



Circle of Questions

Type of activity: Energiser Exercise Icebreaker

Participants: 6 - 60

Timing: 15 – 30 minutes

Key themes: Teamwork, Communication, Motivation, Trust

Overview

An introductory activity that gets participants listening to one another. And in doing so, finding out about each other's values. Participants form two circles, one inside the other. As the circles rotate in opposite directions, participants are faced with different colleagues who ask and respond to a series of questions.

Pre-Work

Make a note of the questions and order in which you are going to ask them

Equipment and Layout

Sufficient floor space for circles of 6-20 people.

A whistle and a stopwatch

Running the Activity

1. Split the group into two equal teams (if you have an odd number of participants, join in yourself to even the numbers)
2. Ask one team to stand in a circle, facing outwards
3. Ask the second team to create a slightly larger circle around the first, facing inwards
4. Explain to the two teams that they are about to greet one another (shake hands) and that those in the inner circle will ask a question (determined by the facilitator) of the person opposite them. Point out that these will be open questions and there can be no wrong answers
5. The respondent standing in the outer circle will have 30 seconds to give their answer before the whistle blows and they must be silent, as they answer, the questioner must just listen and not speak
6. As facilitator you must then ask those who responded in the outer circle to ask the same question of their partner in the inner circle. Once again, the respondent to the question will have 30 seconds to give their answer before the whistle blows and they must be silent

7. Congratulate the group on their first attempt even though there may well have been some confusion
8. Explain that they are now going to repeat the exercise with a new partner. To find their new partner the inner circle must move clockwise one place and the outer circle must move anticlockwise one place. Expect some confusion, normally sufficient numbers will have understood to ensure that everyone finds their place without the facilitator needing to repeat the instruction.
9. Repeat the exercise using the same question twice more, alternate which circle asks the question first in order to give equal thinking time
10. After three rounds when the participants are facing their fourth partner, introduce a new question, slightly more challenging than the first.
11. Continue to introduce a more challenging question every few rounds
12. Call a halt when you detect that the questions have gone as far as is necessary

Sample Questions

- i. How did you get here?
- ii. Where would you like to be?
- iii. Who do you admire most?
- iv. Who has influenced you?
- v. What does success look like to you?

Additional notes

For best results start with some easy 'small talk' style questions gradually working towards the questions most closely linked to the theme you want to address

Review and Conclusions

- How did it feel to answer such open questions?
- Did you hear different answers to the same question?
- How did your own answers alter as the exercise progressed?
- Which was the toughest question to answer?

Follow-up

SDI (Strengths Deployment Inventory) is a psychometric questionnaire which highlights participant's strengths, motivations and core values