



10 DYNAMIC ICE-BREAKERS: LIVEN UP YOUR MEETINGS AND CULTIVATE TEAM CONNECTIONS!

With all of the demands that leaders face, we know how hard it can be to develop your team and strengthen relationships. Try these meeting ice-breakers that are easy to deliver, high on engagement, and proven to be effective. Each ice-breaker works for in-person and virtual meetings. Enjoy!



TOP 10 ICE-BREAKERS

Fun and interactive ideas to foster positive relationships and kickstart your team meetings with high engagement.

1 WOULD YOU RATHER... ~ 10 MINUTES

STEP ONE

Before the meeting, write out a list of 10 - 15 contentious or fun opposites that you believe would resonate well with your team. (i.e. Would you rather take a beach vacation or a mountain vacation? Would you rather have anchovies on your pizza, or pineapple on your pizza?)

STEP TWO

Explain that you are going to play a quick game of "Would you Rather" to get to know each other better. Tell your team that you will read two statements and point to a side of the room for each. They must stand up and go to the side of the room that is true for them, and they can treat it as a continuum if they have mixed feelings on the topic. For example if they like pineapple AND anchovies on their pizza, they can stand in the middle of the room. Read out each of your pairs, and point to one side of the room for your first option and then the other side of the room for the second option. Give your team members time to think and situate themselves based on their preferences. Once settled, give a few seconds for them to see where the other team members land on the issue. Ideally there are some laughs and light chatter as people demonstrate their preferences and personalities.

STEP THREE

Have everyone sit back down, and debrief with a few observations about what you saw from your team members during the activity. Remind them that sometimes agreeing on things is good for a team, and that thinking differently about things can be a huge asset to a healthy team as well!



Virtual Meeting adaptation - list your "Would You Rather" options on top of each other on slides you share in the virtual meeting. With their screens on, have team members point up for the top option and down for the bottom option.



2



~ 12 MINUTES

6-WORD SUMMARY

Remember when you went back to school each September and you had to share with the class your answer to: "What did you do over the summer?" To set a fun and engaging tone at your next meeting, start with a modern twist on the same activity.

STEP ONE

Tell each participant they have 90 seconds to come up with their 6-word summary. This means, in a six-word sentence they have to best explain their answer to one of the following options. Stress that this can be fun or serious - it's up to them.

- Option One (ideal for a January meeting) - *The past year in review.*
- Option Two (ideal for a Spring meeting) - *Reflections on the winter.*
- Option Three (ideal for a Summer meeting) - *My summer motto.*
- Option Four (ideal for a September meeting) - *How I spent my summer.*

STEP TWO

Have a few examples that you can read to the group to help them understand. If possible, put these on your agenda, or a slide if you have a projector/screen handy so they can see them while you read them. For example:

- Life is short, bike ride more.
- EAT READ SLEEP ... repeat for relaxation!
- Friends and family mean renewed energy.
- Vacationing in Ontario fun? Who knew?

STEP THREE

Have a timer ready on your phone and give individuals 90 seconds to write their 6-word summary. Once the timer is done, let the group know it's time to hear everyone's great work.

- If your team is 12 people or less, ask team members one by one to read their 6-word summary.
- If the group is larger than 12 people, have them form small groups of approximately 4 people sitting nearby and give them 5 minutes to read their 6-word summaries, and to use the rest of the time to chat about the highlights and challenges of the season ahead.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - Do a screen-share of the theme for the 6-Word Stories, as well as the examples so your team can see them. If you have a group over 12 people, assign participants to random breakout rooms of approximately 4 people.



3



~ 20 MINUTES

OFFICE 'WHO AM I?'

This Ice-breaker is versatile and can be used in an in-person meeting or with a remote team in a virtual meeting.

STEP ONE

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- Prior to your next meeting, ask all team members to
 - If in-person: pick a small item from their workspace/office and covertly bring it to the meeting with them. Pre-prepare stickies with a number on it for each item.
 - If virtual: take a photo of their workspace or item from their desk. This could be anything from a personal memento in their office, to the view from their chair, or even a photo of their pet that's sitting next to them. Have each team member email you their photo ahead of time and you assemble these photos into a slide show. Ensure you have one photo per slide and assign each slide a number.

STEP TWO

GUESSING PHASE:

- In-Person: have participants drop their small items into a bag (ideally before entering the meeting room). Once everyone has deposited their items, put one item beside each of the numbered sticky notes you prepared, so each item now has a number. Ask participants to create a numbered list based on the number of items. Depending on the setup of your room and the number of participants, either hold up the items one at a time for people to guess which item belongs to whom, or have the items set up on a table with their sticky note numbers beside for participants to walk around and look at.
- Virtual - ask participants to grab a pen and paper and create a numbered list based on the number of people who have participated. Then, scroll through each slide and have team members write down which photo they believe matches up to each teammate. Go through the slides one extra time.

STEP THREE

THE BIG REVEAL:

- In-Person - Once all participants have finalized their list of guesses, hold up each item, one at a time, and invite people to share their guesses for who the owner of the item is. Then have the person whose item it is reveal themselves. Have people give themselves one point for each correct guess, and the person with the most points at the end is the winner!
- Virtual - Invite team members to unmute themselves and share their answers for each image or use the chat function. After hearing the team's thoughts, reveal the actual answer for each photo. The team member with the most correct guesses wins!



4



~ 5-15 MINUTES

THE FEELINGS WHEEL

Carve out some time to deliberately build empathy and understanding before getting down to business at your next meeting. This icebreaker will provide your team with an opportunity to go beyond **what** they are doing and share **how** they are doing.

STEP ONE

Before digging into the meeting agenda items, share “[The Feelings Wheel](#)” on a screen (or printed colour copies) with all participants.



[DOWNLOAD THE
FEELINGS WHEEL HERE](#)



STEP TWO

Explain that the feelings wheel starts in the middle with the most commonly understood emotions, and then works its way out to be more specific. Have people choose the two emotions from the wheel that best describe how they are doing at that very moment.

STEP THREE

If the meeting has a lower number of participants (12 or less) you can go around and have each person share their two emotions with the whole group. If it is a large meeting, divide into groups of 5-7 people to share. The icebreaker does not need to be debriefed, however, acknowledging that people experience a wide range of emotions and that's expected and OK, can set a healthy tone for the rest of the meeting.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - Use the chat feature to share your two emotions if the group is over 12 people.



5



~ 15 MINUTES

OPERATING SYSTEM

This Ice-breaker works well with a team that is newly formed or has had recent turnover, it can also work with a well-established team.

STEP ONE

Give each participant a small piece of paper and ask them to write 3 key facts about how they operate that their teammates should all know. Be clear that they are not to write their name on the paper. This ice-breaker is meant to be light and fun, so be sure to provide examples like:

- life starts after two cups of coffee
- memos should be one page or less
- a funny cat meme goes a long way
- always happy to talk hockey

STEP TWO

- Once participants are finished, have them fold the paper in half and put it into the middle of the table.
- Give all participants a new paper to record their guesses.
- Take each paper one at a time and read out the 'operating system.' Have people write down their guesses of who has which operating system.
- Re-read the systems one final time, keeping them in the same order.

STEP THREE

- Keeping the 'operating systems' in the same order, read them out, and then have people share who they guessed, and then have the person who wrote it reveal themselves.
- Participants get one point for each correct guess, and the person with the most points at the end is the winner.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - have participants email you their 'operating systems' ahead of the meeting. Create a slideshow with numbered slides and one operating system per slide. Use the same procedures from Step Two and Three above to learn about each other and determine your winner!



6



~ 15 MINUTES

SCATTERGORIES

This icebreaker will provide your team members with a much-needed boost of fun and friendly competition.

STEP ONE

EXPLAIN THE RULES AND OBJECTIVES:

In the 3 minutes provided, players must come up with an answer to 12 questions. Each answer must start with the letter you choose.

- Players score one point for an answer no other player has given.
- Players score zero points for an answer that duplicates another answer a player has given.
- You cannot have more than one answer per question.
- Acceptable answers must be proper nouns - and using alliteration scores one point for each word using the letter (ex. Candy Cane is 2 points).

STEP TWO

- Present these **12 questions (click here to download)** to the team by either having them on your meeting agenda, sharing them on a screen, or providing handouts.
- Announce the letter for the game. Some ideas for selecting it could be:
 - use the first letter of the name of your organization
 - use the first letter of the name of the first person who arrived at the meeting
 - use an online letter generator
- Start the timer for 3 minutes

STEP THREE

Start the time, and after the 3 minutes have ended, go around and hear everyone's answers for each question. Make sure to recognize the person with the highest score as the winner! Prizes are optional but definitely add some extra fun.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - show a slide with the 12 questions. If your group is larger than 12 people, consider dividing up into breakout rooms to take up your answers.





~ 5 MINUTES

QUESTION OF THE DAY

This ice-breaker is great when you don't have a lot of time and need a low-preparation option. Don't be fooled by its simplicity; including a question to start your meeting agenda truly helps to strengthen the relationships on your team.

STEP ONE

Pick a question to ask your team and include it on your meeting agenda as the first item of business. As you are selecting the question be mindful of the dynamics of your team, and the purpose of your meeting. What kind of question would be a good fit for where you are and what you'll be doing in the meeting?

STEP TWO

Set aside the first 5 minutes of the meeting to pose your question and then hear each others' answers.

- Allow follow-up questions, clarifications and brief dialogue in response to each other's answers, if appropriate.
- Ensure everyone gets a chance to answer. Allow space for people to 'pass' if they are not comfortable answering.
- Thank people for sharing when you wrap up the activity.

QUESTION IDEAS

- What is a 'useless superpower' that you possess?
- What is your earliest memory?
- What is one thing on your bucket list?
- What are you most proud of?
- What household item could you not live without?
- What is a boring fact about yourself?
- What would your ideal day off involve?
- What makes you laugh?
- What are you most looking forward to in the coming month?
- (search online for 'random question generators' for an endless supply of ideas!)



Virtual Meeting adaptation - go first when answering the question and then choose who you'd like to hear from next. Continue having the person who answered the question pick the next responder until everyone has had a turn.



8 ME TOO!

 ~ 10 MINUTES

This icebreaker is great for helping team members go a little deeper in getting to know their colleagues, discovering similarities and strengthening relationships.

STEP ONE

Give each team member a list with each person's name on it.

Explain the instructions:

- Over the next 10 minutes, talk with your colleagues 1 on 1, discovering something that you both have in common and then writing it next to their name.
- You cannot have the same 'thing in common' with more than one person (ex. if you wrote down for Jane that you both live in Toronto, you can't also write that down for Jamal).
- When you find something in common, you can both exclaim 'ME TOO!' as loudly as you are comfortable.

STEP TWO

Set a timer for 10 minutes (flex the length depending on the size of your group) and let people mingle. Once the timer expires, have people return to their seats.

STEP THREE

When everyone is settled, ask if anyone discovered anything new and/or interesting that they have in common with another team member. Share an example to start if you don't get any responses right away.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - Make random breakout rooms with 2 people in each. Give them 1 minute and then recreate the rooms randomly for new pairs. Do this a few times and then put everyone back in the main room to debrief.





~ 5 - 10 MINUTES

GEEK OF THE WEEK

This ice-breaker works well over a series of meetings and gives people a chance to share something they are passionate about (outside of work) with their team.

STEP ONE

Explain the premise of the ice-breaker:

- At the start of the next 5 meetings (or you choose how many depending on what your meeting schedule looks like) we will dedicate 5-10 minutes to a team member to share what they love to “Geek Out” about outside of work. They can bring in an artifact, show a video, teach a skill, do a little activity, or just talk.
- Ask for volunteers to sign up for the next 5 (or however many you chose) meetings and put it in their calendars so they come prepared. Encourage making it interactive but it is not mandatory.

EXAMPLES

When asking for volunteers, share some examples to help people get a sense for what they could do:

- love fishing? - talk about where you are most likely to find fish in a lake, showing photos of fish you have caught
- love travel? - teach your favourite tricks on getting good prices for flights and then show pics from your all-time favourite travel destination
- a scuba diver? - bring in a piece of equipment from your gear, explain what it takes to get a diving license, and share some photos of wrecks or marine life
- big into smoking meat? - talk about your green egg smoker and bring in a sample of your favourite dish you cook on it

STEP TWO

Be sure to remind each “Geek of the Week” about a week ahead of time that they have signed up for the coming meeting. Have fun and enjoy learning about your colleagues!



Virtual Meeting adaptation - encourage the use of visuals, videos, and live demonstrations to spice up the engagement factor.





~ 15 MINUTES

THE APPRECIATION GAME

This icebreaker will provide your team members with a much-appreciated boost of encouragement.

STEP ONE

A few days before your next meeting, send out an email asking all of your team members to think of something they appreciate about each member of the team (their sense of humour, something they specifically did recently that helped, etc.).

- Suggest that they keep the comments brief. It may be helpful to also include the list of team members' names in your email so that no one forgets a person. It is important to tell your team to reply to you **ONLY** (do not reply all).
- Before the meeting, pick 3 statements of appreciation from all that have come in to share for each person.

STEP TWO

Make sure to schedule 15 minutes at the start of your meeting for this ice-breaker. Let the group know you will be reading out a random list of 3 statements written about each person.

- Example: Person #1- Here are 3 things your team members said about you...
 - you always get your receipts submitted on time for processing
 - your smile makes my morning a little more cheerful each day
 - you are a great listener

STEP THREE

Go around and have each person share their guess as to who the three statements were said about. Once people have shared their guesses, reveal who the person actually was and move on to the next person.



Virtual Meeting adaptation - when guessing who the person is, have participants type their guesses into the chat feature.





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