

# Governance Coach guidance notes

## Discovering decision-making

*An exercise for team-building looking at the way teams conduct meetings and make decisions together.*

Here's an exercise you can try as part of team development. It works best with about eight participants, but it doesn't matter, part of the reflection is on the size of the group. The exercise explores team dynamics with particular reference to how you generate, refine, and ultimately make decisions.

### THE SET UP

Pick a topic. Any topic. It doesn't have to be work related as long as it is something the team know something about and are likely to have opinions on.

Give each participant four different coloured cards.

Yellow = Agreement  
Blue = Disagreement  
Red = New idea  
Green = Point of clarification

*Note – you may wish to add letters to the cards for clarity as some people find it difficult to distinguish between certain colours.*

Identify a chair for the discussion and a timekeeper (who also doubles at the feedback chair)

### APPROACH

The chair introduces the topic/question and sets the time limit. Once explained, they ask the team for their thoughts. Each participant holds up a card before they are invited to speak by the chair. The colour card they hold up depends on the type of comment they wish to make (see code above). The chair, noticing the cards being held up, selects people in turn to express their thoughts. After 10-15 minutes of discussion, the chair summarises as best they can and announces what the group's opinion is on the topic under discussion. The timekeeper then leads a discussion asking the question, "How did you experience the exercise?" The debrief will provide valuable insights as to how the team functions and how this can be refined.

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## AN EXAMPLE DISCUSSION

For example, the discussion might go something like this...

Chair: 'Good morning everyone. We have ten minutes to reach a decision on what animal makes the best pet. If you have something to contribute, please hold up the coloured card that corresponds to the type of comment you wish to make, red for a new idea, yellow to agree with an idea someone else has already expressed, blue if you wish to disagree with a comment expressed, and green if you wish to seek clarification on something that has been said. I can see that some of you are already holding up cards so we'll start with Raj who is holding a green card.'

Raj: 'Is this a pet for a young family or an elderly person? I ask because they are likely to have different needs.'

Chair: 'Good question. It is entirely within our gift to define the question ourselves. Let's assume it is for a young family. Sylvia, you are holding a red card.'

Sylvia: 'Thank you. I think a cat makes the best pet as it is independent, good at keeping mice away, and they are easy to look after.'

*David was holding up a red card to express a new idea but, on hearing Sylvia's comment, switches it to a blue card because he fervently hates cats and cannot let the opportunity pass to tell the group about this.*

*Su on the other hand didn't have a strong opinion and was not holding any card, but she is good friends with Sylvia and wants to express her support for Sylvia's point of view so holds up a yellow card.*

*Mo has a spaniel which he adores. He was holding up a red card but takes it down in order to let the cat conversation play out before attempting to switch the discussion with his red card.*

*The chair turns to Su and the conversation plays out until...*

Timekeeper: 'OK we have 30 seconds left to sum up and close the debate.'

*Chair sums up and describes the conclusion reached.*

Timekeeper/Chair 2: 'Thank you for summing up. How did you find chairing the discussion?' Then turning to the whole group, "How did you experience that discussion?"

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*The group shares their thoughts. You might find they continue to use the cards, maybe for comic effect, maybe because they found it a useful device.*

Questions to ask include:

- How easy was it to chair the discussion?
- How easy did you find it to express yourself within the confines of the discussion?
- Do you think the conclusion reached was apposite?
- Was the size of the group conducive to a good discussion?
- What could have improved the discussion and decision reached?

The insights from such an exercise can help to increase the maturity of the groups' discussions and decision-making.

## FACILITATION

You can do this exercise yourself or you might wish to have an independent facilitator, either from your own organisation or from Governance Coach UK. However you use it, do let us know how you get on.

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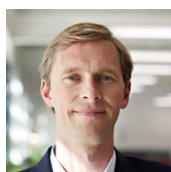
## Meet the team

### About us

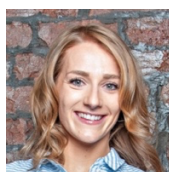
**Governance Coach UK** brings a coaching and governance focussed approach to individual and organisational development. We provide bespoke coaching, facilitation, training, and consultancy support to help individuals and teams tap into their natural resourcefulness and become more successful.



**Ben Westmancott**  
Director, Coach,  
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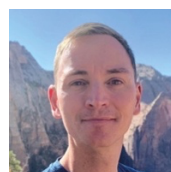
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