
USER GUIDE

Culture Science Cards

Getting started — how to run your first session.



Culture Science Cards

Getting Started Guide

You don't need training to use these cards. You
just need a conversation.

The Culture Science Cards are designed to help teams explore how they work, make sense of what's happening around them, and agree on what "effective" looks like in their context.

They don't give you the answers.

They help you find better ones—together.

These cards help teams move from assumptions... to agreement.

What These Cards Are (and Aren't)

These cards are not a diagnostic tool.

They are not about being right.

They are a way to:

- Surface how people are thinking and behaving
- Explore different perspectives
- Build shared understanding, and
- Agree on more effective ways of working

While some patterns of behaviour are generally more effective than others, this is not a “right answer” exercise—especially at the start.

The goal is not to get the correct answer.

It's to get the best answer for your team, in your context. You're unlikely to get that in a single session. This isn't a one-off exercise. The value builds through repeated conversations over time.

Because people will tolerate decisions made by others...

...but they will commit to what they help create. And that takes time.

How the Cards Are Structured

The 80 cards are organised into opposing pairs.

Each pair represents two different ways teams tend to operate in the same situation.

For example:

- Confident vs. Fearful
- Supportive vs. Critical
- Collaborative vs. Competitive



What This Means in Practice

Not all behaviours are equally effective.

Some patterns consistently lead to:

- Better performance
- Stronger relationships
- More sustainable results

Others may feel easier, safer, or more familiar—but tend to limit effectiveness over time.

In fact, some behaviours feel useful but create cost over time—and the cards help you see those costs.

That doesn't mean people are wrong for choosing them.

It usually reflects:

- Past experiences
- Habits
- Pressures
- Or what has been rewarded before

All behaviours have trade-offs in a human environment. The goal is to choose the set of behaviours that gives you the outcomes you want, with the fewest unintended costs.

Why the Pairs Matter

The value of the pairs is not to say “both sides are equally good.”

It’s to make the choices visible.

So instead of defaulting to habits or preferences, teams can ask:

“Is this helping us get the results we want—or getting in the way?”

How to Use This in a Session

You don’t need to explain all of this upfront.

Let people sort the cards first.

Then, as patterns emerge, prompt gently:

- “What impact does that have over time?”
- “Where does this help us—and where might it hold us back?”
- “What would happen if we leaned more the other way?”

The insight is far more powerful when the team sees it for themselves.

How to Use the Cards

Each of the following is a standalone workshop, typically run in 60–90 minutes.

There are 80 cards in the deck. In your first session, work through all 80 cards. This helps you see the full landscape and the trade-offs between behaviours.

The goal is not to sort the cards into the ‘correct’ piles. The

goal is to have a conversation that matters.

Start simple. Ask a real question. (Examples next section). Let the

group self-organise.



Starter Questions

If you're not sure where to begin, start with a simple question linked to an outcome that matters to your team.

Ask the group:

“Which behaviours would help us achieve this—and which would get in the way?”

Then sort the cards based on that question.

Performance & Results

- Which behaviours will help us deliver consistently strong results?
- Which behaviours might hold us back or create rework?

Customer Focus

- Which behaviours will create a strong customer experience?
- Which behaviours would frustrate or lose customers?

Quality of Work

- Which behaviours will lift the quality of what we do?
- Which behaviours could compromise quality over time?

Team Effectiveness

- Which behaviours will help us work well together?
- Which behaviours could create friction or slow us down?

Safety (Physical or Psychological)

- Which behaviours will create a safe environment?
- Which behaviours might create risk—physically or psychologically?

Leadership

- Which behaviours do we want to see from leaders in this team?
- Which behaviours would undermine trust or performance?

Decision-Making

- Which behaviours will lead to better decisions?
- Which behaviours could lead to poor or slow decisions?

Accountability

- Which behaviours strengthen ownership and follow-through?
- Which behaviours weaken accountability?

How to Use These

Pick **one question** that matters right now.

Don't try to cover everything.

Let the group:

- Sort the cards
- Discuss their reasoning
- Agree on what matters most

You can always come back and run another session with a different question.

A Final Tip

The question you choose shapes the conversation.

So choose one that:

- Feels real
- Connects to current challenges
- Actually matters to the team

Because when the question matters...
the conversation will too.

An Example of Multiple Workshops Building Over Time

1. Envisioning a Future State

"What behaviours do we want to see in our team, and which behaviours would we prefer not to see?"

Ask the group:

"Sort the cards into what we want (put them above the line), and what we don't want (below the line)."

Then let them go. Don't over-instruct. Let the group decide how to approach it.

As the conversation develops, prompt lightly:

- "If we were at our best, what would we see more of?"
- "What would we see less of?"
- "Where do we agree? Where do we differ?"

If the group gets stuck on a particular card, allow them to park it for now and move on. But then come back to it – when groups get stuck on a card – those are likely the most valuable conversations!

No cards are allowed to 'sit' in the middle – they must agree where it goes - above the line or below the line!

2. Prioritising Where to Focus

“What do we need to improve right now?”

Start with:

“We’ve sorted all 80 cards based on what we want to see

Once you’ve worked through the full set, focus on the cards that feel most important.

Which ones really matter to you - now?” Look

for:

- Energy in the discussion
- Repeated themes
- Areas of tension

Then ask:

“If we could improve just one or two of these, what would make the biggest difference?”

This is about focus—not perfection.

3. Changing the System, not just Behaviour

“Where does this show up—and what needs to change?”

Don't try to address all the cards identified. Start with **one** or **two** that matter.

Then explore:

- Where do we see this in our day-to-day work?
- When does it show up?
- What impact is it having?

Then shift the conversation:

“What in our environment is reinforcing this?” Look

at:

- Meetings
- Decision-making
- Goals and measures
- Communication

Finish with:

“What's one practical change we could make?”

Behaviour doesn't change through intention alone. It changes when the environment supports it.

4. Bringing Values to Life

“What do our values actually look like in behaviour?”

Take one value at a time.

Ask:

“Sort the cards under each value based on what it should look like in action.”

Then explore:

- What does this look like when we're doing it well?
- What does it look like when we're not?

You don't need to map every card in this exercise – but it can be interesting to see what cards are left over!

Focus on what's meaningful and recognisable.

This is how values move from words... to ways of working.

**NOTHING
CHANGES
UNTIL
MINDSET
CHANGES**

@gapingvoid

Working with Multiple Groups

If you're running this with several groups, you can deepen the conversation by getting them to learn from each other.

Once each group has completed their initial sort:

Rotate and Explore

Ask each group to move clockwise to the next group's work. Then:

"Look at how this group has sorted the cards. What's different from how you approached it?"

Asking participants why the other group might have put that card in a different position also gets participants thinking from the other side of an issue.

You're not trying to create the perfect set of behaviours. You're choosing the trade-offs you're willing to live with.

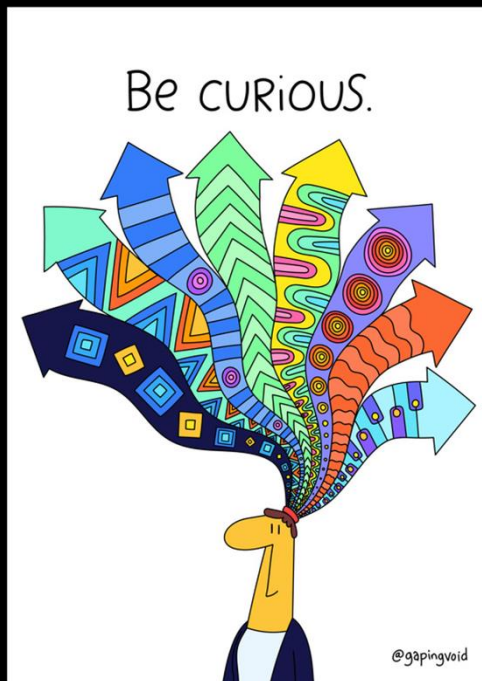
Get Curious (Not Critical)

Set the tone clearly:

“Your job is not to fix or debate. Your job is to understand.”

Encourage questions like:

- “Why might this group have seen it this way?”
- “What might they be experiencing that led to this?”



Ask and Listen

Invite brief interaction:

“Ask them about one or two choices that surprised you.” Focus

on:

- Curiosity
- Listening
- Understanding

Not defending. Assume the other group sees something you don't.

Move Toward Shared Agreement

Bring the whole group together and ask:

“Having seen different perspectives, where do we want to land as a broader group?”

You're aiming for:

- Greater alignment
- Better-informed choices
- Shared ownership

You don't need agreement on everything. Focus on what matters most.

A Note on Changing Your Mind

One of the most valuable outcomes from these sessions is not just agreement.

It's better thinking.

Sometimes you'll hear something that challenges your view. That's a good thing.

Being willing to change your mind in the face of strong reasoning is a sign of maturity and confidence.

At the same time:

- This is not about giving in
- And it's not about winning

It's about this:

Holding your view clearly—and staying open to improving it

Encourage the group toward:

- Strong thinking
- Genuine curiosity
- A willingness to update their view when it improves the outcome

How to Get the Most from a 90-Minute Session

A simple rhythm:

- 5–10 mins — Set context and start
- 45–60 mins — Let the conversation develop
- 15–20 mins — Land 1–2 clear takeaways

If time gets tight, don't rush. There's always time in the future for more conversations. This exercise is not designed for a one-off interaction, but to build over many iterations.

One real insight discussed in detail can be worth more than covering more cards – at the same time don't let the conversation get bogged down.



A Final Thought

There are 80 cards—and in your first session, you should use all of them.

That's important.

Because the value isn't in picking a few behaviours that sound good. It's in seeing the full landscape of options—and the trade-offs between them.

When you work through all the cards, you start to notice:

- How some behaviours reinforce each other
- How others create tension
- How different combinations shape very different ways of working

You're not just selecting cards. You're **building a system**.

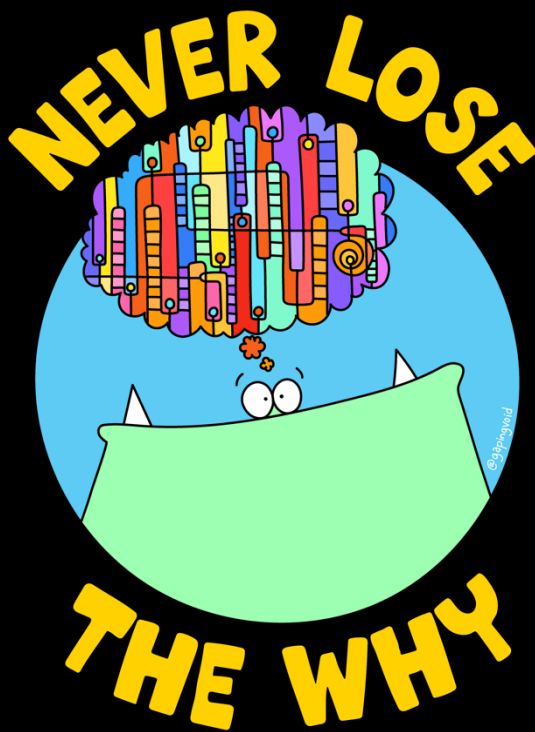
Over time, you won't need to revisit every card in every session. You'll focus on the ones that matter most in the moment.

But at the start, seeing the whole picture is what allows the team to:

- Make conscious choices
- Avoid unintended consequences
- Build a way of working that actually holds together
- So begin wide.

Work through the full set.

Then narrow your focus—based on what matters most.



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