

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Icebreakers

August 2001

Written and Published by Sue Tinnish, 847.394.9857, stinnish@ameritech.net

U. S. Library of Congress ISSN: 1539-1833

WELCOME

Welcome to our old and new subscribers. We appreciate your positive comments and ongoing referrals.

We never sell our subscriber list, so please feel free to refer T.I.M.E. onto your clients, suppliers, associates and colleagues. Please know that your referral will be treated with care and respect. And importantly, we can only grow with your help -- your recommendations are key to our success. Or anyone can subscribe by sending an email to stinnish@ameritech.net.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1) Icebreakers
 - 2) What's the Value in a Meltdown?
 - 3) But My Group Is Different
 - 4) Quickies: Give me Your Pick!
 - 5) T.I.M.E. Gone By
 - 6) Future T.I.M.E.
-

1. ICEBREAKERS

It has been a hot August in the Midwest and throughout much of the United States. We finally have a break in the heat and I can write in comfort about the topic of Icebreakers for meetings and events.

Icebreakers are (usually) short interactive games that help start off a meeting. Traditionally, icebreakers have been thought as introductory exercises able to accomplish the following:

- Allow people to meet
- Help participants become better acquainted with each other

And Icebreakers do accomplish that. However, in the heat of August, expand your framework for when to use icebreakers and consider the following situations when "ice" (or at a minimum "frost") can develop during meetings:

- Management delivering unpopular news (layoffs, change in strategy, elimination of product line, changes in compensation or benefits)
- Conflict within a group that causes the group to be stymied
- Participants “frozen” in a comatose state (usually the result of “information overload”)
- New leadership addressing the group
- That “frozen” state when participants first walk into a meeting room and have the internal debate with themselves on where they should sit. Anyone attending seminars or organizing conferences knows this “frozen” state.

These situations, although not the traditional icebreaker setting, warrant attention to help all the participants be more comfortable and effective within the meeting.

2. WHAT’S THE VALUE IN A MELTDOWN?

Spending 5 – 20 minutes in a game or activity is not a waste of time. Consider some reasons and the resulting Return on Investment (ROI) to incorporate an Icebreaker into a meeting or event:

Build team cohesion and collaborative spirit

ROI: Allows people to work better in teams.

ROI: Allows people to form effective relationships cross geography, organizational boundaries, etc.

Focus participants away from outside distractions toward the meeting/business at hand

ROI: Allows full participation from all participants

ROI: Improves quality of discussion and solutions

ROI: Speeds up meetings

ROI: Improves meetings

Breaks up a meeting

ROI: Participants’ attention span will range from a few seconds to 20 minutes (maximum) before they start to ... w a n d e r and ... get b-o-r-e-d. Keep their attention and focus for positive results

Adds energy to a meeting

ROI: Attention span issues again

ROI: Energized participants are more likely to participate and stay motivated

Combats boredom

ROI: Creates a more memorable meeting/learning/information exchange

ROI: People will stay in the meeting

Creates a more inviting, conducive environment

ROI: Climate setting is important. Think of how quickly you form a first impression when meeting someone. How difficult is it to change that first impression? Now consider the first impression your meeting is creating.

ROI: People will work more effectively and efficiently when they know the other meeting participants

ROI: People will not “open up” unless they feel welcome and comfortable

ROI: Makes your audience more receptive and ready to receive your message

One caveat to using Icebreakers: Often it is necessary to shift the participants’ focus from what happened in the Icebreaker (the game we played) to what it means and why it is significant. For example, an off-site meeting occurs to improve the working relationships of three different departments within the same company. The meeting consists of an icebreaker and several presentations. If these three cross-departmental groups just got to know each other and foster personal relationships, when returning back to work, the groups should not rely exclusively on email to communicate. The meeting and the Icebreaker should be a springboard to improved communication.

3. BUT MY GROUP IS DIFFERENT

Yes, it’s true. You are absolutely right. And knowing the audience (along with the meeting objective) is key.

A senior management retreat requires different treatment than an all-employee meeting.

In our experience, though, fundamentally, all people whether senior management, association attendees, sales people, respond positively to:

- Humor
- Fun
- Involvement
- The Unexpected

WHEN IT IS DIRECTED TOWARD ACHIEVING THE GOAL.

A randomly, carelessly chosen Icebreaker may not work for your meeting or event.

But a carefully crafted, well-executed Icebreaker with a **PURPOSE** and **USEFULNESS** will offer you the dividends (ROI) identified above.

If you don’t want to search for the right Icebreaker or you would like something customized for your meeting or event, call us. We would be happy to put our creativity to work for you.

4. QUICKIE: GIVE ME YOUR PICK!

Want to amaze your stakeholders and meeting participants with your ability to break the ice? Consider adding 1 or 2 of the following books to your trusted resources.

Here are some books that we recommend for Icebreakers

1. **Getting Together: Icebreakers & Group Energizers** by Lorraine Ukens
This book offers 51 activities for groups of all sizes. Lorraine has written several other books -- see our Freebie for more suggestions. To order click here [Icebreakers by Uken](#) or www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0787903558/sealinc-20
2. **The Big Book of Business Games** by John Newstrom & Edward Scannell
This was my first purchase of this type of book. And it has served me well over the years. Along with providing the basic information (objective, materials required, discussion points), the authors offer tips for running the exercises. Again, Newstrom and Scannell have some other useful publications. To order click here [Business Games](#) or www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0070464766/sealinc-20
3. **Presenting and Training With Magic!: 53 Simple Magic Tricks You Can Use to Energize Any Audience** by Ed Rose
The book addresses the use of magic to get people's attention and demonstrate key concepts, including teambuilding, negotiation, and leadership. Ed Rose explains 50 of the most effective, and easiest-to-perform magic tricks for emphasizing and illustrating key learning points. To order click here [Magic](#) or www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0070540403/sealinc-20
4. **101 Ways to Make Meetings Active: Surefire Ideas to Engage Your Group** by Melvin L. Silberman and Kathy Clark
101 tips, tactics, and simple strategies to brighten up meetings and move the action along while successfully fulfilling goals and objectives. The authors start with ideas for nametags and icebreakers and offer suggestions for the entire meeting. To order click here [101 Ways](#) or www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0787946079/sealinc-20
5. **The Big Book of Icebreakers: Quick, Fun Activities for Energizing Meetings and Workshops** by Edie West
This book contains another assortment of 50+ icebreakers and games. Also includes a section for Non-Icebreaker Type audiences. To order click here [Big Book](#) or www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0071349847/sealinc-20

FREEBIE—For an even more extensive list of books available with easily duplicated icebreakers, email us for this month's freebie. Just send an email to stinnish@ameritech.net with the words "Icebreaker" in the subject line and we will send

you this month's freebie.

5. T.I.M.E. GONE BY

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and "freebies" offered in the past:

May 2000: Teambuilding and (freebie) New York Times reprint and summary on why teambuilding programs miss the mark. [May](#)

June 2000: Green Meetings and (freebie) list of books that have 20-30 minute exercises for meetings and events. [June](#)

July 2000: American (Values) and (freebie) Meeting Analysis, a 1-page document that will outline the scope and needs analysis for your next meeting. [July](#)

August 2000: Minimum/Minimal Meetings and (freebie) Web Winners (web resources to make you and your meetings more productive). [August](#)

October 2000: Evaluations and (freebie) sample evaluation questions. [October](#)

November 2000: Politics and (freebie) on-line experiences. [November](#)

December 2000: Toys and (freebie) brainstorming ideas. [December](#)

January 2001: Sales, Award Presentations and (freebie) sales tips. [January](#)

February 2001: Change, Change Management and Communicating change and (freebie) Change Bombs (reasons change management fails). [February](#)

March 2001: Open Space Technology. [March](#)

April 2001: Adult Learning Styles and (freebie) Trade Show Timeline [April 2001](#)

May 2001: Trade Shows and (freebie) Trade Show timeline [May](#)

June 2001: Emotional Intelligence and (freebie) EI quiz [June 2001](#)

July 2001: Presentation Skills and (freebie) Speaker Introductions [July 2001](#)

6. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

If you want to see some Icebreaking in action be sure to attend one of Sue Tinnish's seminars at the ITME Motivation Show at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois. Each will involve audience participation and interaction. Her style is to draw upon the

experience and energy of the group to make the session more memorable and enlightening.

Each presentation will involve “walking the talk” about Icebreakers. The first two sessions will include more information about using Icebreakers effectively.

100 Ways to Transform Your Meetings
Wednesday, October 10, 2001 from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Lights, Color, Sound & Action: Reaching a Jaded Audience
Thursday, October 11, 2001 from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Looking into the Role of Emotional Intelligence
Thursday, October 11, 2001 from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m..

Sue will also be appearing at the ASTA World Congress speaking on Sales and Marketing Tips at Trade Shows.

Details:
Beyond the Trade Show Floor
American Society of Travel Agents World Congress
Seville Spain
Tuesday, November 6 from 10:00 – 11:30 am

She is available to speak at your meeting or event on a variety of topics. She can also work with your internal speakers on utilizing Icebreakers, audience interaction and more! For more information contact Sue directly at SEAL Inc., 1415 N. Salem Blvd., Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004-4545 or at 847.394.9857.

T.I.M.E. is published monthly. Copyright© 2001, all rights reserved. You may copy or distribute T.I.M.E. by including this copyright notice and including full information on contacting the author, Sue Tinnish. Contact her at 847.394.9857 or stinnish@ameritech.net.

We support a spam-free Internet. You may have received this issue based upon a recommendation from a colleague or associate. To unsubscribe, send a request (simply type "CANCEL" in the subject line) to stinnish@ameritech.net and your address will be immediately and permanently removed.