

# Rotate the Lead — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: rotate-the-lead · Category: leadership · 8–16 people · 25 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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## CONTENTS

|                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Objectives                 | When to use this activity    |
| The handover pattern       | Setup                        |
| How to run it              | The card                     |
| Failure modes              | Variations                   |
| Facilitation notes         | Put it on the wall           |
| Props in this folder       | Agent version                |
| How to run this debrief    | Read the rotations           |
| The nine debrief questions | Failure modes of the debrief |

25

MINUTES

8–16

PEOPLE

print props

SETTING

# Rotate the Lead — Facilitator Guide

A 25-minute, 8–16 person leadership tool. Give the team a real small task, then rotate who's leading every few minutes — and make each handover restate the goal, what's done, and the next move before anyone directs. Leadership stops being a job title and becomes a set of visible moves anyone can make and pass on.

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## Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Carried a real thread through one full round — and handed it over in one breath: goal, done-so-far, next, **before** directing.
2. Made one decision as lead that was **visible and owned**, and felt the difference between a call that is named and one that drifts.
3. Seen which teammates can hold a round cleanly — leading shown as a set of moves anyone can make, not a rank only one person holds.

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## When to use this activity

- A team where leadership is stuck on one person and nobody else has practiced holding the thread.
- Before handing someone a real stretch assignment — rotate the least-senior person first.
- You have 8–16 people, one small finishable task, and 25 minutes; online, it runs on a shared doc.

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## The handover pattern

| Move    | The rule                                                                               | What it makes visible                                                   |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Restate | The incoming lead says goal / done-so-far / next in one breath <b>before</b> directing | whether the thread was actually shared — or only ever in one head       |
| Call    | Each lead makes one visible call and names its owner                                   | the decisions a room was making by drift, silence, or the loudest voice |
| Pass on | The round closes on a clean summary handed to the next lead                            | exactly what the team loses every time the thread drops                 |

Two rules only, and the rounds test both: no directing before restating; no leading without one named call.

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## Setup

- 8–16 people, in one working group (above 12, run two parallel groups on the same task).
- One real, small, finishable task — triage the backlog, plan next week, draft the one-pager. Not a discussion topic; something with an output.
- The card faces from [rotate-the-lead-prop-cards.pdf](#) : handover, lead-now, listen-first, make-the-call, pass-on, what-I-noticed (see **The card** below).
- A visible timer — each round is a hard ~4 minutes, and the rotation is the point.
- Put [rotate-the-lead-activity-poster.pdf](#) (A3) on the wall so the two rules stay in view.
- Print one [rotate-the-lead-worksheet.pdf](#) per group — the one-page artifact sheet the room fills while it talks.

- Put one `rotate-the-lead-workbook.pdf` at each seat if people want their own copy; the sheet above is the group version.
- Optional: open `rotate-the-lead-slide-deck.html` in any browser to run the 12-slide deck on the wall (S opens the presenter drawer, T starts the round timer); `rotate-the-lead-slide-deck.pdf` is the same deck for print.
- Online: the rotation runs in a fixed order on a shared doc; the worksheet lives on the screen, the timer on the call.

## How to run it

| Time  | Phase   | Facilitator does                                                                                                  | Participants do                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0–4   | Set     | Pick the real small task, name the first lead, hold the room until “done” is agreed                               | Agree out loud what “done” looks like before the clock starts                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4–20  | Rotate  | Call hard ~4-minute rounds; watch every handover for restatement-before-directing; never say who leads next early | Four leads in turn: restate goal / done-so-far / next in one breath, make one visible call and name its owner, close on a clean summary and pass on — while the room keeps the artifact moving on the worksheet |
| 20–25 | Name it | Ask each person for one leadership move they saw work — or didn’t                                                 | Each person names one move; write the good ones down as the team’s handover pattern                                                                                                                             |

Then run the debrief — see `rotate-the-lead-debrief.md`.

## The card

The sheet from `rotate-the-lead-prop-cards.pdf` (poker spec, 63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides, branded back, blanks) carries six faces: **handover** — restate before you direct; **lead-now** — this round is yours; **listen-first** — hear the room before calling; **make-the-call** — one visible decision, one named owner; **pass-on** — close on a clean summary; **what-I-noticed** — for the seat watching the thread. Put the **handover** card where the room can see it; it is the rule every round is testing. Blank faces take your own wordings.

## Failure modes

1. **The task is too big to move in four-minute rounds.** Shrink it before you start. A task that can’t advance in four rounds isn’t a rotate-the-lead task; it’s a project, and everyone just flails in the same place.
2. **The real manager keeps re-taking the pen.** That’s the finding, not a foul. Note who it displaces and what the room does when they return — then ask them to take a normal turn near the end instead of hovering.
3. **Everyone just repeats the previous lead.** Restating is not parroting. Require the new lead to name the *next* move as their own call, so each round actually changes the direction of the work.
4. **The rounds run, but the artifact stalls.** Leading is being performed while the output dies. Send the next lead’s first sentence to the worksheet: name what the group produces in this round, then start the clock.

## Variations

- **New manager onboarding:** rotate the least-senior person first; it’s the safest place to practice holding the thread.

- **Distributed team:** rotate in a fixed order on a shared doc; the restatement-before-directing rule matters even more when no one shares a room.
- **Deeper read:** after the rounds, ask who felt the thread get *stronger* and who felt it wobble — the pattern of where it wobbles is your real handover risk.

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## Facilitation notes

- Name the first lead deliberately. The least-senior person is the safest opener, and it sets the tone that the pen is movable.
- Don't soften the clock. A squeezed handover — ninety seconds instead of four minutes — is the sharpest data the exercise produces: it shows exactly where the thread drops.
- You are timing the relay, not judging the leadership. The debrief names moves; keep your own read of “who was best” off the wall.
- The handover pattern written at 20–25 only survives if it leaves the room — the worksheet's last box exists for that; copy it into the team's real doc before anyone stands up.

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## Put it on the wall

Print `rotate-the-lead-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to put the run of show, the two rules and the handover pattern the room fills in on one wall while you facilitate.

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## Props in this folder

- `rotate-the-lead-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): the six card faces, branded back, blanks
- `rotate-the-lead-guide.md` — this run sheet
- `rotate-the-lead-debrief.md` — nine debrief questions with what each targets, plus failure modes of the debrief
- `rotate-the-lead-worksheet.pdf` — the one-page session sheet, print-and-fill: four rounds logged — restatement, the call, its owner — and the handover pattern the team kept
- `rotate-the-lead-workbook.pdf` — participant workbook: the sheet in plain words, the artifact as fill-in pages, session notes, a before-you-leave page
- `rotate-the-lead-slide-deck.html` / `.pdf` — the 12-slide deck for teaching or projecting: presenter drawer (S), round timer (T), built-in QR, print fallback; the `.pdf` is the same deck for print
- `rotate-the-lead-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks
- `rotate-the-lead-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole activity on one A3 wall sheet: run of show, the rules, watch-outs
- `rotate-the-lead-tool.json` — machine-facing file (not listed in the download table): the artifact as a machine-readable template: columns, flow, fields, prompts, watch-outs
- `rotate-the-lead-start-here.md` — one page, thirty seconds, then print and go
- `rotate-the-lead-license.md` — what you may do with all of this: run it, copy it, translate it, rebrand it; keep the attribution line
- `SKILL.md` — machine-readable manifest for AI agents
- `*-Letter.pdf` — US Letter editions of the print documents

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## Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the props, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version itself needs no screen at all: no projector, no accounts, just a real task and a timer.

# Rotate the Lead — Debrief

Nine questions, three failure modes of the debrief itself, one rule: name the move, not the person.

Use with `rotate-the-lead-guide.md`. The debrief runs the last five minutes of the twenty-five.

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## How to run this debrief

- Put the filled worksheet on the table first. The four rounds are the evidence; nobody has to recall them from memory.
- Let people note their answers for a minute before anyone speaks — the quietest reader of the room has the best material and gets talked over first.
- Hold a pen over the team's handover pattern: a move that can't be written as an instruction for the next handover hasn't been debriefed yet.

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## Read the rotations

- Look over the four rounds without talking. Where did the thread get carried cleanly, and where did somebody have to pick it up off the floor?
- Notice whose round produced the most work — that is data, not a verdict.

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## The nine debrief questions

### 1. The clean handovers.

“Which handovers landed cleanly, and which made the team lose a beat?”

→ What was different about the restatement — it is the one skill that transfers.

### 2. Directing before restating.

“Did any lead direct before restating goal / done / next? What did the team do — follow, correct, or quietly stall?”

→ Whether the rule actually holds the room, or just decorates the poster.

### 3. The surprises.

“Who surprised you — someone you didn't expect to hold the thread well, or badly?”

→ The team's unstated map of who can lead; today redrew part of it.

### 4. The minimum handover kit.

“What's the minimum the next lead needs to take over without losing progress? Name it in your own words.”

→ The team's own handover pattern — the artifact this whole folder builds toward.

### 5. Visible and owned.

“When a call was made, was it visible and owned? Or did it evaporate because no one knew who was doing it?”

→ The difference between a decision and a mood.

## 6. What the rule prevented.

“What did the one-visible-call rule prevent from being decided by drift or silence?”

→ The hidden decisions the room was already making by default — the exercise just forced them into the open.

## 7. Where it really rotates.

“Where does the lead genuinely rotate in your real work — standups, incidents, reviews? Should the handover pattern apply there too?”

→ Transfer. The pattern earns its keep after the room empties.

## 8. The one move you keep.

“Which single handover move from today will you keep doing when you’re not in an exercise?”

→ Commitment — small enough to survive Monday.

## 9. If the real leader is always in the room.

“If the real leader is always in the room, what does this exercise reveal about what others *could* carry if asked?”

→ Latent capacity — the reason to run this again on a different task.

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## Failure modes of the debrief

1. **It turns into a coronation.** The room praises the best lead of the afternoon instead of naming moves. Rescue: ask what they *did*, not who they *are* — the move is what generalizes; the person isn’t.
2. **The room edits the truth.** Everyone reports handovers that went “great.” Rescue: go back to the worksheet gaps — the restatement nobody finished, the call with no owner. The sheet argues with polite memory.
3. **The pattern gets written and orphaned.** The handover pattern fills its box, the team leaves, and next week the thread drops in the same place. Rescue: before anyone stands, name who owns the pattern and which real doc it lives in.