

# Breaking the Ice with New Employees



Making a good first impression in a new workplace can impact productivity immediately and over time. Enabling a new employee to learn procedures, policies and technology is important. It is also important to introduce new employees to the company culture and the people who power that culture. When designing the icebreaker for your new employee, remember that first day impressions are a two way street. Consider how you can 'break the ice' and enable everyone to make a good first impression.

## **One Icebreaker Does Not Work for Every Situation**

For some, the term 'ice breaker' is an ominous one. The idea of playing games, telling cute stories or answering quiz questions may be appealing in some circumstances but not in others. Finding the best options will depend on your work culture. It also depends on who you are on-boarding. What works for group of new employees may not work for a single employee. What works with a new graduate may not work for a mid-aged manager. When designing your own icebreaker, keep in mind the following pointers.

### **Don'ts of On-boarding Icebreakers – Don't ask people to . . .**

**Invade each others' personal space;** ice breakers should not be confused with team and trust building activities; no holding hands, no hugging, no catching people, no running or dancing and no passing fruit without using one's hands.

**Perform;** unless your organization is an acting troupe, asking new employees to sing, tell funny stories, play games, act like an animal or play charades is generally not a good idea.

**Share personal details or histories;** people can be nervous on the first day and when you ask them to share without enough time to think, they may blurt out something they regret.

### **Dos of On-boarding Icebreakers – Do give people . . .**

**Fun ways to ask questions:** Create a company 'bingo' or 'scavenger hunt' sheet or create an app that allows people to gather information. Include a map of the office and questions about company events, milestones, interesting things about the building, current employees, company culture and more.

**An opportunity to find a connection:** Provide everyone with a few questions to think

about ahead of time; ask them to describe a significant event in their career, something interesting about their name or background, their favourite travel destination, the food they enjoy cooking and more. A fun alternative, ask everyone to list 5 things they would want with them if had to spend a month by themselves in paradise with no communication from the outside world.

***An opportunity for fun:*** Create a list of interesting questions, ask your employees for suggestions that reflect their interests and company culture. When making introductions ask everyone to respond by saying **sometimes, always or never**. Samples include:

- Do you ride a bike?
- Do you like getting up at 6:00 am?
- Do you take a list when you go to the grocery store?
- Do you watch 'superhero' movies?

***An opportunity to display their personality, interests or skills:*** Ask everyone to design an identity tag that does not include their name; use words (interests, skills or descriptive words, even nicknames), colours and images or drawings to describe themselves, their role, interests or skills. Your employees can wear these tags and respond to questions about them or you can give them to a new employee who has to try and match the identity tag to other employees during introductions.

Remember that new employee icebreakers should be a quick, easy and fun providing an opportunity to display individual personalities and company culture and make a good first impression.