

**A sample activity from the  
Fenman trainer's resource:**

# **First-Time Leadership**

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Thank you for downloading this sample activity. You are welcome to use this material in your courses.

This sample activity is just one of 22 contained in the trainer's activity pack 'First-time Leadership', published by Fenman. Details of the other activities are given at the end of this document.

# First-time Leadership

## Contents:

Introduction

Activity 3: What kind of leader are you?

Full contents listing: 22 activities

## Introduction:

As more and more companies move towards a flatter, team-based structure, team leaders are having to learn to combine a leadership role with full-time operational responsibilities.

This pack is aimed at developing core leadership skills in people who are new to this demanding role. It encourages your people to focus on what leaders do, rather than who they are, so they can break their new responsibilities into manageable and achievable stages of development.

22 fresh ideas for your leadership training. Use them to:

- explore what leadership is
- increase awareness of the range of leadership styles available
- identify preferred styles
- give your people plenty of practice of the key recognised leadership skills

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# Activity 3

## What kind of leader are you?

3

### **Purpose**

To enable participants to explore a key aspect of their own leadership style; the degree to which they tend to balance concern for their people with concern to get the job done. To provide an opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches and plan to achieve a more balanced approach.

# Activity 3

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## What kind of leader are you?

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### Introduction

Every leader has two areas of concern; the task which has to be achieved and the people for whom they are responsible. One important aspect of leadership style lies in our approach to these two elements. Some people concentrate exclusively on the task, seeing the team merely as a means to an end. Others focus on the individuals in their team – they work hard at building relationships and take a pride in looking after *their people*. Both extremes have weaknesses and one measure of the successful leader is the extent to which they can keep these two elements in balance. This activity will help participants to consider how close they are to achieving that balance and to think about the problems associated with each extreme.

### Purpose

To enable participants to explore a key aspect of their own leadership style; the degree to which they tend to balance concern for their people with concern to get the job done. To provide an opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches and plan to achieve a more balanced approach.

### Application

A useful follow up to *Activity 2 What does a leader do?*, which discusses the leadership juggling act. The questionnaire provides the opportunity for some self-assessment and will enable participants to recognise which elements of the juggling act are likely to be weaknesses. It enables further discussion of the importance of balance in leadership and presents an individual challenge to achieve a more balanced approach. This activity can lead naturally to *Activity 4 What kind of leader can you be?*, where participants can see that having a balanced approach doesn't mean always doing things the same way. It is also very useful in

connection with understanding the need for different roles within teams and for recognising the importance of task and process within the team's activity and so could be linked effectively with *Activities 14 and 15*.



### TRAINER'S NOTE

The three aspects of leadership in the questionnaire exercise are based on the MCI (Management Charter Initiative) management standards and so this exercise can contribute to development of an NVQ portfolio. The Blue represents managing operations (Unit A1 at level 3, A2 at level 4), Yellow is linked to managing relationships (Unit C4 at level 3 and C5 at level 4) and Green is related to leading teams to achieve results (C12 at level 3 and C13 at level 4).

## What happens

You introduce the session as an opportunity for participants to explore their own leadership style and to begin thinking about their leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Participants then work individually to complete a questionnaire and scoring sheet to reveal their score in each of three different categories.

Next, you lead a discussion on the significance of the categories and ask the group to suggest practical ways in which individuals can improve their leadership balance.

Finally, you challenge the participants to select three actions they can take over the coming week to improve their leadership balance.

## Time

Overall time required: 1 hour 15 minutes

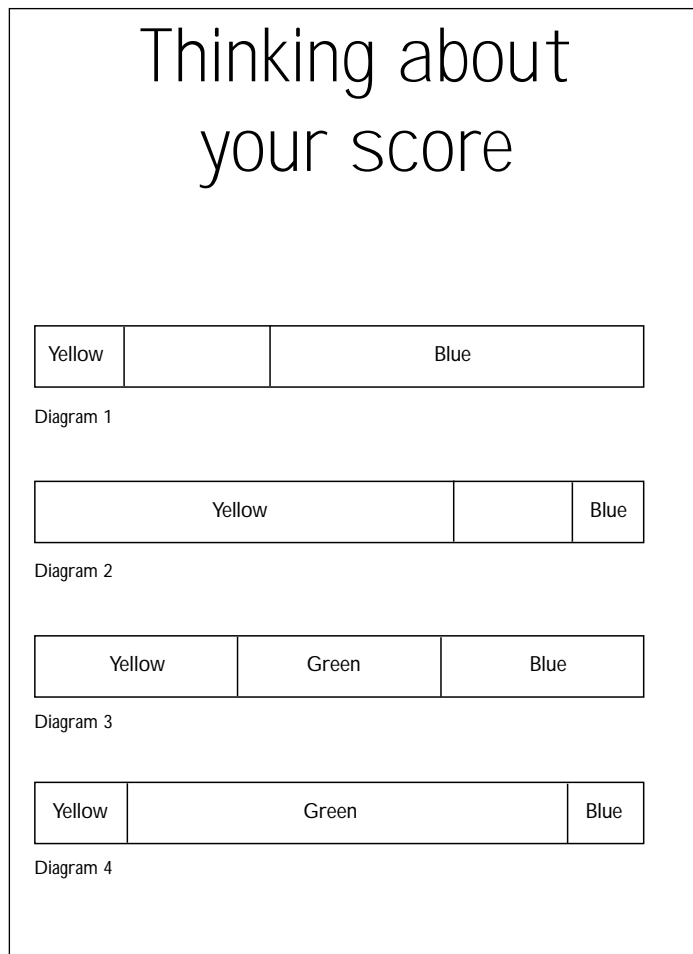
- Introducing the questionnaire: 5 minutes
- Completing the questionnaire: 20 minutes
- Looking at the scores: 10 minutes
- Strengths and weaknesses: 15 minutes
- Aiming for balance: 20 minutes
- Close: 5 minutes

## Materials & resources

- 4 Handout masters:
  - 3.1 *What matters most?*
  - 3.2 *What matters most? – scoresheet*
  - 3.3 *Thinking about your score*
  - 3.4 *Aiming for balance*
- 3 flipcharts and stands
- Marker pens for trainer
- Coloured marker pens (yellow, green and blue) for participants
- Paper and pens for participants
- Walls, screens or whiteboard for displaying flipchart pages
- Tape, Blu-tack® or pins
- Space for individual working and for a group to work as two separate teams

## In preparation

Reproduce the four diagrams from Handout 3.3 on a sheet of flipchart paper in colour. You will find this useful when you explain the significance of the participants' scores.



Consider how you are going to divide the group for the *Strengths and weaknesses* exercise, and where they will work on that part of the activity.



## TRAINER'S TIP

If you are carrying out the exercise for the first time then work through the questionnaire yourself and score it **before** reading the session notes in detail.

## How do I do it?

You start by explaining to the participants that the aim of this session is to:

- look at the way they focus their leadership energies
- consider the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches.

## INTRODUCING THE QUESTIONNAIRE



### Distribute Handout 3.1

*What matters most?*

Tell the participants that you would like them to fill in the questionnaire before you discuss the issues in detail, so that they don't have any preconceptions about it.

The scoring system is explained on the first page, but you will need to work through it with the participants before they begin. Use the example on the front page to ensure that they understand that they can give all the points to one sentence or distribute them among two or three – giving the most points to the sentences which best describe their attitudes and actions as the leader of an experienced work team.

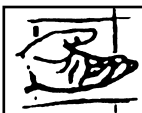
Encourage them to read the sentences very carefully, letting them know that they won't be pressurised to complete quickly – this is not a race. Most important, remind them that an exercise like this is only useful if they are as honest as possible, and let them know that the answers and score are for them – not for anyone else. If they want to share them later they are welcome to

do so but they will not be required to tell anyone their score or hand in the questionnaire.

Before starting the exercise, make sure that each participant has a pen and coloured markers in yellow, green and blue.

## COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Allow them to complete the questionnaire without pressure. Keep an eye out for anyone who seems to be struggling and if necessary discuss the particular question(s) with the individual. Sometimes it helps to encourage them to say the sentence aloud (quietly) so that they can hear whether it has the ring of their style.



### Distribute Handout 3.2

*What matters most? – scoresheet*

When the participants have completed the questionnaire, read through the score sheet with them. Repeat the warning that the answers are not always entered on to the sheet in *a.b.c.* order. When they have their scores for each column ask them to fill in the spectrum bar at the bottom in colour – first putting the yellow score, then adding the green and then filling in the last part in blue.

Allow participants about 20 minutes to complete and score their questionnaires.

## LOOKING AT THE SCORES



### Distribute Handout 3.3

*Thinking about your score.*

Discuss the significance of the colours, as outlined on the handout. At this stage you should concentrate on the characteristics of each colour, rather than the problems and issues each extreme raises.

- Yellow, the people oriented leader.
- Blue, the leader who focuses on the task.
- Green (being a blend of yellow and blue), the leader who attempts to keep both elements in focus, recognising that the job will only get done if the team reaches its potential.

Next, discuss the balance of their scores. Yellow and blue are the extremes – green is the central balancing area. The participants need to be very clear that the meaning of their scores depends not only on what they got for each section but also on the overall pattern of their scores.

Discuss this using the examples on Handout 3.3 Thinking about your score. (It does help to have these **in colour** ready on the flipchart.) A low score for one extreme and a high score for the other (Diagrams 1 and 2) implies that they are putting almost all their energy into one end of the spectrum and so their leadership is probably off balance. However, a fairly low score for yellow *and* blue combined with a high score for green implies a balanced approach (Diagrams 3 and 4).

## **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Before the participants consider how to take a more balanced approach, explain that you want them to think about the strengths and weaknesses of the two extremes. Allow 15 minutes for this exercise.

Divide the group into two teams, one Yellow and one Blue. Give each team a flipchart and stand. Tell them that they have 5 minutes to list the strengths and weakness of an approach to leadership which focuses on people (the Yellow team) or on task (the Blue team).

The issues you can expect to see uncovered are:

**Yellow team.** Their main concern is with people. There will be high levels of trust, and people are likely to feel good and enjoy being part of a happy team. These are certainly important leadership

achievements which help to create high morale and confidence **at first**.

### **BUT**

- Performance will be poor which will undermine that high morale.
- Quality issues will be missed because of a lack of monitoring.
- The most talented and motivated people will get frustrated and go elsewhere – leaving behind the lame ducks and the ones who come to work for a nice time but aren't interested in achieving anything.
- The leader will often become very stressed trying to keep everyone happy whilst getting most things done for themselves – probably not good at delegating.

**Blue team.** Their main concern is with the task. The leader concentrates all their energies on getting the job done and expects the team to do the same. In the short term, this approach will probably achieve high levels of performance. The team will enjoy being respected by others as achievers.

### **BUT**

- An aggressive and competitive approach will create stress and so undermine performance and confidence.
- Illness and absenteeism may rise.
- The lack of trust will mean the team needs constant supervision.
- They will be unlikely to contribute ideas or act on their own initiative.
- The capable team members will tend to go off and find jobs somewhere more rewarding.

- There may be unpleasant consequences like deliberate sabotage of work, or charges of constructive dismissal.

Ask each team to present their conclusions. Ask the other team for any further thoughts and add those to the flipchart.

## **AIMING FOR BALANCE**

During this last exercise continue to display the two flipchart lists of strengths and weaknesses as helpful prompts.

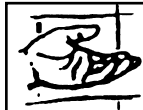
Introduce the exercise by pointing out to the participants that, having looked at the strengths and weaknesses of each end of the spectrum, the advantages of balance should be quite clear. If they go too far in either direction there will be some gains but more significant losses. If they can learn to balance out their concerns for both the team and the task they are likely to be consistently successful.

Using the blue strengths and weaknesses as a prompt, ask them to suggest some practical actions that someone who is too *blue* can take to redress the balance. Write them up on a flipchart and, if possible, display the page alongside the blue strengths and weaknesses.

Carry out the same exercise for the yellows, displaying the answers in the same way.

The kind of suggestions which arise will depend on the environment the participants work in, but here are a few starters. The third point is particularly interesting since it is the same from both directions!

Blue	Yellow
Discuss new tasks with the team <i>before</i> making my decisions.	Set the team clear objectives.
Make time to discuss personal issues with team members.	As a team, discuss strengths and weaknesses and set up a quality initiative.
Give clear helpful feedback to anyone who is not performing well.	Give clear helpful feedback to anyone who is not performing well.
Notice who keeps the team's morale up – and say thank you.	Celebrate an achievement.



#### Distribute Handout 3.4

*Aiming for balance*

Ask them to return to their scores and then fill in Handout 3.4. They can use some of the suggestions listed on the flipchart or come up with further ideas of their own.

### CLOSE

When the participants have completed their plans, end the activity by reminding them once more that all the elements are important – the task must be done, the team must be strengthened and individuals must be looked after. The secret of successful leadership is finding the green route which recognises that you get the job done through the team.





# What matters most?

3.1

3

This questionnaire presents a series of statements about leading an experienced work team. These statements are divided up into 10 sections. For each section, distribute a total of 10 points among the sentences which you think best describe your behaviour and beliefs as a team leader. The points can be divided among two or three of the sentences, or you might give all 10 points to a single sentence.

For example:

1a	2	I really enjoy jogging and going to the gym.
1b	3	I enjoy watching soaps and dramas on the television.
1c	5	I love to curl up with a good book.

or:

1a	7	I really enjoy jogging and going to the gym.
1b	3	I enjoy watching soaps and dramas on the television.
1c	0	I love to curl up with a good book.

or:

1a	0	I really enjoy jogging and going to the gym.
1b	10	I enjoy watching soaps and dramas on the television.
1c	0	I love to curl up with a good book.

Continued ...





# What matters most?

... continued

3.1

1a		I encourage team members to put forward their views and ideas.
1b		I make sure that team members really understand what we are aiming to achieve.
1c		I work out how things should be done and then tell the team what I expect them to do.
2a		I make it a priority to watch out for conflict or discontent in the team and deal with it before it undermines their performance.
2b		I encourage team members to be as competitive as possible and get results.
2c		I want people to be happy at work so I think it's important to be aware of conflict or discontent in the team and deal with it quickly before anyone gets hurt or upset .
3a		If anything is slowing down the job or affecting quality I nip it in the bud as fast as possible because meeting targets is the number one priority.
3b		If a team member needs to talk about a problem, whether about work or personal matters, I make it a priority.
3c		When we have difficulty meeting objectives, we discuss what changes we need to make.

continued ...





# What matters most?

... continued

3.1

3

4a		We get a real sense of achievement when the team succeeds in meeting objectives.
4b		I feel very disappointed if a team member is not honest with me.
4c		I feel very let down when the team fails to meet its targets.

5a		If someone's work is below par I discuss it with them and find out what's wrong.
5b		I give feedback so that team members know they've done a good job and are encouraged to do even better.
5c		If someone isn't up to scratch I would push them hard to achieve their targets.

6a		I will do anything necessary to keep the customer happy, whatever it takes.
6b		It is essential to give the team all the information and support necessary for them to complete the task.
6c		I make a point of keeping any promises I make to the team or individual members.

7a		My priority tasks are setting clear objectives and giving constructive feedback.
7b		I control results by maintaining strict systems to monitor quality and delivery.
7c		My job is to keep the team happy.

continued ...





# What matters most?

... continued

3.1

8a		I always take the chance to acknowledge the contributions of team members.
8b		As a team we celebrate success and discuss how we can improve our performance.
8c		I know I am doing a good job when we exceed our targets.

9a		My main job is to tell the team what to do and then make sure they do it.
9b		I encourage team members to ask questions and clear up any doubts so that they can achieve their objectives.
9c		I make a point of keeping my team informed about the <i>big picture</i> and when something new comes up I consult them about it as soon as possible.

10a		Individual team members always have enough information to be able to measure their own performance.
10b		I make sure that the team knows I am never satisfied with substandard work.
10c		If someone is uncertain or confused about their work I am sure they know they can always ask me or one of their colleagues for help.





# What matters most? – scoresheet

3.2

3

Enter your points into the appropriate boxes and then total up your score for each column. Take care – the scores are not always entered in *a,b,c* order.

	Yellow	Green	Blue
1a	<input type="text"/>	1b <input type="text"/>	1c <input type="text"/>
2c	<input type="text"/>	2a <input type="text"/>	2b <input type="text"/>
3b	<input type="text"/>	3c <input type="text"/>	3a <input type="text"/>
4b	<input type="text"/>	4a <input type="text"/>	4c <input type="text"/>
5a	<input type="text"/>	5b <input type="text"/>	5c <input type="text"/>
6c	<input type="text"/>	6b <input type="text"/>	6a <input type="text"/>
7c	<input type="text"/>	7a <input type="text"/>	7b <input type="text"/>
8a	<input type="text"/>	8b <input type="text"/>	8c <input type="text"/>
9c	<input type="text"/>	9b <input type="text"/>	9a <input type="text"/>
10c	<input type="text"/>	10a <input type="text"/>	10b <input type="text"/>
Totals	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Now enter all three scores onto the spectrum in colour. Starting on the left, colour in the yellow score. Then, *starting from where the yellow ends*, colour in the green. Finally, add the blue which should take you to the end of the grid.

Yellow	Green	Blue
<input type="text"/>		
1 ..... 10 ..... 20 ..... 30 ..... 40 ..... 50 ..... 60 ..... 70 ..... 80 ..... 90 ...100		





# Thinking about your score

3.3

What do those colours mean? Start by looking at the two extremes – the yellow and the blue:

**The Yellows.** The sunny approach, since a high score indicates that your main concern is with people. You aim to build trust, make people feel good and have a happy team.

1–20	LOW	Do you care enough about your team?
55 and above	VERY HIGH	Are you providing jobs or therapy?

**The Blues.** The task master approach – a high score indicates that your main concern is with the task. You are there to get a result and that is where you concentrate all your energies. Your team are there to do a job and you expect them to get on with it. You encourage an aggressive and competitive approach and push your team as hard as you see fit.

Scores: 1–20	LOW	Do you get things done?
55 and above	VERY HIGH	Watch out for the stab in the back!

The aim is balance. So does your score look balanced or does it look more like one of the diagrams below? Diagram 1 suggests someone who is so busy doing the job that they neglect the team. Diagram 2 shows a leader who is probably attending to people but not getting the job done – or perhaps running themselves ragged taking care of everybody else *and* doing all the work!

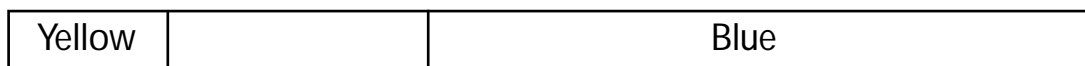


Diagram 1

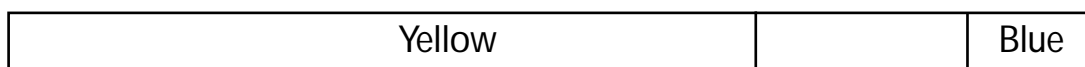


Diagram 2





# Thinking about your score

... continued

3.3

3

The way to achieve balance is not to rush to the other extreme but to focus on the green – where blue and yellow blend.

**The Greens.** The high growth approach – a high score indicates that you aim to achieve the task by making the most of the team. You recognise the need to get things in balance. You have a job to do and you know you are most likely to succeed in that by making the most of your team’s skills and experience and giving clear objectives and helpful feedback. You take care of the team, and you respect their contribution – because that way you all get results.

Scores: 1–20	VERY LOW	Danger zone
21–40	LOW	Still taking risks
41–59	MEDIUM	Healthy – <b>if</b> the blue and yellow are in balance
60 and above	HIGH	A balanced approach

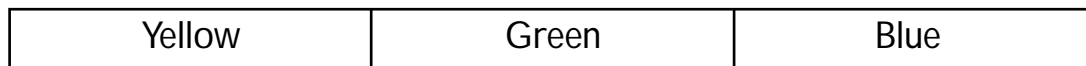


Diagram 3

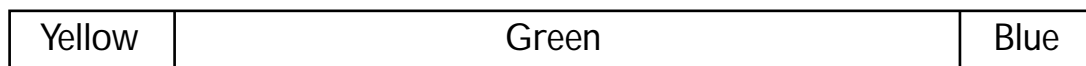


Diagram 4





# Aiming for balance

3.4

Using what you have learned from the questionnaire and the group discussion, consider three actions you can take over the coming week to begin to improve your leadership balance.

1.

2.

3.

The leadership aim is to get the overall balance right and to recognise when you need to concentrate on task and when on people.



# First-time Leadership

**Complete list of activities:**

## **SECTION ONE: WHAT IS A LEADER?**

### **1: What is a leader like?**

What does the word mean to you? Who are your leadership models? Are leaders born or made? An outline for an opening session to bring participants ideas about leadership into the open. This should help the group to see the variety of models we have and some of the limitations we traditionally put onto the word - and the fact that leaders are not always nice people.

### **2: What does a leader do?**

What are the key tasks of a leader? How does a leader make a difference? The leadership juggling act. Following from the opening session, this presents the chance to move away from defining a leader in the elusive terms of qualities and character and go into clearer territory - defining leaders in terms of what they need to achieve. The session should make the role seem more accessible.

## **SECTION TWO: ARE YOU A LEADER?**

### **3: What kind of leader are you?**

A personal audit to help groups explore their leadership potential and style, and consider its implications. An individual questionnaire, designed to assess natural leadership style, leads into a discussion of the different approaches and their pros and cons - in particular looking at the tendency of some to focus almost entirely on task and others to focus too much on process.

### **4: What kind of leader can you be?**

An exercise in which participants work in small groups to explore the realities of action-based leadership. Each small group decides on the appropriate leadership responses to a variety of situations and then negotiates their solution with the other groups. Valuable in forcing individuals to think through situations more fully and recognise the need for different approaches at different times. An opportunity to experience teamwork with an appointed leader.

### **5: The perfect leader?**

An opportunity to discuss expectations of leaders and decide areas where participants could make their own leadership behaviour more effective. Working in small groups and individually they tackle the idea that leaders are sometimes expected to be perfect. Having considered the arguments on both sides, they set themselves some personal challenges for more effective leadership behaviour.

## **6: Knowing yourself**

Recognising your values and their impact on your leadership role. The participants carry out a series of short exercises designed to help them clarify their own key values and those of the organisation they work for. Finally they are challenged to consider the messages they are giving to their teams and to decide whether there are discrepancies between their real values and those they display.

## **7: Managing yourself**

Knowing what matters. Introducing the Rule of Four to sort out some of the issues of important versus urgent activity.

## **8: Managing time**

Some ideas to help with what often feels like the toughest challenge of all. A round up of simple time-management techniques with the challenge to go away and apply a few and then meet to discuss what is working.

## **9: Taking care of yourself**

Coping with stress and keeping life in balance. A brief look at the causes and effects of stress. An audit of the group's current stress levels and life balance. Some simple stress busters and a personal action plan to start reducing stress.

## **10: A personal charter**

Developing a personal charter of rights whether for the training event or the workplace. The participants are involved in developing a charter of rights for the training event, and then move on to consider rights at work and in life at large.

### **SECTION THREE: LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

## **11: Learning to lead**

An activity centred around the importance of taking responsibility for personal development. A discussion of the importance of self-development is followed by a personal audit of development needs and a discussion of the many ways in which participants can find opportunities to learn.

## **12: The gentle art of feedback**

Introducing the key skill of giving feedback. A brief activity during which the participants discuss the importance of effective feedback and then look at basic guidelines for achieving it.

## **13: Communicating the essentials**

However busy a leader is, there is always time to use the three leadership arrows of communication. A discussion of the three arrows is followed by a role-play which provides the opportunity to practise and discuss the skills involved.

## **14: Making yourself heard**

Learning to be heard - especially when you have to say NO. A brief introduction to some assertive approaches and an opportunity to practise the delicate art of saying NO.

## **15: Communicating effectively**

Listen twice and speak once. Making your case. First a brief exercise to encourage and raise awareness of listening skills. Then practice in reducing vital ideas to the sound bite or metaphor which will make them memorable and contagious. Finally, the two elements are combined as the participants test out their own ideas and their colleagues' listening skills.

## **16: The ABC of planning**

Planning tools and approaches. A selection of simple planning tools and a framework for approaching planning tasks with an opportunity to use the group to help in planning for a real work issue.

## **17: Moving towards decisions**

Asking the right questions. Making decisions. Working through a Pareto exercise in teams, the group get practice in asking key questions and moving towards a valid decision.

## **18: Negotiating to win**

Can you only win if the other side loses? The group plays a simple card game designed to encourage them to look at negotiation from a win-win perspective. They learn the value of careful preparation and the kind of strategy needed to achieve a win-win outcome. Valuable for groups who have difficulty thinking outside the box.

## **19: Leading the team**

How many leaders does the team require? A teamwork exercise designed to encourage an understanding of team roles and the effects of different forms and styles of leadership.

## **20: Building the team**

Recognising the team's strengths and needs. Playing your part. A brief introduction to team development and the implications for leadership style. An opportunity to audit the teams participants are responsible for.

## **21: Learning to let go**

The vital art of delegation. Building on the lessons from the team sessions, this is an introduction to the stages of effective delegation and a planned approach to using delegation to develop other team members and spread the leadership load.

## 22: Coaching for growth

Passing on the task. This session provides a framework for understanding and planning the coaching process. It is designed as a coaching session so that the participants see the principles in action.

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