



Rotate the Lead

Eight–sixteen people · 25 minutes · four handovers on a real task

Leading is a relay, not a rank. Take the pen, hold the thread, pass it on clean.

**Who holds the thread
when the person who usually
holds it says nothing?**

The handover, every four minutes

- **Restate first** — the incoming lead says goal, done-so-far, next in one breath *before* directing anyone.
- **Make one call** — a visible decision with a named owner. Leading shows up in a decision, not a title.
- **Pass it on** — end the round with a clean summary for whoever takes over next.

How the 25 minutes run

Time	Phase	The room does
0–4	Set	Pick one real, small, finishable task and agree what “done” looks like before the clock starts
4–8	Round 1	Lead one restates, steers, makes one call, names its owner
8–12	Round 2	Lead two takes the pen: find the blocker before steering
12–16	Round 3	Lead three makes the call the task still needs
16–20	Round 4	Lead four passes on a summary the next person could actually use
20–25	Name it	Everyone names one leadership move they saw work — or didn’t

Two rules hold the relay

- Every handover restates goal, done-so-far and next before directing. If the new lead cannot, that gap is the lesson.
- Each lead makes one visible, owned call. A round with no decision is a discussion, not a lead.
- Above twelve people, run two parallel rounds of the same task.

The thread drops

between leads, not inside them.

Restate it, and the drop disappears.

Three ways it stalls, three rescues

- The task is too big to move in four minutes → shrink it before you start. A task that cannot advance in four rounds is a project, and the room will flail.
- The real manager keeps re-taking the pen → that is the finding. Note who it displaces and how the room reacts, then ask them to take a normal turn near the end.
- Everyone just repeats the previous lead → restating is not parroting: require the new lead to name the next move as their own call.

What leaves the room

- A finished, real output from the task — not a rehearsal.
- A shared picture of who can lead a round cleanly, and who needs the restate prompt.
- A written handover pattern (goal / done / next) the team keeps using when the lead genuinely rotates.

Three questions before you close

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

Who surprised you — someone you did not expect to hold the thread well, or badly?

Where does the lead genuinely rotate in your real work — standups, incidents, reviews?

What carries into real work

- Rotate the least-senior person first in onboarding — the safest place to practise holding the thread.
- Distributed team: rotate in a fixed order on a shared doc; restating before directing matters even more when nobody shares a room.
- After the rounds, ask who felt the thread get stronger and who felt it wobble — where it wobbles is your real handover risk.

Restate · decide · pass on — every four minutes

Leadership stops being a job title the moment anyone can pick the pen up cleanly.

Take this folder with you



Scan for the digital edition — the printable kit, the agent file and the license. *Swap this href for your own QRCode-AI code or FormLM link.*