



Team-Building/Ice Breakers for Groups of All Sizes

Team-Building/Ice Breaker #1

Company Tree

Time Allocation: 30 Minutes

Materials: Large plain paper or cardboard and cut outs of the items listed

Goal: Emphasize the usefulness of perception, working together, listening and non-judgmental feedback.

Groups approach a large paper with the following cut-outs with the explanations to create a "Company Tree"

Roots = influences and beliefs

Trunk = structure and particularly aspects that are quite firm and fixed

Branches = relationships and connections, directions, interests, focuses

Leaves = information and knowledge

Buds = their ideas and hopes for the future, and their potential

Fruit = their achievements

Flowers = what makes them special, their strengths

Thorns = challenges, threats and difficulties

Ask group members to design a tree that reflects the company by writing words on the cutouts and creating a company tree with the roots, trunk, branches, leaves, buds, fruit, flowers and thorns. After 20 minutes, have them share and discuss their trees and interpretations with each other for each of the teams.



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #2

Paper-Tearing Exercise, AKA "Snowflake"

Time Allocation: 5 Minutes

Materials: Blank 8 ½-by-11-inch sheets of paper for each participant

Goal: Lead into a presentation on the need for two-way communication in the workplace. Spark the realization and appreciation that the same words are "heard" differently by various people.

Instructions:

1. Tell the participants the following: "We are going to play a game that will show us some important things about communication. Please pick up your sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Now, close your eyes and follow the directions I will give you—and no peeking or questions while this is done!"
2. Give the following directions, carrying them out yourself with your own sheet of paper and pausing after each instruction to give the group time to comply:
"The first thing I want you to do is to fold your sheet of paper in half.
Now tear off the upper right-hand corner.
Fold it in half again and tear off the upper left hand corner of the sheet.
Fold it in half again. Now tear off the lower right-hand corner of the sheet."
3. After the tearing is complete, say something like "Now open your eyes, and let's see what you have. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look the same, right?!?!" Hold your sheet up for them to see. It is highly unlikely any sheet will match yours exactly.
4. Observe the differences and similarities.
5. Ask the group the reason not all the papers matched yours to lead into the reminder/realization that the spoken word is interpreted internally to the listener, etc.
(You will probably get responses like "You didn't let us ask questions!" or "Your directions could be interpreted in different ways.")



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #3

Your Worst/First Job

Time Allocation: 20 Minutes per group

Materials: Blank 3" X 5" for each participant

Goal: To learn something new about various colleagues. It could also spark conversation between employees who do not normally work together often and in some cases it might get a bit of laughter and connection from shared experiences.

Everyone attending the event fills out a card with his/her first/worst job written on it, once the group is all gathered, the facilitator reads them aloud and everyone has to guess which team member had that particular job.

A variation on it is to have people guess, and then the person who wrote that job can just give two words to describe it. This takes a little bit longer, but it's usually gets a few laughs.



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #4

Personality Assessment

Time Allocation: 20 Minutes per group

Materials: Blank 3" X 5" for each participant

Goal: Have a fun personality assessment. Teams can be grouped into how they determined the color's importance first to learn if other similarities exist. (Just for Fun – no scientific merit.)

Have participants write down the following:

1. The following five animals in the order of your preference: Cow, Tiger, Sheep, Horse, Pig
2. A different word to describe each one of the following: Dog, Cat, Rat, Coffee, Sea
3. The names of a different person you know personally whom you associate with each of these five colors: Yellow, Orange, Red, White, Green

After people have written down and thought about their answers, reveal the interpretations:

1. What is most important to you:

Cow = Career

Tiger = Pride

Sheep = Love

Horse = Family

Pig = Money

2. Personalities:

Dog = Your personality

Cat = Your partner

Rat = Your enemy or enemies

Coffee = Love life

Sea = Your overall outlook

3. People:

Yellow = Person you will never forget

Orange = True friend

Red = Person you really love

White = Your twin soul or soul-mate

Green = Person who can teach you a lot about yourself



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #5

Autograph/Design Session

Time Allocation: 20 Minutes per group

Materials: Blank 8" X 10" blank sheet for each participant, colored pens or pencils

Goal: See how many autographs people can collect; AKA networking, and learn how people present themselves creatively.

All group sizes work with this exercise. Groups of more than 20 should be split into groups of 10 or more. The bigger the teams the longer the exercise takes. Issue to each team member a sheet of paper and a different colored pen or pencil (number of different colors is a factor affective teams sizes - different colors are helpful, but not absolutely essential). Ask each person to draw a matchstick person about two inches high (representing themselves) on their sheet (landscape way around), and to write their name or autograph (legibly) beneath it. Then ask the team members to move around the room among their team, asking other team members to add their matchstick images and autographs, so as to collect matchstick images and signatures. While collecting images and autographs encourage teams to discuss their interests and backgrounds, and to focus on people's names and characteristics, so as to reinforce retention of names.



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #6

Can't Talk Work Now

Time Allocation: As Long as You Like – Minimally 20 Minutes per group

Materials: Logoed pin or sticker with company name on it for each participant

Goal: To listen and learn about people outside work and the work environment.

Everyone gets a logoed pin or sticker with company name on it or the word “work”, whichever you prefer. The name of the company (or the word “work”) cannot be used during the socializing/networking. If the company name (or the word “work”) is used, the person who used it must relinquish his/her pin or sticker to the person who heard it said.



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #7

Improvisation

Time Allocation: As Long as You Like – Minimally 3 Minutes per group

Materials: Open Space

Goal: Think about conversing intentionally. Humorous and fun for remembering we improvise each day.

In a group setting, call for three willing volunteers to come to the front of the room. The remaining people are audience members. From the audience, solicit three numbers from 1 - 10. Assign the numbers to each person in the group up front. Ask for a situation where these three are interacting outside work. Take a call-out from the audience and that is the situation/backdrop. From there, the 3 minute clock starts. The three are in the situation, and they can only respond in the number of words that equals the number assigned to them. The word “no” cannot be used, only “yes, and” if they are stalling. Do again for another three people. Watch how fast people start communicating effectively with only their set number of words!

Thanks to Kari Goetz for this one! Added 7/20/09



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Team-Building/Ice Breaker #8

Two Truths and a Lie

Time Allocation: Minimally 20 Minutes per group

Materials: Blank sheet of paper

Goal: To learn something new about your colleagues. It could also spark conversation between employees who do not normally work together often and in some cases it might get a chuckle or two...and a bit of surprise!

This also assists with remembering names and building common ground.

Everyone attending the event stands and introduces him or herself with three “facts”, one lie and two truths...all told as though they are true. The audience records the names and what they think is a lie. Once everyone has gone, the facilitator goes back through the group individually to learn the lies and the truths. Each participant gets a chance to tell his/her 15-30 second story after the “lie” is revealed. They likely will share about an unsuspected truth. It’s fun to learn what people will guess is not true that really is true.



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