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# THE CONNECTION PLAYBOOK

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Brought to you by **Michael Sheargold**



# Introduction: The Power of the Deliberate Start

In the world of high-performance business, every minute counts. We move from one meeting to the next, often jumping straight into agendas and action items. But in our rush for efficiency, we risk losing something far more valuable: connection. The most productive, innovative, and collaborative meetings don't just happen; they are intentionally created.



The first five minutes are your golden opportunity to set the stage for success. By starting with a quick, purposeful icebreaker, you signal that this meeting is different. You're not just there to transact; you're there to collaborate as a team of engaged individuals. You create a moment of psychological safety and human connection that allows for more open communication, creative thinking, and shared ownership of the outcomes.

This ebook is your toolkit for mastering those first five minutes.

It contains 50 short, sharp, and effective icebreaker exercises that require minimal time and preparation but deliver a significant return on engagement. Whether your team is in the boardroom or connecting through screens, these activities will help you break down barriers, boost energy, and build the critical rapport that underpins all great teamwork.

Think of these not as add-ons, but as essential components of a successful meeting strategy. Let's make every start a deliberate one.

## Zero-Prep & Simple Starters



These icebreakers can be used on the fly with no materials needed. They are perfect for kicking off any meeting, anytime, anywhere.

- 1. Two-Word Check-In:** Ask each person to describe their current state of mind or how their week is going using just two words.
- 2. One-Word Weather Report:** Each team member describes their mood as a weather forecast (e.g., “Sunny,” “A bit foggy,” “Calm after the storm”).
- 3. A Quick Win:** Go around the room and have everyone share one small personal or professional win since you last met.
- 4. Today’s Top Priority:** Each person shares the single most important thing they want to accomplish today. This builds focus and shared awareness.
- 5. One Thing You’re Grateful For:** Ask everyone to share one specific thing they are thankful for at that moment.
- 6. Energy Check:** On a scale of 1 to 5, where is your energy level right now?
- 7. Silent Thumb Scale:** Ask a question (e.g., “How confident are you about hitting this week’s target?”) and have everyone respond silently with a thumbs-up, thumbs-sideways, or thumbs-down.
- 8. Team Temperature:** Ask the group, “What’s the temperature of the team today?” Let them answer with a number or a description.
- 9. What’s One Word to Describe...?:** Pick a topic relevant to your work (e.g., “our current project,” “the market,” “our team culture”) and ask for a one-word description from each person.
- 10. The Compliment Circle:** Start by paying a genuine compliment to the person next to you. That person then pays a compliment to the next person, and so on.

## Get-to-Know-You Questions



These prompts are designed to reveal a little more about each team member's personality, interests, and experiences outside of their job title.

11. **Desert Island Essential:** If you were stranded on a desert island, what one non-practical item would you bring and why?
12. **What's Your Walk-Up Song?:** If you had a theme song that played when you entered a room, what would it be?
13. **First-Ever Job:** What was your very first paid job? What's one thing you learned from it?
14. **Superpower of Choice:** If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?
15. **Dream Vacation:** What is the destination of your ultimate dream holiday?
16. **Best Thing You've Watched/Read Recently:** Get recommendations for a great movie, show, or book.
17. **A Skill You'd Love to Learn:** What is one skill you wish you could master?
18. **Go-To Karaoke Song:** What's the one song you would sing for karaoke?
19. **Hidden Talent:** What's a surprising talent that your colleagues might not know you have?
20. **If You Weren't in This Career...:** What other profession would you have pursued?
21. **Best Advice Received:** What's the most helpful piece of advice you've ever been given?
22. **Coffee Order: Simple and effective.** What is your standard coffee (or tea) order?
23. **Favourite Childhood Candy:** What was your favourite sweet treat as a kid?
24. **A Perfect Weekend:** What does a perfect weekend look like for you?
25. **Dinner with Anyone:** If you could have dinner with any three people, living or dead, who would they be?

## Creative & Fun Energizers



Use these activities to inject a burst of energy, creativity, and laughter into your meetings.

**26. Six-Word Story:** Ask everyone to describe their week (or weekend) in exactly six words.

**27. Two Truths and a Lie:** A classic for a reason. Each person shares three “facts” about themselves—two true, one false. The team votes on the lie.

**28. Human Bingo (Quick Version):** Quickly call out a few Bingo-style prompts like “Find someone who has a pet,” or “Find someone who skipped breakfast.” People raise their hands.

**29. Sell It:** Pick a random, mundane object in the room (like a pen or a water bottle). One person has 60 seconds to create an over-the-top sales pitch for it.

**30. Count to 20:** The group must count from 1 to 20. Only one person can say a number at a time. If two people speak at once, the group must start again from 1.

**31. Category Chaos:** Name a category (e.g., “Brands of cars,” “Types of fruit,” “Words that rhyme with ‘team’”). Go around the circle with each person naming something in that category until someone is stumped.

**32. One-Line Story:** One person starts a story with a single sentence. The next person adds a sentence, and so on, creating a collaborative and often hilarious tale.

**33. Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament:** A quick, high-energy bracket-style tournament to crown a team champion.

**34. The Alien Has Landed:** An alien has landed and wants to understand what our company does. Someone has 60 seconds to explain it to them without using any industry jargon.

**35. Silent Line-Up:** The team must line up in order of their birthdays (month and day) without speaking a word.

## Chapter 4:

# Creative & Fun Energizers

These icebreakers are specifically designed for teams connecting via video calls, ensuring remote members feel just as included.



- 36. Virtual Background Tour:** Each person takes 30 seconds to explain the story behind their virtual background (or their real one).
- 37. GIF Your Mood:** In the chat, ask everyone to post a single GIF that represents how they're feeling today.
- 38. Emoji Weekend Story:** Ask everyone to describe their weekend using only three emojis in the chat. The group can guess what happened.
- 39. Picture This:** Have everyone grab their phone, find a photo that makes them happy, and show it to the camera, giving a one-sentence explanation.
- 40. Guess the Desk:** Have team members send an anonymous, cropped photo of something on their desk. Share them on screen and have the team guess whose is whose.
- 41. Coffee Cup Close-Up:** Everyone holds their coffee/tea mug up to the camera. It's a simple way to see a bit of personality.
- 42. A Poll for All:** Use your meeting software's polling feature for a fun "This or That?" question (e.g., Beach or Mountains? Pizza or Tacos? Early Bird or Night Owl?).
- 43. Themed Dress-Up:** Announce a simple theme for the call, like "Wear your favourite hat," or "Wear a colour that makes you happy."
- 44. Digital Shout-Out:** Start the meeting by having everyone type the name of a colleague they want to acknowledge in the chat, followed by a brief reason why.
- 45. One-Click Camera-Off:** Ask a question like, "Turn your camera off if you've ever been to Europe." It's a fast, visual way to learn about the team.
- 46. Guess the Sound:** One person goes off-mute and makes a common household or office sound (crumpling paper, a stapler, etc.). The team guesses what it is.
- 47. Virtual "Cheers":** A simple but effective way to start. Have everyone raise their coffee mug or water glass to the camera for a team "cheers."
- 48. Share Your Screen (for 15 seconds):** Ask for a volunteer to share their screen and show their browser tabs or desktop wallpaper. It's a quick glimpse into their world.
- 49. Digital Whiteboard Word Association:** Put one word in the middle of a virtual whiteboard (e.g., Success). Have everyone simultaneously add words they associate with it.
- 50. Chat Waterfall:** Ask a question and have everyone type their answer in the chat box but wait to press Enter until you give a countdown. Then, watch the answers flood in at once.

## Conclusion: The Habit of Connection

Connection is not a project with a deadline; it is a habit. By consistently and intentionally dedicating the first few minutes of your meetings to one of these simple exercises, you are weaving the habit of connection into the very fabric of your team's culture.

The positive effects will ripple outwards. You will notice meetings that are more energetic, communication that is more open, and a team that is more aligned and resilient. It's proof that the smallest investments in rapport can yield the greatest returns in performance and engagement. Keep this guide handy, be consistent, and watch your team's connection capital grow.



## About Michael Sheargold

With over 20 years of experience coaching and consulting top-performing real estate leaders and teams, Michael Sheargold has been a driving force for positive change in the industry—helping elevate both the reputation and results of professionals across Australasia.

As CEO of The Network, Australasia's leading community of independent real estate agencies, Michael is widely regarded as one of the most respected and influential thought leaders in the real estate space. His work continues to shape the future of the industry through leadership, innovation, and a commitment to excellence.



### MICHAEL SHEARGOLD

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