

## An Icebreaker

I've often facilitated group planning sessions and account management sessions. Frequently many of the participants do not know each other and haven't worked together. Additionally, many key group members may be from other countries and cultures.

I have found the following exercise to be most useful – here is a sample “script.”

*Good morning everyone. For some of you it's really late at night and I appreciate your traveling all this way to lend your vision to our group.*

*Before we go around the room and introduce ourselves, I'd like to try an “icebreaker” to kick things off. As we go around the room I would like each of you to tell me three fun things about yourself – keep it light and non-business related – for example you might discuss your hobbies or vacation travel. BUT here's the catch – only two of the things should be true, one should be fictional.*

*And after each of you regales us with your three items, we'll all try to guess which is fact and which is fiction.*

*OK – I'll go first<sup>1</sup>:*

- 1. I was born on a freight train.*
- 2. I play 5-string banjo and sing in a band and we have recorded several records.*
- 3. When Colin Powell and I were officemates, I had the larger desk.*

I find this approach works well. But be cautioned that some cultures frown on telling a fib and thus be sure to not use the word “lie” or “fib” and if someone is reluctant to participate, don't press too hard.

A variant of this exercise for a group of people who know each other very well is to have them write down the three (two true, one fiction) onto a sheet of paper. Then as group leader you read these triplets one at a time and see if the group can identify the author. Here's a scripted introduction:

*It seems you all know each other fairly well, so as an icebreaker this morning I'm going to test you as follows: On the cards that I'm distributing write down three fun things about yourself – keep it light and non-business related – for example you might discuss your hobbies or vacation travel. BUT here's the catch – only two of the things should be true, one should be fictional. I'll then collect the cards and we'll see if we can tell who's who in <name of organization>. As an example, I'll go first ...*

---

<sup>1</sup> #2 is fiction – I do play 5-string banjo, but no sane person wants to hear me let alone perform with me.