



CULTURE SCIENCE CARDS™

Certified Facilitator Programme

Programme Handbook 27-28 May 2026

Certified Facilitator Programme

Programme Handbook

Welcome.

Two days. One methodology. The science behind why it works — and the practice to make it yours.

Name	
Organisation / Role	
Email	
Cohort Date	
First use — who will you run this with?	

How to use this handbook

This handbook is yours. Write in it. Dog-ear it. It follows the programme sequence exactly so you always know where you are and what comes next.

It serves two purposes: a working document during the two days — with reflection spaces after each session — and a practitioner reference you keep and use in your client work afterwards.

The theory sections are written to depth. In the room we move quickly through each theory. On the page you have everything you need to explain the science to clients, handle sceptics, and understand why the methodology works the way it does.

Facilitator notes appear in shaded boxes throughout. These contain the programme design rationale — the thinking behind each session that a practitioner needs to understand, not just experience.

Programme at a Glance

Day 1 — Feel It, Understand It, See the System

Time	Session	Mode
9:00	The Full Sort — cards in hand, one question, go	Experience
10:15	Morning tea	
10:30	Debrief as participants — what happened in you?	Reflection
11:15	Debrief as facilitators — what did you observe?	Analysis
11:45	Culture intro — what culture is and why changing it is hard	Context
12:05	Lunch	
12:35	The behavioural science — five theories	Theory + Experience
14:00	The quadrant discovery	Discovery
15:00	The architecture reveal	Knowledge
15:30	Buffer — close Day 1	
16:00	Close	

Day 2 — Master the Practice, Build the Repertoire

Time	Session	Mode
9:00	Overnight reflections — what came up?	Discussion
9:20	The facilitator as choice architect — role, language, opening questions	Practice
9:45	Facilitation practice — Full Sort (open, debrief, close)	Practice
11:00	Morning tea	
11:15	Difficult rooms	Both
12:00	Exercise repertoire — taught	Knowledge
12:30	Exercise repertoire — practice rounds 1 & 2	Practice
13:15	Lunch	
13:45	Exercise repertoire — practice round 3 + debrief	Practice
14:15	The improvement cycle	Application
14:40	Positioning with clients	Practice
15:00	Your first use — planning session	Application
15:25	Certification and community	Closing
16:00	Close	

Day One

Session 1 · 9:00 — The Full Sort

No instructions. No theory. Cards in hand. One question.

Setup

When opening a new deck, it contains theme cards as well as the 80 behaviour cards. Before dealing, the group removes the theme cards and sets them aside. The facilitator places the deck on the table. From that point the group owns the physical process entirely — shuffling, dealing, flipping, and placing. The facilitator never touches the cards again.

Groups are a maximum of six people. Six is the size at which every voice has genuine space. With six participants, each person holds approximately thirteen cards.

Display the opening question and the two anchor questions on screen. Say nothing else.

The Two Anchor Questions

These two questions apply to every card throughout the exercise:

- 1. What value might this behaviour bring to the team?**
- 2. What constraint might this behaviour introduce in the way the team works?**

Then decide: above or below the line. Nothing stays in the middle permanently.

Choosing the Opening Question

The opening question is the single most important facilitation decision. Choose it before the session based on what matters most to this group right now.

General — suitable for any context

“What are the behaviours that would be required in a high-performing team — one that consistently delivers quality outcomes, treats people well, and adapts to pressure without falling apart?”

If you are not sure where to begin:

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

Context-Specific Opening Questions

Context	Above the line	Below the line
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	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 here?	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?

Pick one question that matters right now. Sessions can also build over time:

Session 1: Envisioning — what behaviours do we want, and which would we prefer not to see?

Session 2: Prioritising — of everything we sorted, what do we need to improve right now?

Session 3: Changing the system — where does this show up, and what needs to change in our environment?

Session 4: Bringing values to life — what do our values actually look like in behaviour?

How the Exercise Works

Once the opening question is displayed, stop talking entirely. Taking turns around the table, each person flips one card face up and the group discusses it together before anyone flips the next. The two anchor questions guide every card. After discussing both, the group decides: above or below.

Cards that cannot be quickly decided go temporarily in the middle — but this is a parking space, not a resting place. The exercise does not close until every card is placed. Nothing sits on the fence permanently.

If the group gets stuck on a card, encourage them to park it and move on — but they must return to it. When groups get stuck on a card, that is usually where the most valuable conversation lives.

Light Prompts During the Sort

Prompt lightly when needed. Do not direct. Do not share views.

- “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?”
- “Take your time with this one — what is the value in this behaviour, even if we end up placing it below?”

A Note on Above and Below the Line

Cards are never good or bad. Every behaviour carries value in some context. The question is whether the team wants this behaviour as a regular feature of how they work. A behaviour that is occasionally useful but generally problematic still belongs below the line.

Example: “Question decisions made by others” has genuine value in the right moment. But if a team normalises it, every decision gets relitigated. Trust erodes. Progress stalls. Below the line is the honest placement — not because the behaviour is wrong, but because it does not serve the team as a norm.

Facilitator Observation Notes

Which cards slowed the group down?

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Which cards passed quickly? What might that tell you?

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Where did energy rise or tension surface?

--

What did you notice about group dynamics — who spoke early, who held back, who pushed?

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Session 2 · 10:30 — Debrief as Participants

Before we analyse anything — just notice. What actually happened in you?

What surprised you about that conversation?

Was there a moment where something shifted — in yourself or in the room? Describe it.

What did the cards make possible that a blank piece of paper would not have?

What happened when you held both questions — value and constraint — before deciding? Did that change anything?

Where did the conversation feel most honest?

The Fence-Sitting Reflection

Almost every group will have cards they struggled to place. The question to introduce:

“What happens if a team agrees to a behaviour that really could go either way — sometimes valuable, sometimes damaging, depending on context?”

A behaviour that requires perfect timing and judgement to be useful is a high-risk behaviour to normalise. Ambiguous standards are no standard at all. Below the line does not mean wrong forever. It means: we do not want this as our norm.

Which card was hardest for your group to place, and why?

Session 3 · 11:15 — Debrief as Facilitators

Now step back. You were also observing. What did you see in the room?

What did you notice about how group dynamics changed as the exercise progressed?

Where did the turn-based structure help the conversation? Where did it create tension?

Where did the facilitator intervene, and where did they stay out of the way? What was the effect of each?

When did the conversation feel most real? What conditions made that possible?

What would you do the same if running this tomorrow? What would you do differently?

What are you most uncertain about as a facilitator right now?

The facilitator's most powerful skill is restraint. The moments of most value were almost never the moments the facilitator spoke.

11:45 — What Culture Actually Is

Before we name the science, let's name the problem it's solving.

Beat 1 — What Culture Actually Is

Not the values on the wall. Not the poster in the corridor. Not what the CEO says in the town hall.

Culture is the sum of the behaviours that get reinforced every day — what gets rewarded, what gets tolerated, what gets punished, and what gets ignored. The gap between stated culture and actual culture is almost always widest at the moments that matter most.

"The way people believe they need to behave to fit in, stay safe, and get ahead."

Not what's on the wall. What actually happens under pressure.

Beat 2 — Why Culture Drifts

Culture rarely fails loudly. It drifts quietly — usually under pressure. The gap between who we say we are and how we actually behave is widest at exactly the moments that matter most: high-stakes decisions, tight deadlines, conflict, uncertainty.

Under pressure, patterns emerge. Teams revert to habits. The cards make those patterns visible — so teams can talk about them constructively.

Think of a culture drift you have witnessed. What was the trigger? What was the cost?

Beat 3 — Why Most Culture Programmes Fail

Edgar Schein's model identifies three levels at which culture operates. Most culture programmes never get past the first.

Level	What it means
Level 1 — Artefacts	Values posters, culture decks, engagement surveys, town halls. Visible. Easy to produce. Almost never changes behaviour on its own. Most culture programmes live here.
Level 2 — Espoused Values	What the organisation says it believes. The gap between this and Level 1 is where culture decay lives.
Level 3 — Basic Assumptions	The unconscious beliefs that actually drive behaviour. Invisible until disrupted. The only level where lasting change happens. The cards and the improvement cycle work here.

Beat 4 — What Behavioural Economics Adds

Behaviour is not primarily driven by values, intentions, or character. It is driven by context — the environment, the social norms, the defaults, the incentives. Change the context and you change the behaviour, even without changing the person.

This is why the card sort works. And this is what the afternoon will unpack.

Where have you seen behaviour change when the environment changed — not when people were told to change?

Close before lunch: sleep on this question — if we wanted the below-the-line behaviours to persist, what would we keep exactly as it is right now? We'll return to it this afternoon.

Session 4 · 12:35 — The Behavioural Science

Everything you experienced this morning has a name.

Theory 1 — Kahneman: System 1 and System 2 Thinking

The Experience — The Bat and Ball Problem

A bat and ball cost \$1.10 together. The bat costs \$1 more than the ball. How much does the ball cost?

Most people answer 10 cents. The correct answer is 5 cents. If the ball costs 10 cents, the bat costs \$1.10, and together they cost \$1.20 — not \$1.10. System 1 fired before System 2 had a chance.

The Core Theory

Daniel Kahneman identified two fundamentally different modes of human thinking. System 1 is fast, automatic, and emotional — it responds before you know you are thinking. System 2 is slow, deliberate, and rational — it requires conscious effort. In most group settings — especially those involving hierarchy, status, or performance pressure — people default to System 1.

The Culture Science Cards shift groups into System 2 — not by instruction, but by design. Holding cards, taking turns, and discussing both the value and the constraint of each behaviour slows thinking down. The absence of a correct answer removes the emotional threat that triggers System 1 defensiveness.

In the cards: the reason the room felt different this morning — slower, more honest, more considered — is System 2 activation.

Deeper Concepts — Read and Return to These

Cognitive Ease — and the Illusion of Understanding

When something is easy to process, System 1 treats it as true. Reading 'We act with integrity' on a wall is cognitively easy — so it feels like agreement. It isn't. The card sort creates cognitive effort: every behaviour must be actively discussed and placed. That effort is where genuine thinking happens.

WYSIATI — What You See Is All There Is

System 1 constructs a coherent story from whatever information is available, ignoring what it doesn't know. People form strong opinions about culture from a handful of vivid experiences. The card sort disrupts this by surfacing all 80 behaviours systematically. The conversation becomes more complete and more honest than any open discussion of culture ever is.

Loss Aversion

Losses feel roughly twice as painful as equivalent gains feel good. This explains why placing a card below the line can feel uncomfortable even when the group knows the behaviour is genuinely problematic. The discomfort is not about the card. It is about the psychology of letting go. Understanding this helps facilitators respond when a group resists placing a card.

The Peak-End Rule

People judge an experience by how it felt at its most intense moment and at its end — not by the average. Design your close deliberately. The cards that surfaced the most important insight are worth returning to at the end. How a session closes shapes how the team remembers it, talks about it afterwards, and whether they want to do it again.

Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D. (1992). Advances in Prospect Theory. Journal of Risk and Uncertainty.

Where did you notice System 1 trying to take over this morning? Which deeper concept feels most relevant to your client context?

Theory 2 — Thaler & Sunstein: Nudge Theory and Choice Architecture

The Experience — Opt-In vs Opt-Out

Raise your hand if you would opt in to something. Note the number. Now reframe: everyone is enrolled unless they actively opt out. How many would stay? The number who remain is almost always dramatically higher. Same choice. Different default. Different outcome. That is a nudge.

The Core Theory

Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein established that the most effective way to change how people behave is not to tell them what to do, but to design the environment in which they make choices. A nudge is any element of that environment which influences decisions without restricting options. The person who designs that environment is the choice architect. The facilitator's role in a Culture Science Cards session is exactly that.

Key Nudges in the Methodology

Nudge	What it is	How it shows up
Spotlight effect	Fear of being wrong or judged	No right or wrong answer removes the threat
Anchoring	First view expressed shapes group thinking	Turn-based dealing — no voice sets the frame first
Status quo bias	Doing nothing is easier than acting	Holding cards makes participation the default
Framing	How a question is worded changes the conversation	Opening question focuses on shared goals, not fault
Loss aversion	People resist giving up their position	New shared standards — no one has to concede
Facilitator restraint	Helping people discover rather than directing	Staying out of the way is the most sophisticated nudge

Deeper Concepts — Read and Return to These

The EAST Framework

Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely. The Culture Science Cards methodology applies all four simultaneously: Easy (cards in hand, turn-based structure), Attractive (the question is about the team's best), Social (collective agreement), Timely (run at a genuine moment of need). EAST is also a useful diagnostic when a card sort has produced insight but little subsequent change: which of the four was missing from the follow-up?

Sludge — The Opposite of a Nudge

Sludge is friction that makes doing the right thing harder than it needs to be — the approval process that requires three sign-offs, the meeting culture that makes speaking up riskier than staying silent. When a team has committed to a priority behaviour but is not sustaining it, the question is almost always: what sludge is making this harder than it needs to be? Removing friction is often more effective than increasing motivation.

The Limits of Nudges

Nudges work best for automatic, low-stakes decisions. They are less effective for complex, emotionally charged ones. The card sort is most powerful at the start of a culture conversation. Sustained behaviour change requires the improvement cycle to follow. Knowing when the cards are the right tool — and when deeper structural or leadership intervention is needed — is the mark of a sophisticated practitioner.

Thaler, R.H. & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). *Nudge*. Yale University Press.

Service, O. et al. (2014). *EAST: Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights*. Behavioural Insights Team.

Which nudge did you feel most strongly this morning? Where does sludge show up in one of your client organisations?

Theory 3 — Deci & Ryan: Self-Determination Theory

The Experience — The Reward Experiment

Two groups get the same creative problem. Group A is told they will be timed and the fastest solver wins a prize. Group B is simply asked to solve it. Which group performs better? Group B consistently outperforms Group A. The reward narrows thinking. Intrinsic motivation expands it.

The Core Theory

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's Self-Determination Theory identifies three fundamental psychological needs whose fulfilment produces intrinsic motivation: autonomy (I chose this), competence (I can do this), and relatedness (we are in this together). When a team uses the Culture Science Cards, all three are met simultaneously. The team chose the standards. They already know what good looks like — the cards give them the language. Standards are agreed, not imposed. The result is commitment rather than compliance.

In the cards: this is why the culture poster on the wall does not work. And why this does.

Deeper Concepts — Read and Return to These

The Motivation Continuum

SDT describes a continuum from completely controlled to completely autonomous: External regulation (do it or face consequences) → Introjection (do it to avoid guilt) → Identification (do it because I see its value) → Integration (do it because it is part of who I am). The goal of the methodology is integration — where agreed standards become part of how the team thinks of themselves. The Commitment Stack and improvement cycle are designed to move teams along this continuum.

The Undermining Effect

Introducing extrinsic rewards for an activity people were already intrinsically motivated to do reduces their subsequent motivation. If a team has developed genuine ownership of a behavioural standard through the card sort, introducing performance metrics or formal incentives around the same behaviour can undermine the ownership. Know when not to formalise culture work into HR systems.

Psychological Needs Under Pressure

Need satisfaction predicts both wellbeing and performance — and the relationship is strongest under pressure. When autonomy, competence, and relatedness are unmet, people default to defensive behaviour. This is the psychological explanation for the quadrant model's below-the-line clusters: both defensive quadrants are need-deprivation responses, not character flaws.

Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior. Plenum Press.

Deci, E.L. et al. (1999). A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation. Psychological Bulletin.

Think of a time you were told what the culture should be — versus a time you helped decide it. What was different about your commitment?

Theory 4 — Social Norms Theory

The Experience — The Waiting Room Video

A person sits in a waiting room. When a beep sounds, actors around them stand up. Without instruction, the unknowing participant stands too — simply because everyone else does. After the video: has anyone in this room ever gone along with something at work — a decision, a silence — not because you agreed, but because everyone else seemed to?

The Core Theory

Humans are powerfully motivated to conform to social norms — especially norms they perceive to be genuinely held by their group. Many apparent cultural norms in organisations are not actually held by most people — they are maintained by silence, conformity, and the belief that everyone else agrees. Culture Science Cards makes implicit norms explicit. By the end of a session, the team has agreed on specific behavioural standards, out loud, in the room, together. Those standards now function as genuine social norms.

In the cards: the conversation in that room this morning will be referenced in that team long after today — not because it was a workshop, but because it produced a genuine social norm.

Deeper Concepts — Read and Return to These

Descriptive vs Injunctive Norms

Descriptive norms describe what people actually do. Injunctive norms describe what people think should happen. These often diverge in organisations. The card sort makes both visible — the above/below placement reflects aspiration (injunctive) while the discussion of where the team actually sits reveals reality (descriptive). The gap between them is one of the most productive conversations a facilitator can facilitate.

Pluralistic Ignorance

Most members of a group privately reject a norm but assume others support it — so they continue to go along with it. This is extraordinarily common in organisations and explains some of the most surprising moments in card sorts — when a card everyone assumed would go above the line turns out to be privately disagreed with by most of the group. The card sort surfaces this because it creates a space where private views become public without individual risk.

The Boomerang Effect

Naming below-the-line behaviour prominently can normalise it. Always anchor debrief conversations in aspiration, not diagnosis. The above/below framework is specifically designed to avoid this — the focus is always on what the team wants to see more of.

Social Proof and Facilitator Behaviour

People take cues about appropriate behaviour from others who seem credible. The facilitator is one of the most powerful sources of social proof in the room. When you are calm, unhurried, and genuinely non-judgemental, the room becomes that. When you are anxious or appear to have a preferred outcome, the room picks that up too.

Cialdini, R.B. (2001). Influence: Science and Practice. Allyn & Bacon.

Prentice, D.A. & Miller, D.T. (1993). Pluralistic Ignorance and Alcohol Use on Campus. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

What social norms did you notice operating in the room this morning? Where might pluralistic ignorance be operating in one of your client organisations?

Theory 5 — The Science of Culture Change

Why most culture programmes fail — and what the research says about what actually works.

The Opening Question

Think of a culture programme you have experienced or observed. Did it produce lasting change? If not, what got in the way? Two minutes to write, then share.

The Core Theory

Most below-the-line behaviours are not choices — they are habits. They are triggered automatically by environmental cues and produce familiar rewards. Telling people to stop rarely works, because the cue and the reward remain in place. Lasting change requires changing the environment that produces the behaviour — not just the intention of the people in it.

The practitioner's diagnostic question:

"If we wanted the below-the-line behaviours to persist — if we were deliberately designing an environment that would produce them — what would we keep exactly as it is right now?"

Deeper Concepts — Read and Return to These

The Habit Loop (Duhigg)

Cue → Routine → Reward. To change a habit, the cue and reward typically remain constant. The intervention is in the routine — replacing the habitual behaviour with a new one that produces the same reward through an above-the-line path. The improvement cycle's Stage 3 is essentially habit redesign: identify the cue, understand the reward, design a new routine.

Implementation Intentions (Gollwitzer)

Intention alone is a poor predictor of behaviour. Forming an if-then plan — 'If situation X arises, I will do Y' — more than doubles follow-through compared to simple goal-setting. The Commitment Stack applies this directly: not 'be more collaborative' but 'at every project kickoff, we will spend ten minutes agreeing which of our priority cards are most relevant.' The specificity is the mechanism.

The Environment Is the Culture

When good people consistently produce bad outcomes, look at the system, not the people. The most important question after a card sort: what in the environment is currently making the below-the-line behaviour the path of least resistance? Meetings that reward aggression. Decision processes that punish challenge. Performance systems that measure individual output at the expense of collective behaviour. These are culture.

The card sort names what the team wants. The improvement cycle changes what the environment produces. Both are necessary. Neither works without the other.

Schein, E.H. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
 Duhigg, C. (2012). *The Power of Habit*. Random House.
 Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business School Press.
 Gollwitzer, P.M. (1999). *Implementation Intentions*. *American Psychologist*.

Which of the five theories feels most directly relevant to the culture challenges your clients face? Why?

What in one of your client organisations is currently making the below-the-line behaviour the path of least resistance?

Mapping the Science to the Methodology

Element	Which theory?	What it produces
Cards dealt by participants	Choice architecture	Removes anchoring; everyone starts equally
Turn-based flipping	Choice architecture	Prevents dominance; every voice enters
Value + constraint questions	Kahneman System 2	Slows thinking; prevents cognitive ease
No right or wrong answer	System 2 + Nudge	Psychological safety; removes spotlight effect
Above/below — nothing on fence	Social Norms + Habits	Makes norms explicit; public commitment
Team decides; facilitator doesn't	Self-Determination Theory	Autonomy; intrinsic ownership
Improvement cycle	Culture Change Science	Embeds aspiration in environment; sustains change

Is there an element of the methodology you now understand differently through the science lens?

Session 5 · 14:00 — The Quadrant Discovery

You sorted the cards intuitively this morning. Now look more carefully at what you built.

Stage 1 — The Intuitive Re-Sort (15–20 minutes)

Participants look only at their above-the-line cards. The instruction:

“Look at your above-the-line cards. Without any other guidance, see if you can find natural groupings within them — cards that seem to share something about either who they are focused on, or what they are trying to achieve. Go with what you notice.”

Do not confirm or deny emerging groupings. If anyone asks whether they are on the right track: “What does your instinct say?”

Most groups will find two natural clusters without being told what they are. Some will find it quickly. Some will take longer. That variation is itself useful data for the debrief.

Stage 2 — Pattern Recognition (10 minutes)

Once clusters form, ask each group to name what they found. What do the cards in each group share? What would you call each cluster?

What groupings did you find in your above-the-line cards? What did you call them?

Stage 3 — The Quadrant Reveal (25–30 minutes)

The above-the-line cards cluster into two fundamentally different types of effective behaviour:

Getting things done effectively	Treating people with dignity
Goal Directed · Creative · Authentic · Confident	Empowering · Supportive · Collaborative · Empathetic
Task and self-directed in the best sense. Clear goals. Honest thinking. Confident action. Creative problem-solving. Without these, teams drift, avoid, conform, and underperform.	Relationship-directed in the best sense. Developing others. Sharing responsibility. Working collectively. Showing genuine care. Without these, teams produce results at the cost of people — never sustainable.

Both clusters are necessary. A team that has one without the other is incomplete.

The below-the-line cards also cluster into two types — and both share the same underlying driver:

Defensive through control and status	Defensive through the need to be accepted
Controlling · Competitive · Critical · Demanding	Dependent · Conventional · Seek Approval · Fearful
Task-focused in appearance — but the motivation is self-protection through dominance. Managing threat by asserting power. Not about outcomes. About status.	Relationship-focused in appearance — but the motivation is self-protection through compliance. Managing threat by making oneself acceptable rather than effective.

The profound insight:

Both below-the-line quadrants are driven by the same force — threat response. One expresses it through aggression. The other through appeasement. Both undermine team performance. Both are need-deprivation responses, not character flaws. Below-the-line behaviour is never a moral judgement. It is an observation about what threat does to people — and an implicit question about what kind of environment would make those defensive responses unnecessary.

Were you surprised by the clusters you found intuitively before the reveal?

How does this model change how you would talk about below-the-line behaviour with a client team?

Where do you tend to go under pressure — personally? Which quadrant?

Session 6 · 15:00 — The Architecture Reveal

Now turn the cards over.

The Three Layers

Layer	What it enables
The Numbers (1–80)	Record which specific cards a team prioritises by number. Return to exactly those cards in a follow-up session. Compare results across teams over time. Design custom subsets referenced by card number.
The Colours	Each colour corresponds to one of the eight theme pairs. Identify any card's theme in seconds. Pull a complete 10-card theme set for a deep dive. Recognise theme patterns in a sort in real time.
The Back of the Card	The theme identifier connects to the quadrant model and confirms what participants discovered through intuition in Stage 3.

Ask the group: how many of you noticed the numbers during the exercise this morning? Almost no one will have. That is the point — they were doing the work without the system being visible. The system is always there.

Designing with the Architecture — Pair Exercise

Work in pairs to design a custom card subset for a specific client context. Identify which cards by number or colour, which opening question, and what outcome you are designing for.

Client context:

Cards included (by number or colour theme):

Opening question:

Outcome you are designing for:

Close Day 1: sleep on everything. The science, the quadrant, the architecture. Tomorrow morning we discuss your role as a facilitator — and then you practise it.

What is the one thing you will be thinking about tonight?

Day Two

Session 7 · 9:00 — Overnight Reflections

One thing that landed.

One thing you are still questioning.

One thing you want to try today.

Session 8 · 9:20 — The Facilitator as Choice Architect

Your job is not to lead the team to an answer. Your job is to design an environment in which the team discovers its own answer — and owns it.

What you do	What you don't do
Choose the right opening question before the session	Share your own view on any card or behaviour
Display the opening question and anchor questions on a slide	Rescue silence — let it breathe
Place cards on the table — the group removes theme cards, shuffles, and deals	Touch the cards once they are in play
Create conditions for safety — no judgement, no correct answer	Direct the group toward a particular placement
Observe without intervening unnecessarily	Judge any contribution as better or worse
Reflect back what you hear without editorialising	Fill space with commentary or suggestions
Name the gap without blame when it surfaces	Summarise prematurely — let the team summarise
Help the team move toward their agreement, not yours	

The facilitator's only contact with the cards is placing them on the table at the start.

From that point the group owns the physical process entirely — shuffling, dealing, flipping, placing. Handing physical ownership of the cards to the group is the moment autonomy transfers. The facilitator never touches them again.

The hardest thing: most experienced facilitators are used to adding value through contribution. This methodology asks you to add value through restraint. The turn-based structure, the two anchor questions, and the above/below obligation do most of the facilitation work. Your job is to protect the conditions that make them work.

What will be hardest for you personally about staying in the choice architect role? What might pull you out of it?

Session 9 · 9:45 — Facilitation Practice — The Full Sort

Three roles. Three facilitators. One session.

The Three Roles

Role 1 — Opens the Session

Place the cards on the table. Display the opening question and anchor questions on screen. Then stop talking entirely. The group removes theme cards, shuffles, and deals themselves. You do not assist, explain, or intervene. Step back. Hand over once the sort is running and the first few cards have been placed.

Role 2 — Debriefs the Sort

Take over with a specific subset — the cards that generated the most energy, disagreement, or tension during the sort. Draw out what surfaced. Ask what surprised people. Name patterns without editorialising. Slow the group down when something important is being passed over. Hand over once the key insights have been named.

Role 3 — Closes and Commits — the hardest role

Take a different subset — the cards the group found hardest to place, or the highest-priority above-the-line cards. Drive toward resolution. Name the gap without blame. Create genuine agreement — not performed consensus. Land the session with a specific commitment or a clear next step. You inherit a room already in motion and have to bring it home.

The Scenarios

Scenario A

A 12-person operations team. Significant staff turnover in the past 18 months. The new team leader wants to establish a clear way of working without imposing.

Scenario B

A leadership team in professional services. Engagement survey shows low psychological safety. The CEO wants to address it but worries about the conversation becoming personal.

Scenario C

A project team that delivers good results but is consistently described as difficult to work with. Talented but fragmented. No one has named the problem directly.

Observer Brief — HSNZ Consultant

Observe throughout all three roles. Provide structured feedback at the end of the full session — not after each individual role.

Watch the facilitators:

- Role 1: do they place cards and step back immediately? Do they resist the urge to explain?
- Role 2: do they draw out what the group found, or lead toward their own interpretation?
- Role 3: do they create genuine resolution or performed consensus? Do they name the gap without blame?
- Across all three: does anyone share personal views? Touch the cards after placing them? Rescue silence?

Watch the group:

- Who leads? Who defers? Where does System 1 take over?
- Which cards create the most energy? The most tension? The fastest agreement?
- How does the group dynamic shift across the three facilitation roles?
- Which nudges are visibly operating?

Feedback Structure

One piece of feedback per facilitator role — delivered to the whole group:

- One specific thing that worked
- One specific thing to develop
- One question: “When you did X — what were you trying to achieve?”

Role 1 — Opens: what worked, what to develop, what you will do differently:

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Role 2 — Debriefs: what worked, what to develop, what you will do differently:

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Role 3 — Closes: what worked, what to develop, what you will do differently:

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As a team member: what did you notice about how each role felt different to be facilitated by?

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Session 10 · 11:15 — Difficult Rooms

Every facilitator will eventually face a room that doesn't behave. Here are the most common situations — and the behavioural response to each.

The Dominant Voice

The situation: even within the turn-based structure, one person's framing sets the frame before others have formed their own view.

The response: slow the discussion before the dominant voice responds. "Before we hear from anyone else — take a moment. What is your own first reaction?" Ask quieter participants directly. Name what you see without blame: "I notice we have been building on one perspective — let's hear what is different." You are redesigning the conditions, not judging the person.

The Resistant Team

The situation: the group was told they were doing this. Body language is closed. Answers are performative.

The response: name it directly. "I know some of you may not have chosen to be here. That's okay. I'm not here to tell you what good looks like — I genuinely don't know. That's your job." Resistance drops fastest when people believe the facilitator has no agenda. Your restraint is the most credible signal you can give.

The Gap Surfaces

The situation: a team member flips a card and says: "We all know we should be doing this — but we're not." The room goes quiet.

The response: do not fill it. Sit in it. Then: "That's an important observation. Can you say more?" Let the team respond. Your role is to make it safe for the gap to be seen — not to resolve it. The team resolving it themselves is the point.

Silence

The situation: a card has been flipped. Nobody speaks. The silence stretches.

The response: silence is System 2 thinking. Count to fifteen before considering any intervention. The first person to speak after a genuine silence almost always says something worth hearing. Filling silence prematurely is one of the most common and costly facilitation mistakes.

The Sceptic

The situation: a senior leader challenges the methodology: "What's the evidence for this?"

The response: use the science plainly. "Kahneman's work explains why the conversation is qualitatively different when there's no right or wrong answer. Thaler and Sunstein's nudge theory explains why designing the choice environment produces more genuine outcomes than instructing. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory explains why teams that define their own standards commit to them in a way that teams given standards from above never do. We just applied all three simultaneously." Say it calmly. You do not need to win the argument. You need to be credible.

The Card Conversation That Goes Sideways

The situation: discussion has become personal. Two people are no longer talking about a behaviour — they are talking about each other.

The response: name the dynamic and redirect. “I want to make sure we stay with the behaviour on the card rather than specific situations.” If it escalates: “There’s something important here that may need a different conversation. Can we park this card?” Know the boundary. You are not a mediator.

Which difficult room are you most likely to encounter with your clients? How will you prepare for it?

Session 11 · 12:00 — The Exercise Repertoire

Five named exercises. Each designed for a specific purpose. Each using the card architecture differently.

Exercise 1 — The Full Sort (Foundation)

Purpose	Establish a complete behavioural landscape. Create shared understanding of what above and below the line looks like for this team.
Setup	All 80 cards. Participants remove theme cards, shuffle, and deal one at a time around the table. Maximum six per group.
Mechanic	Turn-based flipping. Two anchor questions per card. Above or below. Nothing permanently in the middle.
Timing	60–90 minutes.
When to use	Always as the first session with any new group. Every other exercise builds from what the Full Sort surfaces.

Debrief questions:

- Which cards slowed you down most? What was happening in those conversations?
- Where did you agree quickly? What does that tell you about shared values?
- If you could shift just two or three behaviours — which would make the biggest difference?

Exercise 2 — The Theme Audit

Purpose	Move from broad awareness to precise diagnosis within one cultural tension or across one side of the quadrant model.
Option A	Single theme pair — pull all 10 cards, deal around the table.
Option B	Task quadrant — Goal Directed, Creative, Authentic, Confident cards.
Option C	Relationship quadrant — Empowering, Supportive, Collaborative, Empathetic cards.
Spectrum sort	Left to right: ← We do this well We need more focus here →
Extra anchor	“Where does this honestly sit for our team right now — not where we want to be, but where we actually are?”
Timing	30–45 minutes.
When to use	After a Full Sort has identified high-priority themes. Excellent for targeted development or leadership coaching.

Debrief questions:

- Which specific behaviours are strongest?
- Where are the biggest gaps between where you want to be and where you actually are?
- What one change — to a system or habit — would most shift one of these in 30 days?

Exercise 3 — The Pressure Test

Purpose	Reveal the gap between how a team operates normally and how they operate under pressure. This is where real culture lives.
Setup	The 15–20 priority cards from a prior Full Sort, dealt around the table.
Round 1	“Place these cards where you honestly sit on a normal working day.”
Round 2	“Now — same cards. Where do you drift when things get hard?”
Timing	20 minutes per round, 30 minutes comparison and debrief.
When to use	With teams wanting to move from aspiration to honest diagnosis. Particularly valuable in high-stakes environments.

Debrief questions:

- Which cards moved most between normal and pressure conditions?
- What does that gap tell you about your culture risk?
- What would need to change for the same cards to stay in the same place under pressure?

Exercise 4 — The Gap Map

Purpose	Identify where leaders and their teams perceive culture differently. The gaps are the most valuable conversations.
Setup	Two groups — leaders and team members — sort independently using the same 20–30 cards without seeing each other's results.
Process	Compare results by card number. Identify cards with the largest gap in placement.
Timing	30 minutes independent sorting, 30 minutes comparison, 30 minutes facilitated conversation.
When to use	With leadership teams and direct reports. Surfaces blind spots without blame, using cards as the neutral reference point.

Debrief questions:

- Which cards show the biggest gap between what leaders see and what the team experiences?
- What might explain that gap?
- What would need to happen for both groups to see the same reality?

Exercise 5 — The Commitment Stack

Purpose	Convert insight from any exercise into a specific, tracked improvement plan. The bridge between conversation and change.
Setup	Following any exercise, participants select their 3–5 highest-priority cards, noted by number.
For each card	1. What does this behaviour look like when we are doing it well? 2. What currently gets in the way? 3. What one change would most move this forward?
Output	A numbered list of priority behaviours with a named owner and a specific next action for each.
Follow-up	Card numbers are recorded and used to anchor the next session. Those exact cards are pulled first: “Where are we now?”
Timing	45–60 minutes.
When to use	At the end of any session where the goal is action, not just awareness. Always with multi-session clients.

Which exercise did your group run in the afternoon? What was different about facilitating it compared to the Full Sort?

What did the afternoon practice reveal that the morning practice did not?

Session 12 · 14:15 — The Culture Improvement Cycle

What happens between sessions is where culture actually changes.

This framework turns the Culture Science Cards from a workshop tool into a longitudinal culture development system. It applies the culture change science directly — moving from aspiration to diagnosis to environmental design to practice to measurement.

Stage	What happens
1. Select	Identify 3–5 priority behaviours by card number. Not the full list. The ones that matter most, right now.
2. Diagnose	How frequently does this show up? What triggers it? What systemic factors reinforce the opposite? Identify the cue, understand the reward, locate the leverage.
3. Design	Small, specific interventions. Not training programmes. Changes to systems, habits, or conversations that make the priority behaviour more likely to occur naturally. Remove sludge. Apply EAST. Ask: if we wanted this behaviour to happen without anyone having to remember, what would we change?
4. Practice	A specific, observable practice. Named owner. Named timeframe. Apply implementation intentions: not ‘be more collaborative’ but ‘when X happens, we will do Y.’
5. Return	Pull the exact priority cards from the previous session by number. Re-sort: where are we now? Progress is visible — or the gap is visible, which is equally valuable. The cycle repeats.

The same cards, sorted repeatedly over time, create a visible record of cultural movement that clients can point to. This is the difference between a practitioner who runs workshops and a practitioner who changes cultures.

Think of one client relationship where the improvement cycle would create ongoing value. What would the first session lead to?

Session 13 · 14:40 — Positioning the Methodology with Clients

How you talk about this determines what doors open.

Language that closes doors	Language that opens them
Culture workshop	Behavioural standards framework
Culture programme	Team operating agreement
Values alignment	Ways of working definition
Team building	Performance alignment tool
Soft skills development	Facilitated behaviour design

The One-Minute Explanation

“Most culture initiatives fail because they tell teams what the culture should be — and people comply without committing. Culture Science Cards flips that. Teams use a structured card-based process to define their own behavioural standards — what above the line and below the line looks like for them. Because they decide, they own it. The research on intrinsic motivation is clear: ownership produces commitment that instruction never does. The process takes 90 minutes. The outcome lasts.”

Audience	What to emphasise
Internal HR / OD practitioners	The methodology sits alongside your existing diagnostic tools. Surveys tell you what exists. The cards help teams decide what to do about it — in specific behavioural terms, with genuine ownership.
External consultants	One methodology. Multiple applications. A card session is a conversation starter. The improvement cycle is a programme. The Gap Map is a leadership development tool. Multiple touchpoints with each client.
Sceptical leaders	Point to the science. Point to the process — the outcome is owned by the team. Point to the tracking — card numbers create measurable longitudinal data.

Write your own one-minute explanation in your own words — for your specific clients:

Session 14 · 15:00 — Your First Use

Commitment without a specific plan is just intention.

Question	Your answer
Who is the team?	
What is their current challenge?	
Which opening question will I use?	
Which exercise will I start with?	
What outcome do I want the session to produce?	
When will I run it?	
How many card decks do I need?	
Who do I need to brief beforehand?	
How will I know it worked?	
Which cards or themes are most relevant?	

What is the one thing that might stop you following through — and what will you do about it?

Session 15 · 15:25 — Certification and Community

Certification isn't the end of something. It's the beginning of a practice.

Level 1 Certified Facilitator — Certification is awarded to practitioners who have:

- Completed both days of the Certified Facilitator Programme in full
- Participated in facilitation practice as one of the three roles in the Full Sort session
- Participated in facilitation practice as one of the three roles in the exercise repertoire session
- Submitted a first-use plan in Session 14
- Demonstrated understanding of the behavioural science when challenged
- Demonstrated understanding of the quadrant model and its facilitation implications

The Commitment

Certification is not a contract. It is a commitment — to yourself, to your clients, and to this community of practitioners.

In the next 30 days, I commit to:

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The person I will be accountable to:

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What Certified Facilitators Receive

- Wholesale pricing on Culture Science Cards decks (with Annual Commercial Licence)
- Public listing on the Culture Science Cards website as a Certified Facilitator
- Access to the practitioner community
- Ongoing exercise releases as the methodology evolves
- Facilitation support for complex or unusual client situations
- Invitation to the annual practitioner summit
- Eligibility to apply for Level 2 Consultant Certification

Commercial Activation

Certification is included in the programme fee. Commercial activation is optional.

Certification (included in programme fee — \$1,150)	Annual Commercial Licence (optional — \$500/year)
Right to deliver Culture Science workshops	Wholesale pricing on decks
Use of the full methodology and exercise repertoire	Public listing as a Licensed Certified Facilitator
Access to the practitioner community	Brand usage rights
Invitation to the annual practitioner summit	Ongoing methodology updates
	Eligibility for Level 2 Consultant Certification

Wholesale Pricing (Licensed Facilitators Only)

Retail Pricing	
Deck	\$200
Presentation Box	\$250

Wholesale Tier	Discount — cumulative over 12 months
Up to 19 decks	20% — \$160 per deck
20–49 decks	25% — \$150 per deck
50+ decks	30% — \$140 per deck

This margin sits alongside the facilitation fee you charge. Discounts accumulate across all purchases within a 12-month period — not per order. Most practitioners recover their programme investment within one or two workshops.

What Comes Next — Level 2 Consultant Certification

Level 1 certifies a facilitator: someone who can run a powerful conversation that surfaces what a team believes, creates genuine ownership of behavioural standards, and plants a seed.

Level 2 certifies a consultant: someone who can grow what was planted. Who understands not just how to surface culture but how to design it — deliberately, systemically, and in ways that outlast the programme that created them.

Level 1 — Certified Facilitator	Level 2 — Certified Consultant
Facilitate card sort sessions and exercises	Diagnose organisational culture at scale
Deliver the improvement cycle with a team	Design multi-session culture change programmes
Work at team level	Work at board and executive level
Session fees: \$5,000–\$10,000	Programme fees: \$30,000–\$150,000
Prerequisite: this programme	Prerequisite: Level 1 Certified Facilitator

Level 2 is currently in development. If you are interested in being part of the first cohort, register your interest:

info@culturesciencecards.com · culturesciencecards.com

Notes

Culture Science Cards™

Certified Facilitator Programme — Programme Handbook

culturesciencecards.com · info@culturesciencecards.com