

Meeting Icebreakers

Meeting icebreakers are a great way to begin a meeting. They help to relax participants, and that makes them more receptive to listening and contributing. An ice breaker can also serve to build a team atmosphere and to generate enthusiasm. Ice breakers can be fun, amusing, humorous, thoughtful, surprising or just plain silly. The idea is that more than just having fun, the ice breaker will truly help to create group cohesion based on trust and understanding.

One of the tricks of an icebreaker is timing. It should not be too long otherwise the serious work of the meeting will not be given enough time. It should not be so short that participants feel it was a perfunctory exercise. Timing also depends on the size of the group, the overall length of the event, and the purpose of the event. An all-day retreat might warrant a half hour ice breaker, but a one-hour meeting may merit only a minute or two. The following are some ideas compiled by category, and gathered from a variety of sources:

Games

- ✓ Have participants say 3 things about themselves - 2 true and 1 lie, others guess what the lie is
- ✓ Have everyone write on a piece of paper their answers to these questions: What is your favorite food, animal, TV show, hobby, and color? Sign your name. Don't let anyone else see the answers. The leader then reads the answers to the whole group, and members try to guess whom each set of answers belongs to. Award one point for each right guess. The person with the most points wins a prize.
- ✓ Give each person is given a list of 5 to 10 traits that they must find in common with the people around them. Sample items could be: "Find someone that was born in the same month", "...someone who lives in your state", or "...drives the same model of car". A prize is awarded to the participants with the most in common.

Activities

- ✓ Write the words "agree," "disagree," "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" on separate pieces of paper and post them on four different walls of the room. Then make a statement such as "our organization can change the world" and have everybody move to the part of the room that matches their opinion. Have the group discuss why they chose their response.
- ✓ With everyone in a circle, have someone come up with a short story that they whisper to the person next to them, and so on. Have the last person recount the story out loud.

Simple Lead-Ins

- ✓ Ask participants to state one or two "burning questions" they hope will be answered in this session.
- ✓ Have participants describe one strategy/resource they have used successfully (relevant to the topic of the meeting/training).
- ✓ Have them state their personal definition of the topic (eg., in a unit meeting, "Patient centered care means...").

Be creative and come up with your own ice breakers!

Source: <http://www.meetingwizard.org/meetings/icebreakers.cfm?re=5>