



BUILDING YOUR TEAM

A MEETING ICEBREAKER GUIDE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

FIRST JOB LESSON

Icebreaker Questions for Team Meetings

Everyone remembers their first paying job. What they learned from it, written on a board with no names attached, turns into a values list the team didn't know it already agreed on.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Team-Generated Values List, Built From Old Jobs

The First Job Lesson asks each participant to name their first paying job and the number one thing it taught them — and the facilitator writes down only the lesson, never the job title.

That one editorial choice turns a nostalgic go-around into a genuine, team-generated list of values that connects directly to current work priorities. This paper walks a facilitator through materials, group-size guidance, the full five-step run, and the debrief questions that link old lessons to how the team works today.

~45 sec

per person; about 8 min for a group of 10

5–12

people per circle

0

materials required; whiteboard optional

CONTENTS

01 Materials and Setup

02 Run the Icebreaker

03 Debrief Questions

04 Why Only the Lesson Gets Written Down

Materials and Setup



This is a no-materials icebreaker at its core, with one optional tool.

- **No materials required.**
- **A whiteboard**, optional, for capturing lessons.
- **A chat window**, for virtual meetings.

The activity runs about 45 seconds per person, or roughly 8 minutes for a group of 10. It works best with 5 to 12 people per circle; larger groups should split into smaller circles. Circle or U-shape seating is preferred, and the facilitator should prepare their own answer first — slightly unflattering, to set the right tone.

Run the Icebreaker



Five steps take the group from a simple prompt to a shared list of lessons worth discussing.

1 Present both questions

Show the questions on a slide or in chat, with examples to prime the room: fast food, babysitting, paper routes, lifeguarding, retail, lawn mowing, dishwashing, telemarketing.

2 Go first

Give a 20-second response to set the tone and pace for everyone after you.

3 Move around the circle

Proceed in order rather than asking for volunteers, so no one is left waiting to be picked.

4 Record only the lessons

Write the lesson on the whiteboard or in chat — skip the job title entirely.

5 Connect lessons to today's work

Ask the group which of these values the team needs most this quarter.

Debrief Questions



The debrief questions turn a nostalgic exercise into something the team can actually use.

- Which lesson surprised you most?
- What would your sixteen-year-old self think of your job now?
- If you could thank one early boss, who would it be?
- How many of these still show up in how we work?
- Name one habit from your first job you still use weekly.

Why Only the Lesson Gets Written Down

Skipping the job title is a small choice with a real effect on the room.

FACILITATION NOTE

The facilitator captures only the lessons on a board, creating a team-generated values list that connects to current work priorities — not a list of who used to work fast food or retail.

Without job titles attached, the board reads as a shared set of values the team already holds, rather than a ranking of whose first job sounds more impressive. That's what makes it easy to pivot straight into asking which of those values the team needs most right now.

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ABOUT



Building Your Team is a division of The Leaders Institute®, the company that pioneered the Build-A-Bike® charity team-building activity in 2005. Building Your Team publishes practical, field-tested team-building activities and facilitation guides for corporate meeting planners, HR leaders, and event professionals.

Want us to facilitate this activity for your group?

Talk with our team about running First Job Lesson, or another meeting icebreaker, for your group.

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