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# **Creative Icebreakers, Introductions, and Hellos for Teachers, Trainers, and Facilitators**



**Business Training Works  
9015 Katie Court  
Port Tobacco, MD 20677  
[www.businesstrainingworks.com](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com)  
Phone: (301) 934 – 3250  
Fax: (208) 445 – 5379**

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## **Message from the Author**

*Icebreakers, Introductions, and Hellos, for Teachers, Trainers and Facilitators* was written to add excitement and variety to training. Both new icebreakers and variations on timeless classics are included in this guide.

You are welcome to use and copy these icebreakers as much as you like. You may also distribute them as long as you include the Business Training Works copyright. You may not, however, distribute them for money or as part of a package for sale or as “free with purchase” giveaway.

Good luck and happy icebreaking!

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## **Using Icebreakers for Maximum Effectiveness**

When choosing your icebreaker, be conscious of your group dynamic. It is important that your activity not make anyone feel unnecessarily uncomfortable. No one should be forced to reveal extremely personal information or participate in an uncomfortable environment. And of course, what's personal to some may not be personal to others.

In addition to encouraging interaction, it is best if you are able to tie your icebreaker into the topic to be discussed. Are there any points of your presentations illustrated by the activity? If so, bring them out. If not, you may want to consider choosing a different icebreaker. At the very least, "pre-call" any unrelated icebreakers by stating that their sole purpose is to introduce participants to each other and get the session moving along.

# Story of My Life



You have just been given a contract to write your autobiography for a major publishing company. Your agent Harry Hardnose is anxious to get to press. He has decided to help you get started with a few probing question.

1. First, take a piece of flipchart paper and fold it in half and then in half again to form a book.
2. Choose the title of a popular song for the name of your book. Write that title on the front cover.
3. On the inside of the front cover (page two), list a table of contents.
  - Name of the place where you were born
  - Description of your first job
  - Number of years you have been working for your company
4. On page three, draw a picture of your family.
5. On the back cover of the book, draw a picture of what you plan to do when you retire. Where will you go? Who will you go with? Etc.

## Materials Needed

Paper  
Markers

## Time

Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, and drawing. When all books are complete, have each person tell their story, using the book as a visual aid. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to debrief in smaller groups. If possible, leave the books in a central location during your training to encourage further introductions and discussions.

## Variations

- Change the focus of the pages of the book. For instance, most exciting moment, favorite food, most exciting vacation, etc. Be careful not to make any of the questions too personal. The idea is to open people up, not shut them down.

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# Too Many Cooks



Your family (group) just inherited a successful restaurant from, Chef Charlie, a long lost relative. The only problem is, Charlie was very disorganized. The only recipes you have found are on torn strips of paper. You have to make sense of it all and quickly! The restaurant is opening tonight and you have to have the food ready.

1. Each member of the group will be given part of recipe (an ingredient, instruction, etc.).
2. Your job is to put yourselves in order as quickly as possible. Your recipe must make sense.
3. When your group is done, loudly announce “bon appetite” to signal the end of the game.

## Materials Needed

Several Small Prizes for the Winning Team

Cut Recipes (Separate the Title, Ingredients, Instructions, Etc.)

## Time

Allow 10-12 minutes for the game. Once a team calls, “bon appetite,” have them introduce themselves read their recipe in order.

## Variations

- For an added challenge, this game can be made considerably more difficult if groups are not pre-designated before the recipe pieces are distributed. Participants must then not only find the correct order but the correct recipe as well.

# ABCs of Me



You have been hired by the Creative Classroom Company to illustrate a poster to help children learn their ABCs. By happy coincidence, you and your first name is the subject of the poster!

1. First, take a piece of flipchart paper and write your name vertically down the left side.
2. Next, choose a word that starts with each letter of your name. The word should describe something about you. Write those words horizontally across the paper, using the letters of your name as the first letter of each descriptive word.
3. After you have listed your words, draw an accompanying picture to illustrate each.
4. When you are finished, tape your poster to the wall.

## Materials Needed

Paper  
Markers  
Tape

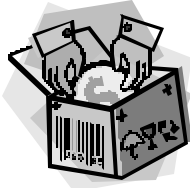
## Time

Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, and drawing. When all posters are complete, have each person introduce themselves using their name drawing. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to debrief in smaller groups. If possible, leave the drawings posted throughout your training session.

## Variations

- Narrow the focus of the words. For instance, all words must be adjectives, nouns, verbs, related to work, related to foods you like, etc.

# I Remember



You and the others in your group are about to revisit the past and take a trip down memory lane.

1. First, get coin.
2. Next, look at the year on the coin. Take a minute to think about what you were doing when that coin was minted. Were you in school? Were you a child? Where did you work? Were you married? Where did you live? What was going on in your life at that time? What was the music of the day? Etc. (If you were not yet born or prefer not to discuss your life during the year selected, choose another coin.)
3. After you have had some time to remember where you were, you are ready to play the game. Your goal is to find someone with a coin that was minted at least two years before or after yours. Ultimately, your goal is to have the oldest coin in the room.
4. Once you have found a partner, take three minutes each to tell each other about your moments in time. When you are finished, each of you flip your coin. Reveal the results of your toss to your partner. If they are alike (both heads or tails) exchange coins. If they differ, keep your original coin.
5. Repeat the process up to three times as designated by the facilitator.

## Materials Needed

Coins  
Prize

## Time

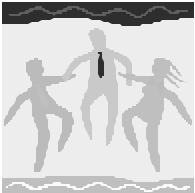
Allow 5 minutes for setup. Allow 5 minutes for each round. At the end of all rounds, call each year in order and ask each participant to stand and give his or her name. Award a prize to the holder of the oldest coin.

## Variations

- Use your own coins to ensure an even distribution of years.
- If using your own coins, incorporate a piece of corporate history with each. Research a fact or figure about each year of your business and include it with the corresponding coins. When the participants exchange their own information, they can also share a piece of the corporate history. When debriefing, Call each year in order and ask the participant with the year called to read his or her fact.

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## 6 Degrees of Separation



It happens all of the time, we meet someone who knows someone we know. It's a small world, that's for sure. The object of this game is to see how small the world really is.

1. First, find a partner. Introduce yourselves and make a list of 5-10 things that you have in common with each other: where you went to school, year you were born, number of years with the company, food likes, sports likes, etc.
2. Once you have completed your first list, you must find someone else in the room that also has one of those 5-10 things in common with you. When you have found that person, repeat step one with them and develop a new list.
3. Repeat step two.
4. Continue until you have met five other people or time is called by the facilitator.
5. A prize will be given to the first person able to complete the game. When you are done, let the facilitator know that you have finished.

### Materials Needed

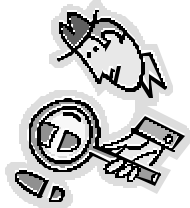
Prize

### Time

Allow approximately 15-20 minutes for game. Once most people have finished, call time. Ask your winner to introduce his/her chain of separation.



# Scavenger Hunt



You are about to begin a scavenger hunt with several members of this training group. The object of the game is to collect all of the items listed below as quickly as possible. You may talk with anyone in the group. You may not leave the room. You must associate each item with the person who gave it to you. You may not get more than two items from any one person. Once the facilitator has assigned groups, you may begin play. When your team is finished, your team should loudly announce the phrase, “hunt over” to the rest of the group. Be prepared to say where you got each item. A prize will be awarded to the team that finishes first.

1. Driver's License
2. Family Photo
3. Store Receipt
4. A 1979 or Earlier Penny
5. A Piece of Candy
6. A Ballpoint Pen
7. A Lipstick
8. A Planner, Palm Pilot, Calendar, or Other Organizer
9. A Drink
10. A Coffee Cup
11. A Marker
12. A Piece of Candy
13. A Store Credit Card
14. A Pair of Glasses
15. A Magazine or Book

*The list of hunt items should be reviewed by the facilitator before the game begins, in order to make sure that all items are available.*

## Materials Needed

Several Small Prizes for the Winning Team

## Time

Allow 10-12 minutes for the game. Once a team calls, “hunt over.” Have them review each of the items, where they got them, and from whom.

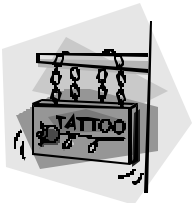
## Variations

- Instead of using actual items, list activities and facts as the items to find. For instance, “plays piano.” The object of the game is to find someone who plays the piano and associate their name with that item. This variation works well in teams or individually.

**Classic**

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# Tattoo



You have just arrived at Tony's Tattoo Parlor for a tattoo. Tony is competing for "Tattoo King of the Year," a contest sponsored by *Needle Knows* magazine. Every design is a potential entry and Tony wants each of his tattoos to say something about the person wearing them. From you, he needs a little inspiration and a design before he can start his work. Tony is excellent at lettering, animals, characters, band logos, maps, etc.

1. On your piece of paper, you are to design a rough tattoo that reveals something about yourself, your work, your hobbies, or your family, in order to help get Tony's creative juices flowing.
2. You must also make a note about how big the tattoo should be and where you will have it applied.

## Materials Needed

Paper  
Tape  
Markers

## Time

Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, drawing and posting designs on the wall. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to debrief in smaller groups. If possible, leave the designs posted throughout your training to encourage further introductions and discussions.

## Variations

- Narrow the scope of the tattoo design: what you do at work, animal most like you, favorite song, favorite band, adjective that best describes you, etc.
- Divide your group in two. For round one, assign one group the role of Tony and the other group the role of the customer. Each customer must find a Tony and tell him about the design they would like and why. Tony is to draw a design, asking questions as he or she goes. After the first set of designs is complete, the groups reverse roles. To encourage additional interaction, ask the customers to "shop around" and find another partner to work with. To debrief, let each Tony describe what he or she drew and for whom.

# Storyteller



You are about to stretch your storytelling skills with the help of others in the group designated by the facilitator. You will incorporate facts about yourself into a story that could just go anywhere.

1. First, write down the name of ...
  - something you would see in a store.
  - something you would buy as gift for your mother.
  - your favorite sport
  - your favorite celebrity.
  - a crime.
  - your favorite restaurant.
  - a tourist attraction.
  - a profession.
  - the name of someone the room.
2. The facilitator will begin the story with, "Once upon a time, I found the most unusual thing." The next person is to fill in the next piece of the story. The object of the game is to incorporate as many of the items as you can from those listed above. No one can say more the two sentences at a time. Turns must be taken in order. To win, you must incorporate all of your words and then conclude the story. Everyone must get an opportunity to "write" from their imagination at least twice before the story can end.

## Materials Needed

Prize

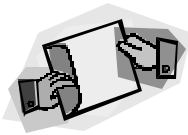
## Time

Allow 10-20 minutes for the game. If the group is large, consider breaking into smaller subgroups or reducing the number of incorporated words required to win. For instance, you must work in five words from those listed in part one.

## Variations

- You can easily tailor this game by changing the questions in part one to better match your industry, company, etc.

# Trait Trader



You have just taken a job as a trait trader in the fictitious exchange, the Personality Market. You are new executive and it is very important to you that you do well in your new job. To do so, you must trade wisely and end the game with a trait that applies to you.

1. In a moment, you will be given a piece of paper (trade slip) with a personality or character trait written on it (e.g. tall, creative, adventurous, quiet, etc.) Write your name on the slip.
2. You must trade your slip with someone else. If your new trait also applies to you, write your name on that slip. If not, move to step three.
3. Trade again. Your goal is to end up with a trait that applies to you and to have written your name on more slips than anyone else.
4. When the facilitator calls out “exchange closed.” The game is over.
5. You may stop trading for the exchange closes. Remember, your goal is to end up with a trait that applies to you and to have written your name on more slips than anyone else.

## Materials Needed

### Prize

Trait Slips (Consider: Over 5’8”, Born in the 70s, Red Hair, Curly Hair, Athlete, Creative, Talkative, Adventurous, Quiet, Bossy, Demanding, Funny, Dare Devil, etc.) You design the slips based on your group. Remember to be sensitive to age, gender, etc.

### Time

Allow 12-15 minutes for the game and then call “exchange closed”. Next, ask everyone to turn their trait slip to the side that holds the names of the traders. Ask your first trader to say his or her name and to read his or her trait, stating whether or not it is true about them. Then, ask the others in the group to raise their hands if the trader’s name appears on their trade slips. Count the hands. Move to the next trader and repeat. When done, award the prize to the trader with the most slips signed who has a trait that describes him or her on the final slip.

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# Race for the Truth



You and the other “runners” in the room are about to embark on a race for the truth. Your goal is to cross the finish line as quickly as possible by truthfully answering questions about yourself by following the facilitator’s directions.

1. Line up on the starting line as directed by the facilitator.
2. In a moment you will hear a statement. If it is true about you move forward one step. If it is false, remain at the finish line.
3. Once all first moves have been made, the facilitator will make another statement.. Again, if it is true move forward one step. If it is false, remain on the starting line if you have not yet advanced. If you have advanced past the starting line, take one step back.
4. Repeat step three until the first “runner” completes the race.

## Materials Needed

2 Long Pieces of String for the Start and Finish Lines

List of Statements Related to The Group (e.g. “I have worked here more that one year.” “I think we have too many meetings around here.” or “I understand xyz aspect of my job.”

## Time

Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, drawing and posting designs on the wall. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to debrief in smaller groups. If possible, leave the designs posted throughout your training to encourage further introductions and discussions.

## Variations

- Narrow the scope of the statements to relate to issues at work, materials being covered, etc.

# Candy Confessions



You have just taken a job as a candy tester in the Candy Confessions factory. What makes this candy different from other candy is that each flavor is associated with a fact about you. Your job is to select and “test” four different candies from a bowl/box that will circulate among all testers.

1. Choose four candies from the bowl without looking. In a moment, a key code will be revealed, indicating which truths you should tell.
2. Once the code has been revealed you may begin your confession.
3. The chief tester (winner) is the person who selects the most popular candies.

## Materials Needed

Prize(s)

Basket of Candy

Key Code (e.g. Kit Kats = Favorite Movie, Favorite Magazine, Favorite Song, or Favorite Book, Krackle = Favorite Vacation Spot, Place You Would Like To Visit, Place You Would Least Like To Visit, or Worst Vacation, Lollipop = Number of Years in Current Position, Where You Work, What You Do, or Brief Description of First Job, Gum Drops = Something About Where You Live, Something About Where You Grew Up, Something About Your Family, Something About Your Town/City, Kisses = Wildcard [tell us anything])

Count up the totals of each candy. Award a prize to the person/people who selected that combination.

## Time

Allow 10-20 minutes for the entire process.

## Variations

- Allow people to take as many candies as they like from the basket and reveal something about themselves for each candy they take.
- Use a ball of string. Allow each person to take as much as they like. For each inch, they must reveal something about themselves. (Additional material: string, scissors, and ruler)

**Classic**

## The Magic Lamp



You and your team have just found a lamp. You rub it, and surprise! A genie appears. The genie grants you three wishes. You are allowed to make three changes at work. You may change yourself, your boss, your job, the people around you, etc.

1. The facilitator will soon divide you into groups of 3-5 people and give your team a piece of flip chart paper and a marker.
2. Once you have your materials, design your wish list for your genie. When you are finished, post it on the wall.

### Materials Needed

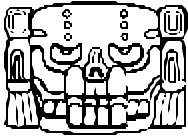
Flip Chart Paper

Markers

### Time

Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, writing and posting lists on the wall. Allow 5 Minutes for debriefing. If possible, leave the lists posted throughout your training to encourage further introductions and discussions.

# Totem Truths



In the past, a totem pole was carved several reasons. For example, to on a deceased elder who was important to the carver, to show the number of rights and names a person had acquired over his or her lifetime, or to document an encounter with the supernatural. Today, totems are carved not only for those reasons but to also tell the story about the person commissioning the pole. You and your team are about to design a totem pole to discover your group's strengths and weaknesses.

1. In a moment, the facilitator will divide you into teams, each of you will be handed a piece of cardboard and a list of totem. You are to design a totem figure that best represents your strengths in the group. You may use one of the totem symbols given or make up your own.
2. Once you have completed your drawing, you and your team will tape them one on top of the other on a portion of the wall. Be prepared to explain your strength to the group.

## Materials Needed

8.5" x 11" Cardboard Piece for Each Participant

Markers

List of Animal Totems (pages following)

## Time

Allow 20 minutes for the entire process.

*This exercise is excellent for teambuilding.*

## Variations

- o Ask each group to design a group crest, similar to a family crest. The only disadvantage to this versus the totem is that the groups are static. With the totems, you can reorganize the groups and have them rebuild the poles throughout the day's activities.

**Classic**



# Totem Poles

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## SYMBOLS

Alligator - Maternal and revenge oriented  
Ant - Group minded, patient, active, and industrious  
Antelope - Active, agile, and willing to sacrifice  
Armadillo - Safety oriented, and has boundaries  
Badger - Courage, Aggressive, healer and energy conduit  
Bat - Rebirth and long life  
Bear - Industrious, instinct, healing, power, sovereignty, guardian of the world, and great strength  
Beaver - Determined, strong-willed, builder, and protector  
Bee - Organized, industrial, productive, wise, community, celebration, and enjoys life  
Buffalo - Sacredness, life, and great strength  
Butterfly - metamorphosis and transformation  
Cat - Guardianship, detachment, sensuality, mystery, magic, and independence  
Cheetah - Swift, insightful, and focused  
Cow - Nourishment and mother figure  
Coyote - The trickster, intelligent, stealthy, and mischief  
Crane - Solitude, justice, longevity, independent, intelligent, and vigilant  
Crow - Keeper of law, shape shifting, change, creativity, spiritual strength, energy, and justice  
Deer - Intellectual, gentle, caring, kind, subtlety, gracefulness, femininity, gentleness, innocence, and seller of adventure  
Dog - Noble, faithful, loyal, teaching, protection, and guidance  
Dolphin - Kind, salvation, prudent, capable of deep emotion, wise, and happy  
Dragon - Longevity, infinity, wisdom, power, and fiery  
Dragonfly - Flighty and carefree, and strong imagination  
Eagle - Divine spirit, sacrifice, connection to creator, intelligence, renewal, courage, illumination of spirit, healing, creation, and risk-taker  
Elephant - Strength, power, and wisdom  
Elk - Strength and agility, pride, independence, purification, strength, and nobility  
Falcon - New beginnings, adventure, passionate, and leadership  
Fish - Graceful  
Fox - Cunning, agility, quick-witted, diplomacy, wildness, feminine magic of camouflage, shape-shifting and invisibility  
Frog - Water energy, cleansing, rebirth, sensitivity, medicine, hidden beauty and power  
Gazelle - Aggressive  
Goose - Self-demanding, reliable, prudent, rigid, vigilance, parenthood, and productive  
Hawk - Messenger, intuition, victory, healing, nobility, recollection, cleansing, visionary power, and guardianship  
Horse - Freedom, stamina, mobility, the land, travel, power, and freedom  
Hummingbird - Messenger, timelessness, healing, and warrior  
Jaguar - Chaos and shape-shifter  
Lion - Family, strength, energy, courage, guardian and protector  
Lizard - Conservation and vision  
Llama - Comforting to others  
Lynx - Keeper of secrets, guardian, and guide  
Moose - Headstrong, longevity, steadfastness, and wisdom  
Mouse - Scrutiny, order, organizer, and an eye for details  
Opossum - Diversion, strategist, and deceiver  
Otter - Playful, friendly, dynamic, joy, helpfulness, and sharing  
Owl - Deception, clairvoyance, insight, messenger, detachment, wisdom, change, and silence

# Totem Poles

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Ox - Sacrifice and self-denial  
Peacock - Immortality, dignity, and self-confidence  
Porcupine - Innocence, companionship, and trust  
Rabbit - Fear, timidity, nervousness, humility, rebirth, intuition, balance, fertility, and new life  
Raccoon - Curiosity and cleanliness  
Raven - Introspection, courage, self-knowledge, healing, initiation, protection, trickster, and magic  
Salmon - Proud, intense, confident, wisdom, inspiration, and rejuvenation  
Seahorse - Confidence and grace  
Seal - Love, longing, dilemma, active imagination, creativity, and lucid dreaming  
Shark - Hunter, survival, and adaptability  
Skunk - Reputation, presence, and strength  
Snake - Impulsive, shrewdness, rebirth, transformation, healing, life energy, resurrection, initiation, and wisdom  
Squirrel - Planner and gatherer  
Stag - Lord of the forest, masculine power of regeneration, giver of bounty, beauty, and mystical signs.  
Swan - Grace, balance and innocence, soul, love, beauty, awakening the true beauty, and power of the self  
Tiger - Strength, valor, power, and energy  
Turkey - Generosity, life-giver, and sharer  
Turtle - Nurturer, shy, and protecting  
Weasel - Strength, energy, ingenuity and stealth  
Whale - Wisdom and provider  
Wolf - Loyalty, perseverance, success, intuition, learning, the shadow, guardianship, ritual, loyalty, and spirit  
Woodpecker - Sensitive, protective, and devotion

## Definitions



You have just taken a job at a dictionary company. You are responsible for editing a new edition. The only problem is that some of the computers went on the fritz and wiped out various definitions. You have decided to “wing it” and make up definitions for the words of which you don’t know the meaning.

1. In a moment, you will be handed a card. It will contain either a word or a word and a definition.
2. If you received a “word only” card, you must make up a definition.
3. If you received a definition card, you must explain the definition without reading the card.
4. The object of the game is for the others in the group to spot the real definition of the word.
5. You may not vote on your own word.

### Materials Needed

Small Prizes

Index Cards with Words

Index Cards with Definitions of Lesser-Known Words (See Example)

**Brobdignagian** \brahb-ding-NAG-ee-uhn\, *adjective*:

Colossal; of extraordinary height; gigantic. -- as a noun: a giant. [Often misspelt *Brobdignagian*.]

- “The final triumph of my **Brobdignagian** persecutor.” --William Godwin, *The Enquirer*
- “A brand-new **brobdignagian** hotel.” --Benjamin Disraeli, *Lothair*
- “Known to our **Brobdignagian** intelligence as grains of sand.” ---Grant Allen

### Time

Allow 5 minutes for preparation. Allow 10 minutes to play the game. Award small prizes to the people who guess the most correct answers.

## True or False



You have just entered a new society of truth-tellers and liars. You and the others sometimes tell the truth and sometimes lie. The key to this society is knowing when you are being lied to and when you are being told the truth.

Partner must guess if truth or lie. If both are correct move on. If both are incorrect move on. If one is correct and one is wrong, the wrong person is out.

1. First, flip a coin, if it reveals "heads," you tell truth, if "tails," you lie.
2. Find a partner, swap stories. Your partner must then guess if you told a truth or a lie. If both are correct, move on. If both incorrect move on. If one correct and one wrong, wrong person is out.
3. Move on and repeat steps one and two until one person remains and is declared the winner.

### Materials Needed

Prize

Extra Coins

### Time

Allow 10 -20 minutes to play the game, depending on the size of the group. Award a prize to the person who remains standing.

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## About Kate Zabriskie



Kate Zabriskie founded Business Training Works to answer a need in the marketplace for affordable, relevant, fast-paced, business training.

Based just outside of Washington D.C., she has trained for corporations, nonprofit foundations, government agencies, associations, schools, and libraries throughout the United States.

Kate is best known for her high-energy training style and ability to make learning fun. Classes are practical, interactive, and hands on.

Kate brings over ten years of solid business experience to the marketplace. She earned her MBA from the University of Texas at Austin and holds an undergraduate degree in Art History from George Mason University.

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## **Business Training Works Available Programs**

Negotiation Power Skills -  
Get What You Want Without Being A Jerk

Professional Presence -  
Strategies For Maximizing Your Business Advantage

Essentials Of Business Etiquette -  
Mastering Professional Appearance And Conduct

Time Management Mastery -  
How To Take Charge And Get More Done

Communicating With Tact, Diplomacy, And Grace -  
What To Say And How To Say It

The Essentials Of Customer Service -  
How To Keep Customers Coming Back

Beyond "Hello"-  
How To Deliver First-Rate Service Over The Telephone

"Don't Call Me Dude"  
How To Deliver Exceptional Service To Mature Markets

Building Better Boards -  
Strategies For Creating Investment In Nonprofit Organizations

The Polished Administrative Assistant- Keeping Those Around You  
Organized, On Time, and On Track

Supervision Skills For Managers -  
How To Run An A+ Workgroup

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## **Business Training Works Available Program (continued)**

Building And Developing Successful Teams -  
Strategies For Working Better Together

Creativity Boot Camp -  
Keys For Unlocking Ideas

The Art And Science Of Teaching Adults -  
How To Train And Facilitate Like A Pro

You Don't Have To Imagine Them Naked -  
How To Create And Deliver Great Presentations