

Breaking Into Small Groups

Sometimes the hardest part of using small groups can just be breaking into them. Everyone likes to work with their friends and the people they know...it is comfortable and familiar. But that is exactly why you want to break it up a bit. Groups reap great rewards when they mix it up!

Here are a few simple and easy strategies to break it all up!

How to Do the “Break Out”

There are multiple fun ways to get people into small groups. Try any of these to get random people connected and communicating:

- **A Few of My Favorite Things**—Everyone has a favorite ice cream, pizza topping or type of music! Determine how many groups you would ideally like to work with and identify that number of food items (i.e. four groups—four ice cream flavors such as: chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, and cookie dough). Ask people to select their preferred flavor from the list provided. This exercise doesn't guarantee equal distribution among groups, but it does get the larger group broken down into more manageable working groups.
- **Birthday Line-Up**—Each participant has a birthday. Ask them to line up without talking, in sequence of their birthday month and date. Show the participants where January birthdays should begin and let them go from there. This is a great



Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

... that small groups are most effective when you have 10 or less people involved.

activity to get the group moving and gives you control over how you want to break that line into smaller groups. Once they have completed the exercise, you have a variety of choices for small group break outs: ask them to count off, ask each month to be a small group, break into groups of four by asking people in the first three months to gather, and so on—there are many options.

- **Sticker Strategy**—This break out strategy requires some pre-planning. Get some fun stickers that you can acquire multiple copies of. Determine how many small groups you would like and how many people in each is your ideal. Make sure you have the appropriate number of stickers for that count. Then as people enter the work space, provide them with a randomly selected sticker. When you are ready to break into small groups, direct participants by “sticker type” to their small group stations. Most people walk in with people they know, so this method ensures that you are breaking up some of those comfortable networks from the start.
- **Counting Off**—This is a tried and true method of breaking out. You probably remember it from your grade school days, but it is still effective and efficient. Determine your ideal number of participants in each group, divide that by the number of your large group and you will have the number you need to count off by. Example: if you have 50 participants and would like no more than 5 people in a group, then ask the group to count off by 10.