

Personal Histories Exercise

This exercise is typically the first small step teams take to start developing trust.

Purpose: To improve trust by giving team members an opportunity to demonstrate vulnerability in a low-risk way and to help team members understand one another at a fundamental level so that they can avoid making false attributions about behaviors and intentions.

Time Required: 15 — 25 Minutes

Instructions: Go around the table and have everyone answer three questions about themselves.

1. Where did you grow up?
2. How many siblings do you have and where do you fall in that order?
3. Please describe a unique or interesting challenge or experience from your childhood.

Debrief: Ask team members to share what they learned about one another that they didn't already know. This reinforces the purpose of the exercise and allows for a natural ending to the conversation.

Next Steps: As described in *The Advantage*, this is the first of many exercises that can be used to start the trust building process. More often than not, leaders will reveal interesting personal information that was otherwise not known. The leadership team must continue to work on building trust by using a behavior profiling tool (we like the Myers-Briggs). More specific instructions on building trust can be found in *The Advantage*, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Field Guide* and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: Facilitators Guide*.

This exercise originated from Lencioni's book, *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team: a Field Guide*.