



Silent Lineup

A 10-minute leadership exercise for one whole group

Line up by birthday — no talking, no writing, no phones. When words are taken away, leadership gets very visible.

**In a room with no appointed
leader —
who moves first? How do you
know?**

The rules, said out loud once

- Line up by birthday: January at my left, December at my right.
- No talking. No writing. No phones. Three minutes. Go.
- Then verification: each person says their birthday out loud — once, in place.

Round two changes the system

- Same rules, new axis: line up by years on the team.
- Birthdays are easy to gesture; seniority is not. The group must invent a new code.
- Over sixteen people: run two lines, then compare how each organized itself.

What the silence makes visible

- Who claims an edge — walking to "January" is the first move in a leaderless room.
- Who makes themselves legible: birth month on fingers beats vague waving.
- Who unsticks the jam — and who waits, perfectly willing, for someone else.

Three ways it fails, three rescues

- Someone talks "just to fix one thing" → restart the round, amused: "and again — in silence."
- The line clusters and stalls in the middle → no rescue. The stall is data; the debrief is built for it.
- Verification shows a wall of errors → applaud the fix, not the perfection. Errors are the point.

Three questions after round two

- 1. Who moved first — and what did they actually DO?**
- 2. Where did the line jam, and who felt allowed to unstick it?**
- 3. Where in your week does a group coordinate with no appointed leader — and who moves first there?**

The measure

- Before the line forms: six rows about how you behave in leaderless groups.
- After the debrief: the same six rows about these two lineups.
- Initiative, legibility, early following, edge-checking — the delta shows what the silence taught.

No word was spoken. So every action was a choice.

The early followers co-led.

Someone checked the edges — remember who.

One move to install

- "Make my status legible without being asked" — the classic export from this exercise.
- Pick your silent-lineup move: initiative, legibility, following, or edges. One, with a day.



One wall · ten minutes · two systems, read out loud

Take away the loudest tool; watch what the team builds with what is left.

Take this folder with you



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