# Quick Session AAR from the Lucid Meetings Team

Session: Leadership for Exceptional Teams with Jurgen Heitman and Andy Walshe  
Based on the 10 Science-Backed Rules for Meaningful Meetings

***Experience + Reflection = Learning***

About this document:  
[After action reviews](https://www.lucidmeetings.com/meeting-types/action-review-meetings) (AARs) were mentioned several times during this session on using leadership to enhance performance. At Lucid, we run a fast, informal AAR after every public event with every Lucid team member who attended. In this case, it was John and Elise Keith, chatting as we walked the dog.

We try to run our conversations in the standard *What? – So what? – Now what?* order, regardless of where or how we’re meeting. Then we write up the results.

This conversation took about 30 minutes total. Take a look and let us know:

* What else did you observe?
* So what did you think about it? What worked? What could have been improved?
* Now what would you do in the future, based on what you learned?

## What

### Context:

The session topic aligned with the 10 Science-Backed Rules for Meaningful Meetings–Rule 9: Use leadership to enhance performance.

Goals:

* To faithfully explore the science-backed rule
* To honor the contributions, experience, and wisdom of our guests, who also contributed to the research paper upon which we based this course
* To connect the community with ideas, stories, and people who can inspire a new perspective around how they might lead better meetings
* To have fun and experiment. It’s a "safe to fail probe" using different meeting techniques with a friendly group
* To generate a useful learning artefact we can reference in the future and share with those who didn't attend

Our generous guests agreed to donate time in their hectic schedule.

This was a free session, open to the public. Put it all together and we had:

* An important but vague/overly broad topic.
* Very minimal prep time.
* Zero budget.
* Low predictability regarding audience size, composition, technical capability, interest, or willingness to participate.

### The Plan

We chose to use an interview format to reduce prep required by our guests. We didn't know what would come up or who would show up, so we selected lightly structured interactions for the group, and planned some backup questions in case no one participated.

Before the session, we also invited people to start thinking about the topic using GroupMap. We received 21 contributions before the session.

#### During-Session Plan

* 15 minutes early: open the session for tech check and greetings
* Intro and Setup (5 minutes)
* Fishbowl (20 minutes)  
  Here's a link to the Liberating Structures description of a Fishbowl.  
  <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/18-users-experience-fishbowl/>
* Small Group Sensemaking (8 min)  
  The group would discuss what they heard and what they'd like to explore more deeply.
* Collaborative Interviews
* Closing BLUF (Last 5 min)

### What We Observed

**Attendance**: 30% of those registered

Several registrants let us know in advance that they were registering to receive the recording. This is lower than normal for us (avg 45%), but better than the 15% we've seen some past Decembers.

**Participation**:

* Several people came and went. Some mentioned external factors in chat. Some left, then returned.
* We ended up with 7 breakout groups. Some reported 8 minutes as too short for their conversation. One group returned early.
* 28 new ideas were added to the GroupMap during the session.
* Several links, questions, and comments were shared in the chat.
* Several people offered questions, insights, and takeaways verbally.

## So What?

### Did we achieve our goals?

Goals:

* To faithfully explore the science-backed rule:

Not really. We didn't talk much about the meeting science, but that's entirely Elise's doing. She isn't inspired by this particular bit of science. Jurgen and Andy, on the other hand, are fascinating!

* To honor the contributions, experience, and wisdom of our guests, who also contributed to the research paper upon which we based this course

Yes(ish?) - with room for improvement.

* To connect the community with ideas, stories, and people who can inspire a new perspective around how they can lead better meetings

Yes - with room for improvement.

* To have fun and experiment.

Yes. We definitely learned some things.

* To generate a useful learning artefact we can reference in the future and share with those who didn't attend

Absolutely. All kinds of deep resources here.

### What we felt worked

The end result is pretty fabulous. Our guests and our participants supplied lots of rich resources. This is one of those sessions you could listen to multiple times, take notes, then go explore the ideas mentioned and before you know it, you'd be running your own leadership course.

The fishbowl approach made sure our guests received the main focus without requiring them to create slides or spend a lot of time in complicated prep.

The group seemed comfortable. People came on and off video, chimed in or stayed quiet, and had the freedom to participate however they chose. This feels kind for a public event, because it makes it possible for everyone to interact in a way that works and feels safe for them. It feels funny to us, because this would be lousy for a true working event.

Any time we got into a specific example or story, the energy picked up. 7000 people in one meeting? The chat lit up.

The [5 hippopotamus](https://www.lucidmeetings.com/glossary/5-second-rule) rule: works every time.

We heard from folks afterward two things that thrilled us.

* First, we heard that they were amazed by all the golden ideas/nuggets/insights they heard, especially in the last 30 minutes.
* Second, we heard from someone who was disappointed that there weren't more action stories. This aligned with a secondary goal for this whole series, which is to connect those eager to learn with experts in a safe environment where we can all see that we're all more alike than not. While it’s not fabulously entertaining, we love busting hero myths. Hero myths are the enemy of good meetings.

### What we felt could be improved

We felt the energy and clarity for the initial fishbowl wasn't quite where it could be.

We asked the breakout groups to come up with way more questions than we could handle in the remaining time. This was intentional, but we could have found a better way to surface and prioritize those questions. It felt like we’d asked people to do some thinking work, then ignored most of it. That was an error.

It takes too long to get these recordings out. We're excited by the richness of the result, but it's a lot of work.

## Now what?

### Experiments we'd try

Here are some things we'd do differently if we were to use this format again.

1. We have to pick topics that interest us more, or fully delegate the session plan to a guest. In this case, Elise ran the session plan and was thrilled with our guests, but wasn't jazzed by the topic. That mindset means we aren't set up to get the best result.
2. If we ran an expert fishbowl again, we'd ask each guest to share a 3-to-4 minute story about the topic to kick it off. Storytelling always works best, and while it requires more prep, this might actually have been easier for our guests than our wishy-washy open questions.
3. For the group questions, we'd try some other way to surface those. Options might include:

* Posting all the questions in chat and inviting our guests to answer the ones that they found most interesting
* Asking the group to prioritize the questions using tech (although this takes longer)
* Leaving it even more unstructured, so that there’s no implied promise that any number of questions will be answered.

### What we'll keep

* Still liking the open camera/open mic trust. This could bite us some day, but it hasn’t thus far.
* The BLUF. It can be a bit awkward as it starts, but it consistently results in great material for the video and a strong invocation of the self-consistency principle ("Oh, I did get value here!") in those who contribute
* Pre-work. It's lightly used in these sessions, but good modeling and always produces useful learning content.
* Amazing guests! Who else do we know? Who else would you like to see? :)
* Our fabulous community of meeting enthusiasts. This is a small-but-mighty group. Hey you all - invite your friends!