

# EVENT ICE BREAKERS

Ice breakers can be an effective way of starting an event. Interactive (and often fun) they run before the main proceedings, and help people get to know each other and buy into the purpose of the event.

By getting to know each other, getting to know the facilitators, and learning about the objectives of the event, people can become more engaged in the proceedings and so contribute more effectively towards a successful outcome.

The key to success is to make sure that the activity is:

- specifically focused on meeting your event objectives e.g. what is your theme, what is the outcome you want from the event?
- appropriate to the group of people involved e.g. how many of them are there, how well do they know each other, how comfortable will people be in taking part?
- appropriate to the circumstances and environment e.g. how is it being delivered, how is the room set up, can they do this online?

## **General ice breaker sessions:**

**The Little Known Fact:** ask participants to share their name, department or role in the organisation, length of service, and one little-known fact about themselves. This “little known fact” becomes a humanizing element that can help break down differences such as grade/status in future interaction.

**True or False:** ask your participants to introduce themselves and make three or four statements about themselves, one of which is false. Now get the rest of the group to vote on which fact is false.

As well as getting to know each other as individuals, this exercise helps to start interaction within the group. You can run this in smaller groups if the event is larger enough.

**Interviews:** ask participants to get into twos. Each person then interviews his or her partner for a set time while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group.

**Problem Solvers:** ask participants to work in small groups. Create a simple problem scenario for them to work on in a short time. This could be a specific challenge pre-submitted by a member (even if you change the names to protect the innocent). Once the group have analysed the problem and prepared their feedback, ask each group, in turn, to present their analysis and solutions to the wider group.

This could be really effective if someone needs help with a specific problem and needs ideas, or you could create a fictional scenario about the theme of the event.

## THE EVERYDAY CHANGE COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

### Change-related sessions:

**Three Issues:** Participants spend two minutes individually writing down what they think are the three biggest issues with change in your organisation, then depending on numbers, they can divide into small groups. Each participant shares the issues they wrote down with their group (or feed straight back depending on numbers).

Groups then collaboratively discuss the values that matter most to them and create a new list. Everyone returns to discuss as a larger team while each group's values are written on a large poster or whiteboard.  
Discuss as an entire team.

**Why it's useful:** This activity helps everyone get their issues out there, allows everyone to see what others are finding challenging as well as finding common ground, and gives you fodder for future events. Be sure to gather these back in and use them in future – these are the issues your events need to address.

**How change affects you:** Participants take three minutes to write a response to “How does change typically affect you?” Halfway through the activity, ask participants to continue writing their answers, but with their other hand. Once the three minutes are over, have participants think about their responses and how they handled writing with their non-dominant hand.

**Why it's useful:** This activity allows participants to consider their beliefs on how they think they handle change, then witness their actual habits during times of change and discomfort. This helps them understand how difficult and unpredictable responses to change can be. And if you collect the feedback, gives you ideas for future events.

You can see where I'm going with these can't you...?

**Times change:** Ask participants to write down five of their major life experiences, then pair into groups of two. Participants should share one life change with their partner, including why the change was difficult, how they felt at the beginning, how they overcame it and how they felt after the change.

**Why it's useful:** This exercise demonstrates that it's possible to overcome issues arising from change. Negative feelings may not always last once the change happens and time has passed.

**Positive or Negative:** Before the activity, create a list of eight to 10 words related to “change,” such as transition, evolution or transformation. If in person, ask participants to stand up.

Read the first word aloud and ask participants to stay standing/put a hand up if they view the word as positive or sit down/keep hands down if they view it as negative. Ask participants to discuss their choices, then repeat the activity with each word on your list.

## THE EVERYDAY CHANGE COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

End with an open discussion about how to see change-related terms more positively.

**Why it's useful:** This helps participants explore their experiences of change and the power of language when they are communicating change.

**Cross your arms:** Ask participants to cross their arms. Then ask them to cross their arms the other way. Let them stay in this position for a moment. Once they've done this, ask them how they felt when they crossed them the "wrong" way.

Discuss those feelings and why they felt that way – they were doing the same action, but it felt really uncomfortable.

**Why it's useful:** It demonstrates the idea of change being uncomfortable at first. Its quick & its effective.

**An alien came to dinner:** Ask participants to imagine themselves as aliens observing a human dinner party. You can do this as small groups (on tables) or as a whole depending on numbers. The task is to point out unusual human social norms and to explain them to the beings on their imaginary planet. Why do they drink poisonous alcohol? Why do they knock their glasses together when celebrating?

**Why it's useful:** This exercise highlights alternative points of view, and how strange new ways of doing things can look and feel.

**Changing places:** This only works in-person.

Allow participants to sit wherever they want. Then ask them to move to a different seat. Ask them to think about how their perspective changed in moving to the new seat and why.

After they have settled for a minute or two, tell them they can now sit wherever they like. Watch which seat they choose.

Play the game twice (maybe do the second time later in the event), and see if people behave the same way the second time. Discuss why people may have changed their choice the second time around.

**Why it's useful:** Guide the discussion to highlight our innate resistance to change and the benefits of moving away from a comfort zone to the unknown. Take this opportunity to acknowledge the fear of the unknown. Physical movement exercises like this have a bigger impact on mindsets because it sticks for longer. Plus, moving about helps people stay focussed when they have to sit for a long time.