

THE BIG IDEA

Most people walk into a room thinking about what they need to say. **Ashley Siller** flipped the script — and it changed everything about how she leads. The moment you stop making it about you and start making it about them, your credibility goes up, your connections go deeper, and people actually want to follow you. Intentional connection isn't a soft skill. It's your competitive edge.

THE GOLDEN RULE

You don't get to the real conversation until you make it about the other person first.

The title, the credentials, the results — none of it builds trust as fast as genuine curiosity does. When you ask real questions and lock in to actually listen, you learn how they think, how they lead, and how you can serve them. That's the formula. And it works at every level.

■ CONNECTION FRAMEWORK

FOUNDATION SKILLS	ELITE MOVES
OBSERVATIONAL INTELLIGENCE Reading the room before you open your mouth — scanning body language, energy, and facial expressions so you know how to adapt before you say word one.	FIVE BEFORE THE FIVE Taking five minutes before any meeting to research the other person — their name, role, and what matters to them. Preparation is leverage.
LOOK AT THEM, NOT YOU Shifting the spotlight from your credentials and results to their story, their goals, and their world. The fastest way to kill a connection is to make it about you.	TWO QUESTION MINIMUM Committing to ask at least two genuine questions before you switch topics. The second question is where the surface breaks and real conversation begins.
NAME MASTERY Learning and using people's names in real time — asking for spelling to lock it in, then dropping the name naturally within the first 20 seconds of conversation.	TELL ME MORE / HOW SO Two phrases that function as conversation engines. They're not just questions — they're open invitations that pull out the answer the other person actually wants to give.

■ DEEP DIVE: THREE ELITE MOVES FROM ASHLEY SILLER

01 NAMES ARE YOUR FIRST TRUST SIGNAL

Most people say "I'm bad with names" like it's a personality trait they can't change. It's not. Ashley Siller was in that camp and now she's one of the best in the room at it. The trick isn't memory. It's a process. Ask for the spelling, repeat it back, drop the name in conversation twice in the first 20 seconds. Done. They're locked in and so is the connection.

ELITE MOVE:

Ask how the person spells their name within the first 30 seconds of meeting them. It doesn't matter how "obvious" the spelling seems — the act of asking signals that you actually want to get it right. Then say their name immediately. Then find a natural reason to say it again before the minute is up.

"Hey Bryan — B-R-Y-A-N, got it. So Bryan, tell me what brought you to this event today."

02 QUESTIONS ARE NOT THE SAME AS CURIOSITY

Most people ask questions as a setup — a way to get back to their own story. Ashley calls this the "boomerang question," and Bryan named it perfectly in the conversation: you're not asking to learn, you're asking to launch. Real questions don't have an agenda. They're designed to go deeper, not to redirect. And the second question is where the real conversation actually starts.

ELITE MOVE:

After the person answers your first question, resist the urge to respond with your own experience. Instead, use "Tell me more" or "How so?" These two phrases don't just invite more — they signal that you're actually listening. Then commit to one more genuine follow-up before you introduce yourself or your story.

"That's interesting — how so? I want to make sure I'm understanding what you mean before I weigh in."

03 PREP IS THE HIDDEN RESPECT SIGNAL

Walking in cold isn't confident — it just looks that way. Leaders who skip the five-minute pre-work assume their presence is enough. It isn't. Knowing one detail about the person before you sit down — their role, a recent win, a shared connection — changes the entire temperature of the first five minutes. You skip the surface. You get to what matters faster. And the other person knows you showed up for them.

ELITE MOVE:

Before your next meeting or call, look up one specific fact about the person you're seeing. Don't use it as a credential flex — use it as a genuine conversation opener. Mention it early, let it breathe, and let them run with it. The goal isn't to show off that you prepped. The goal is to prove you care.

"I saw you've been leading a team across three states now — I'd love to hear what that journey has looked like for you."

3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Say Their Name Three Times Fast.

In your next conversation, ask how the person spells their name within the first 30 seconds, repeat it, and use it at least twice more before the conversation ends.

2 Run the Two-Question Drill.

Before your next meeting or call, commit to asking a genuine follow-up question to whatever the other person says first — and then ask a second one before you say anything about yourself.

3 Prep Five Minutes Before You Walk In.

Look up one fact about the person you're meeting — their role, a recent win, or something they care about. Use it in your first five minutes. Preparation signals respect before you say a word.



***The **higher** you get, the more
you need the people around
you.***

Ashley Siller



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. Am I walking into this conversation ready to make it about them or am I still running my own agenda?
2. Have I asked at least two genuine questions and actually listened to the answers before I started talking about myself?

■ BONUS DEEP DIVE • THE SCIENCE BEHIND "LOCK IN AND LISTEN"

Active listening was named by **Ashley Siller** as the single connection skill she wishes everyone would work on and the research backs her up hard. What Ashley calls "locking in" isn't soft skills language. It's one of the most measurable drivers of trust, leadership effectiveness, and team performance. Here's what the data actually says.

1 Listening Is the #1 Predictor of Leadership Trust: Zenger Folkman's analysis of 360-degree feedback from over 4,200 leaders found that the two behaviors most strongly correlated with trust were directly tied to listening effectiveness. Leaders rated as poor listeners ranked at the 15th percentile in trust. Those who excelled ranked at the 86th. Ashley's instinct to lock in and listen isn't a personality trait — it's the single highest-leverage trust-building behavior a leader can develop.

[View Source →](#)

2 Great Listeners Ask Questions — They Don't Just Stay Quiet: A landmark Harvard Business Review study by Zenger & Folkman (2016) found that the best listeners were not those who simply stayed silent — they were those who asked questions that "promoted discovery and insight." Good listeners functioned like a trampoline: they amplified and energized the conversation rather than just absorbing it. Bryan's "Tell Me More" and "How So?" are textbook examples of this in action.

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3 You Can Learn to Remember Names — It's a Skill, Not a Gift: An American Psychological Association study found that participants who actively engaged with another person's name during first introductions — using repetition and name-game techniques — remembered names significantly better at 30 minutes, two weeks, and even eleven months later. Ashley's "ask for the spelling" move is exactly the kind of active encoding the research validates.

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BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

Ashley Siller didn't just read this book — she used it. After eight weeks on the road meeting hundreds of people, she credits *The 1st 5 Minutes* for giving her the tools to be in the moment, remember names, ask real questions, and make every conversation count. If you're a leader who thinks connection is optional, this book will change your mind. And if you already know it matters, this is the playbook you've been missing.

Get the Book → bryanbuckleyspeaks.com



TURN YOUR 1ST 5 MINUTES INTO YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — LEVERAGE OR LOSE IT.

Bryan Buckley is the leading authority on the 1st 5 Minutes of a business conversation — 5X author, speaker, corporate trainer, and podcast host. He helps sales professionals and leaders develop, deepen, and master their business communication skills so every conversation counts.

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