

Draw out the *genius in the room.*

> *Hear every idea before you debate any idea.*

Every room has a loud voice. Maybe it's the boss, the most tenured person, or the one who simply talks the fastest. Once that voice speaks, everyone else quietly adjusts or just nods along.

Jeff Bezos has said he speaks last in every meeting he attends. When he can, he asks the most junior person to go first, then works up through the room by seniority. His reason is simple: speak first, and even strong-willed people start to doubt their own view.

The best idea in the room may not be the loudest.

Your quietest team member may be holding the insight you've been missing. Maybe she's new and sees what everyone else has stopped noticing. If you only hear the loud voices, you never find out.

Here's a simple way to do it. Before anyone speaks, give everyone a few minutes to write their ideas on paper. No talking and no comparing.

Then go around the room one person at a time. Start with the most junior and finish with the most senior, including you. Nobody debates, ranks, or shoots down an idea yet. You are just listening.

Only when every voice has been heard do you open the floor to discussion. By then the best ideas are already on the table, and they belong to the whole team instead of the loudest person.

The leader's job isn't to have the best idea. It's to build a room where the best ideas can surface.

At Boaz Strategic, we develop leaders who draw out the genius in every voice in the room.