

Game plan

Hazel Russo shares how her board game, Lumination™, is being used as a powerful coaching and facilitation tool in organisations

By Hazel Russo

Two decades ago I invented a treasure trail in my local woods which invited people to explore a question they had about their lives.

Fifty people took part. We divided them into small groups, gave them a map and they set off. Once in the woods they met characters who held an activity designed to prompt new thinking. At the end, a number of participants described it as one of the most impactful experiences of their lives.

Zoom forward to 2013 and I had distilled the idea of bringing a question to a journey with characters into a board game called Lumination™.

Today the game is being used as a coaching and facilitation tool in organisations around the UK.

WHAT IT IS

Lumination™ comprises a board, a dice, counters, guidance booklets and four sets of cards.

As a board game it represents something familiar and fun which seems to give people permission to share in ways they might do not otherwise.

Players share their starting questions then throw the dice and move around the board where they land on spaces which contain an instruction to select a card, or invite reflection. The characters

are embodied in Lumination™ cards, selected at random. Each card is based on a theme such as action, clarity, control, potential, wisdom and risk.

One set of Lumination™ can be used with two to six players and in one-to-one sessions. It's also possible to run multiple sets of the game at the same time for larger groups with a facilitator moving round the room to support each table.

The board is divided into two sections to give the option for a short or longer game. Players can revisit the game for a follow-up or use part one then part two later, allowing flexibility.

There are no winners or losers, so the game ends when all players have reached 'Declaration Square' at which point they share their learning, insights and actions.

HOW IT WORKS

● Offers a simple and effective introduction to coaching

Players do not need any previous coaching experience. The questions are built-in, so those new to coaching have an experiential introduction to the approach and those with existing experience can develop their skills.

Example:

Player question: "How do I improve my confidence in team meetings?"

Player picks 'The Woodcutter' card whose theme is Action.

The Woodcutter asks: "If you knew you could only succeed, what would you do next?"

Player: Laughs and says: "I'd speak out sooner in a meeting when I have something to say instead of holding back and waiting to be invited."

Player is then invited to capture any insights or actions.

● Facilitates meaningful conversations

As a coach I aim to get to the heart of the issue with clients. Lumination™ is designed with that in mind. It generates rich and meaningful conversations between participants. I've seen teams using it share comments such as: "I have never heard you say that before – now I really understand how to work differently with you."

● Works with the senses and with metaphor

As many coaches know, working with cards and images can be very powerful. When using Lumination™, players touch, hold and look at the cards, throw the dice and read from the guidance booklet. There's the added metaphor of the journey, all of which supports people to access new thinking.

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Marianne Douglas (left), senior leadership and OD business partner, WME, with Hazel Russo (right)

What others say

● “We use Lumination™ to help our clients make decisions about very challenging circumstances. It enables discussion of difficult issues through the powerful, enlightening and relevant questions it throws up. Our clients are constantly amazed at how the cards they pick connect to their exact circumstances, and sometimes find it hard to believe we haven’t pre-placed them!”

Jonathan Coe, managing director, Clinic for Boundaries Studies

● “I use Lumination™ in a Graduate Still Build programme of one-day activities mapped against Korn Ferry’s framework of Leadership competencies. The client recruits from the top end of talent and the sector is FMCG.

I’ve had three different occasions with Lumination™ and the two dozen participants have loved the questions, synchronicity, how apt everything seems to their challenge.

Lumination™ matches the learning style of the younger generations coming into the workplace.”

Jean Crawford, consultant, Mango Communities CIC

● Invites new behaviours

The structure of the game also encourages those who tend to speak out, to listen, and those who tend to reflect, to speak out – again encouraging new behaviours through experience.

● Highly adaptable and cost-effective coaching tool

Lumination™ can be used in a wide variety of ways and can bring coaching to those who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

– **Small and large group coaching:** a single copy can be used with up to six players. Multiple copies can be played simultaneously to provide large group coaching

– **Team building:** as part of team or awayday activities

– **Team coaching:** to address a team



TOOLBOX TRIED & TESTED



My vision is that Lumination™ reaches people who would not otherwise have access to coaching

Players do not need previous experience and questions are built-in. The Woodcutter card (Action) asks: "If you knew you could only succeed, what would you do next?"

project or challenge where each player brings their own question

- **Coach training:** to introduce and consolidate coaching skills
- **Leadership development programmes:** to enhance coaching and leadership skills
- **Coaching supervision:** reflective tool for group coaching supervision
- **One-to-one coaching:** coach facilitates the client through the game.

NEXT STEPS

My vision is that Lumination™ reaches people who would not otherwise have access to coaching, such as young people, users of social services, prisoners, the homeless and children. That really would be a board game which makes a difference. 🎲

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Case study/Q&A:

West Midlands Employers

West Midlands Employers (WME) is a cohort of public sector employers across this UK region. At the time of writing Marianne Douglas was WME senior leadership and OD business partner. Marianne has been working with Lumination™ for just over two years. More than 50 people have used the tool.

Douglas said the cohort uses Lumination™ “to facilitate action learning sets as part of one of our leadership development programmes; to help managers who have received coaching skills training to embed their skills; with teams who are seeking to work through collective challenges, and with other L&D professionals who wish to undertake group coaching”.

She said the biggest impact of using the game has been “helping people to appreciate that they can gain new insight and fresh perspective without having to be told the answers”.

Asked what surprised her about using it, Douglas said, “How deeply it can get some people to think and reflect and also how much fun groups can build into the process. Some individuals who were wary of the Lumination™ cards at the start, end up itching to land on more!” She added that “Lumination™ isn’t for everyone but those that haven’t enjoyed it tend not to have had something tangible to bring or are not yet ready to make the changes that they might need to.”

She would recommend Lumination™ because “it is so easy to set up and use, it requires minimal input from the facilitator once the group get to grips with the process, is very portable and unlikely to become dated, and is very cost-effective as it can be used time and time again.”