

ICEBREAKER: Line Up

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I have an amazing icebreaker called Line Up that I use frequently in my trainings, and it is always a hit! It reinforces messages of communication, teamwork, accuracy, efficiency, and fun. It energizes groups and gets them ready to learn.

Instructions: Organize participants into a few groups (divide your total number of participants to try to get an even number for each group; it works best when you have about 8-10 per group; more is more challenging, less is less challenging). What I do is have people call out 1, then 2, then 3, then 1, 2, and 3, and so on. I make it fun by saying we are going to count to three. I say we'll have the first person say 1, the next say 2, the next say 3...then I ask, "What comes after 3?" Normally there is at least one person who will say 4, and the audience laughs. I make sure never to point at people as I am getting them to say their numbers; instead, use your full hand to gesture to each person.

Tell participants that in the Line Up, they will have a chance to learn things about one another they may never think to ask. You can relate this activity to anything you are teaching from leadership to communication to teamwork and more (note that you make the connection to the topic in the debrief and not before the activity). It will also improve blood flow to prepare for learning.

Say the Following to Prepare Them for the Icebreaker: This is group competition, and I will give the instruction for groups to line up in a particular way. Your group should communicate with one another to get in a line as quickly as possible from the smallest to largest of whatever I tell you. When your group is lined up appropriately, all group members should clap *in unison* (demonstrate how) to indicate they have completed the task. (I do clap, clap...pause....clap, clap, clap. This makes it more fun). Again, your objective is to line up in the order that I tell you to. There are two goals: accuracy and efficiency. (As an example, tell them that you could- but you wouldn't- tell them to line up by weight and they'd have to talk amongst themselves then organize from the smallest to largest. This always gets a laugh). Finally, to show you that you have successfully completed the task, everyone on the team has to clap *in unison*. (Have them practice the clap in unison). If anyone in your team fails to clap or doesn't do so with everyone else, then your team has not successfully completed the task. Once your team claps, you cannot change your position unless you plan to clap again.

The JOHN MAXWELL Team



Activity:

Say, "Line up by..." (pause to reveal one of the following items at a time, or make up your own):

1. Line up in order by shoe size, smallest to largest.
2. Line up in order by length of time working in your current job. Get down to the days if needed.
3. Line up in order by birth date, January 1 to December 31.
4. Line up in order alphabetically by favorite color.
5. Line up in order by number of siblings.
6. Line up in order alphabetically by first name.
7. Line up in order by number of pets, least to most.
8. Line up in order by the number of bones ever broken.

Conduct a practice round. Tell them to line up by height and to clap when they're finished. **I usually pick from about 4-5 of the above depending on the size of the group**, or I mix things up by making up new challenges.

After each round, ask each person in the winning team to quickly give you his or her information to verify that the team accomplished the task accurately. They won't always do so accurately, and use this as a learning experience, too. If the team was accurate, announce the team as the winner of the round. If not, move on to the second fastest team. For smaller groups, I sometimes have each team give its answer so everyone gets to know one another even in losing teams. If everyone is doing great and there are no errors, compliment them then tell the group that you want them to go faster. Distribute prizes for winning teams.

Debrief: I always ask, "What skills did you use to successfully complete the task?" Something to remember from the game is that communication is key. Different teams communicated in different ways and adapted for each round. The more efficient teams won the competitions. This ties in very well with the concepts of leadership, teamwork, communication, and more. It applies to anything that they do for a living, including the fact that people always want things done quickly and accurately. Relate it to the topic that you are teaching. I get SO many compliments when I do this icebreaker. It is fun, rewarding, and people learn something about one another.

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