

Back Writing Exercise

A work culture that encourages open and positive feedback fosters growth by supporting the open discussion of opportunities and concerns.

This exercise offers a safe, light-hearted approach to providing feedback. It is an ideal icebreaker when team members have met before but are still learning about one another.

The steps in this team-building exercise are as follows:

1. Give everyone a pen, a sheet of paper, and either a safety pin or sticky tape.
2. Each person draws a horizontal line in the middle of their piece of paper, on both sides.
3. Attach the pieces of paper to everyone's backs with either a pin or sticky tape.
4. Walk around the room, mingling with everyone else.
5. When the leader claps their hands stop and pair up with someone nearby.
6. Write above the line on your partners' paper (on their back) the name of a celebrity that resembles them somehow.
7. Clap again, and everyone continues to walk and mingle.
8. Repeat until everyone has been paired together.
9. Next, repeat the exercise but this time writing below the line a holiday destination that may be a good fit for the person.
10. Continue until everyone has been paired up.
11. Turn over everyone's sheet of paper to the blank side and re-attach.
12. Repeat the exercise, writing down one positive characteristic on each other's back on the paper, above the line.
13. Finally, repeat, and write below the line something the person could improve.

After the exercise, each person reviews their paper, circling the words they think best represents who they think they are, then forms them into a sentence for sharing with the group.

Such as:

I am easy-going (positive characteristic), Tom Hanks (celebrity), who is a little forgetful (something to improve upon), on his holiday in Italy (favorite destination).

People may be more comfortable creating a sentence from the words, with a description that least fits them.

This is a useful exercise for people to gain insight into how the group sees them and offers an opportunity to provide light-hearted feedback where there are different levels of the management structure present.