

The Turning Point — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: the-turning-point · Category: reviews · 4–12 people · 25 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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25

MINUTES

4–12

PEOPLE

print props

SETTING

The Turning Point — Facilitator Guide

A 25-minute, 4–12 person review that reconstructs what actually happened. Most retrospectives collect opinions about a project; this one rebuilds its timeline — start to now — and marks the moments the story turned: up or down. Then it names the decision or habit behind each turn, so the team stops arguing about how it feels and starts seeing what caused what.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Rebuilt the project’s timeline from kickoff to now as dated events — launches, decisions, incidents, quiet weeks — not moods.
2. Marked the turning points, up and down, and named the decision or habit behind each one.
3. Committed to keep one habit that turned things up and kill one that turned them down — each with a name and a date.

When to use this activity

- Retros keep producing opinions and everyone remembers the project differently; the team needs one shared map before it needs actions.
- A project is about to restart, and you need the list of what not to repeat.
- One team ran two projects; laying both timelines side by side shows whether the same habit turned both.

Why a timeline beats a vibe

Projects don’t succeed or fail all at once; they turn at a handful of moments, and each turn usually has a decision or a habit behind it. Once you can point at the turn and name its cause, the lesson stops being a vibe and becomes something you can keep or kill on purpose.

Setup

Space: a wall or shared board with a horizontal timeline from kickoff to now and two lanes around it: **Turned up** • **Turned down**.

Materials per person: sticky notes and a pen — real moments, one per note, with a date where you can.

Materials for the room: the card faces from [the-turning-point-prop-cards.pdf](#) : a “the turning point” card, a “what caused it” card, a “keep this” card, a “kill this” card, and a blank.

Grouping: 4–12 people who were on the same project or initiative from start to now (or a meaningful stretch of it).

Roles: everyone places events; you police the two rules — dated moments, not vibes; a named cause behind every turn — and drive the final two commitments.

Optional: put [the-turning-point-activity-poster.pdf](#) (A3) on the wall so the two rules stay in view. No projector, no account, no online form.

How to run it

Time	Phase	What you do
0–5	Draw	Sketch the timeline from kickoff to now. Everyone adds real moments — launches, decisions, incidents, quiet weeks — as sticky notes along the line.
5–12	Mark	Circle the turning points — the moments the project clearly went better or worse. Place each in the up or down lane.
12–18	Cause	For each turning point, name the decision or habit that caused it. Not “the market” — the thing you did or didn’t do.
18–25	Lesson	Pick one habit that caused a good turn and one that caused a bad turn. Commit to keep the first and kill the second — with a name and a date.

The card

Circle each turn with the “turning point” card and pin its “what caused it” card beside it. The last two cards of the deck are the output: “keep this” holds the habit that turned things up, “kill this” the one that turned them down — each with an owner and a date written on it.

Failure modes

- **The timeline is empty.** People are recalling outcomes, not events. Prompt for dated moments — “the week we shipped,” “the day the stakeholder changed their mind.”
- **Every cause is external.** “The market,” “the budget.” Push back gently: what did you do or not do in response? The team only gets to keep or kill what was in its hands.
- **Nobody will name a down-turn.** Someone’s decision is on the wall. Reframe from blame to mechanism — “what did that decision make possible at the time?” — so the cause can be said without a person being tried.

Variations

- **Mid-project check-in:** run it on the timeline so far; the pattern of turns tells you whether you’re accelerating or drifting.
- **Two projects, one team:** lay both timelines side by side; the same habit usually turns both the same way.
- **Before a restart:** mark only the down-turns and their causes — that’s your list of what not to repeat.

Facilitation notes

- Insist on the date, or the moment quietly turns into a mood; a turning point you can point at is the whole format.
- Keep the two commitments small enough to survive the next busy sprint — oversized lessons are the ones nobody comes back to.

Put it on the wall

Print [the-turning-point-activity-poster.pdf](#) (A3) to hold the timeline shape, the two rules and the keep/kill prompts on one wall while you run it.

Props in this folder

- `the-turning-point-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): turning-point, what-caused-it, keep-this and kill-this cards, blanks, branded backs
- `the-turning-point-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks (`-Letter.pdf` is US Letter)
- `the-turning-point-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole review on one A3 wall sheet
- `the-turning-point-guide.md` · `-debrief.md` · `-start-here.md` — the facilitator guide, the debrief, the one-page start here
- `the-turning-point-license.md` — what you may do, how to rebrand, what shipped when
- `SKILL.md` · `the-turning-point.zip` — the machine-readable manifest, and the whole folder in one download

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the cards, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version needs nothing but a timeline on a wall, sticky notes and a pen each.

The Turning Point — Debrief

You didn't relitigate the project. You pinned it to a line with dated turns and named causes — and a lesson with a cause behind it can be kept or killed on purpose.

Use with `the-turning-point-guide.md` . The two commitments at minute 18 are the compressed version; this sheet is the full one.

How to run this debrief

- Talk with the whole line **visible** — the map, not anyone's memory of it, is what you are debriefing.
- Accept only decisions and habits as causes. "It just got hard" gets one polite push-back: what made it hard?
- Close on the keep card and the kill card, each with an owner and a date — the lesson is those two cards, not the conversation.

Read the shape of the line

1. **Whether the map agrees with memory.** Step back: does the project's story match how you *remember* it, or does the line disagree? The disagreement is the finding.
2. **Whether the turns cluster.** Up-turns and down-turns packed into one period usually point at a single cause, not many.
3. **Which down-turn nobody marked.** If a turn is missing because naming it is uncomfortable, that's the one worth looking at.

The four debrief questions

- For the biggest down-turn: was the cause a one-time decision, or a habit that kept making the same call?
- For the best up-turn: could you reproduce it on purpose, or was it luck wearing a decision's clothes?

- Which turning point surprised you — the one someone else marked that you didn’t even notice happening?
- For the habit you’re keeping: what will help it survive the next busy sprint? For the one you’re killing: what fills the space it leaves?

Failure modes of the debrief

Failure mode	Why it happens	The rescue
The timeline is all outcomes	People recall results, not events	Prompt for dated moments — “the week we shipped,” “the day they changed their mind.”
Every cause is external	“The market,” “the budget”	Push back gently: what did you do or not do in response? You only keep or kill what was in your hands.
The down-turn stays unnamed	A person’s decision is on the wall	Reframe from blame to mechanism: what did that decision make possible at the time?
The lessons don’t survive	Commitments are too big	Shrink keep and kill to habits that fit one sprint, with a named check-in date.