture (fire helmet, autographed baseball, Kermit the Frog puppet, etc.)?" or just appreciate and admire: "What a view," "What a great desk," etc. All of these will generate "small" but *useful* talk.

*Note:* Always be sensitive to how small talk is being received and when it's time to move on to the next step. Pick up signals about impatience, time pressures, and so on.