Belbin® Team Role Summary Descriptions

Resource Investigator

Contribution: Outgoing, enthusiastic. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.

Allowable Weaknesses: Might be over-optimistic, and can lose interest once the initial enthusiasm has passed.

Teamworker

Contribution: Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can be indecisive in crunch situations and tends to avoid confrontation.

Co-ordinator

Contribution: Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can be seen as manipulative and might offload their own share of the work.

Plant

Contribution: Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.

Allowable Weaknesses: Might ignore incidentals, and may be too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.

Monitor Evaluator

Contribution: Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.

Allowable Weaknesses: Sometimes lacks the drive and ability to inspire others and can be overly critical.

Specialist

Contribution: Single-minded, self-starting and dedicated. They provide specialist knowledge and skills.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can only contribute on a narrow front and tends to dwell on the technicalities.

Shaper

Contribution: Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can be prone to provocation, and may sometimes offend people's feelings.

Implementer

Contribution: Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can be a bit inflexible and slow to respond to new possibilities.

Completer Finisher

Contribution: Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.

Allowable Weaknesses: Can be inclined to worry unduly, and reluctant to delegate.

Handout: Belbin® Things 'To do' and 'Not to do'

Resource Investigator

✔ Go outside the group to initiate new contacts. Develop the ideas of the PLANT. Use your enthusiasm to build up other people's enthusiasm. Search out new markets. Negotiate with others.

✘ Let people down by neglecting to follow up arrangements. Talk too much so others cannot get enough air time.

Teamworker

✔ Promote good team atmosphere by reacting to the needs of others. Support members of the group when necessary. Become a broker in times of argument, and defuse any hostility.

✘ Avoid situations that may entail pressure. Side with the most dominant in a desire to please.

Co-ordinator

✔ Establish an air of authority over the team with your mature approach. Bring others into discussions when they have things to contribute. Hold the group together. Praise and encourage others.

✘ Take credit for the effort of the team. Overplay your status. Neglect to do your fair share of the work.

Plant

✔ Come up with ideas and suggestions for solving problems and working out solutions. Invent a new way of tackling the issues in hand. Create an original piece of work. Look at things from a different angle.

✘ Evaluate your own ideas. Have strong ownership of your own ideas when co-operation with others would yield better results.

Monitor Evaluator

✔ Provide a balanced opinion on all ideas and options. Be ready to explain what actions you prefer and why. Stop ill thought out courses of action. Take your time over your decisions.

✘ Be seen by the team as a cynic. Give a negative reaction to everything you hear. Dampen the positive approach of the team.

Specialist

✔ Show your enthusiasm for a particular subject. Cultivate a sense of professionalism and encourage your fellow team members to trust your knowledge. Keep your expertise and skills up-to-date.

✘ Discount the importance of factors outside your own area of competence. Become over protective of the boundaries of your job area.

Shaper

✔ Get things moving. Stop complacency and laziness. Be honest, straightforward and open with others. Make sure the team is achieving goals. Push things forward.

✘ Hold grudges, become overbearing. Lose your sense of humour when the going gets tough.

Implementer

✔ Organise systems. Ensure you and others follow the laid out procedures. Get down to the practical issues. Try and turn ideas into action. Be loyal to your organisation and people within it.

✘ Obstruct change. Be resistant to new ideas of the team. Be seen as a "stick in the mud".

Completer Finisher

✔ Try to raise standards in all you do. Concern yourself with detail. Use your ability to help other members of the team who may not be so strong on accuracy. Promote excellence.

✘ Allow perfectionism to turn into obsessive behaviour. Penny pinch or split hairs on trivial issues.

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QUICK TIPS: How to improve your EQ with Belbin

- **Plant** – you're already an advocate of change and innovation, but be sure that you accept the rejection of your ideas with good grace, rather than becoming someone who holds grudges.

- **Resource Investigator** – ensure that you listen as much as you talk. Controlling our impulses in all areas is a good path to higher EQ.

- **Co-ordinator** – practise your ability to read other people and use it for the greater good. Ensure that you're giving without expecting to receive.

- **Shaper** – you're likely to be pretty thick-skinned, but just ensure that when conflict does occur, you can recover the situation with good humour, keeping people on-side.

- **Monitor Evaluator** – embrace your rational side. It helps you to handle situations without getting emotionally involved. But remember that others struggle more with this – and they need empathy, not logic.

- **Teamworker** – you're likely to have empathy down pat, but you may need to challenge doubts and other kinds of negative thinking which stand in your way. When faced with uncomfortable situations (such as conflict), practise separating your thoughts from the facts and moving towards a more positive outlook.

- **Implementer** – accepting change is hard for Implementers, but it's a must for EQ. Practise a more positive, accepting approach to change. Ask for plans and specifics so that you can make yourself more comfortable with developments.

- **Completer Finisher** – be wary of your drive for perfection. Those with high EQ know that it doesn't exist, and that the pursuit of it can lead to burnout and a persistent sense of failure. Don't compromise on your standards, but practise celebrating your successes too.

- **Specialist** – if you have the opportunity to do what you love – and you derive your own pleasure from it, rather than from other people's validation – you're on the path to joy. Just remember that no one is an island and showing a little interest in others goes a long way.

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Handout: **Belbin® Team Roles in a Nutshell**

Ever wondered why some teams just seem to work and others hit the rocks?
When things don't work, it is obvious to all and it often has a profound effect on the people involved, as well as the project or objective to be achieved.

In the 1970s, Dr Meredith Belbin and his research team at Henley Management College set about observing teams, with a view to finding out where and how these differences come about. They wanted to control the dynamics of teams to discover if – and how – problems could be pre-empted and avoided.

Over a period of nine years, international management teams were studied. Each participant completed a battery of psychometric tests, so that attributes such as personality and behaviour could be brought into play and their effects on the team could be accurately considered.

As the research progressed, the research revealed that the difference between success and failure for a team was not dependent on factors such as intellect, but more on behaviour. The research team began to identify separate clusters of behaviour, each of which formed distinct team contributions or "Team Roles". A **Team Role** came to be defined as: **"A tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way."** It was found that different individuals displayed different Team Roles to varying degrees.

The first Team Role to be identified was the **"Plant"**. The role was so-called because one such individual was "planted" in each team. They tended to be highly creative and good at solving problems in unconventional ways.

One by one, the other Team Roles began to emerge. The **Monitor Evaluator** was needed to provide a logical eye, make impartial judgements where required and to weigh up the team's options in a dispassionate way. **Co-ordinators** were needed to focus on the team's objectives, draw out team members and delegate work appropriately.

When the team was at risk of becoming isolated and inwardly-focused, **Resource Investigators** provided inside knowledge on the opposition and made sure that the team's idea would carry to the world outside the team. **Implementers** were needed to plan a practical, workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible. **Completer Finishers** were most effectively used at the end of a task, to "polish" and scrutinise the work for errors, subjecting it to the highest standards of quality control. **Teamworkers** helped the team to gel, using their versatility to identify the work required and complete it on behalf of the team. Challenging individuals, known as **Shapers**, provided the necessary drive to ensure that the team kept moving and did not lose focus or momentum.

The Belbin® Team Role Circle

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Whilst some Team Roles were more "high profile" and some team members shouted more loudly than others, each of the behaviours was essential in getting the team successfully from start to finish. The key was balance. For example, Meredith Belbin found that a team with no Plant struggled to come up with the initial spark of an idea with which to push forward. However, once too many Plants were in the team, bad ideas concealed good ones and non-starters were given too much airtime. Similarly, with no Shaper, the team ambled along without drive and direction, missing deadlines. With too many Shapers, in-fighting began and morale was lowered.

As well as the strength or contribution they provided, each Team Role was also found to have an **"allowable weakness"**: a flipside of the behavioural characteristics, which is allowable in the team because of the strength which goes with it. For example, the unorthodox Plant could be forgetful or scatty; or the Resource Investigator might forget to follow up on a lead. Co-ordinators might get overenthusiastic on the delegation front and Implementers might be slow to relinquish their plans in favour of positive changes. Completer Finishers, often driven by anxiety to get things right, were found to take their perfectionism to extremes. Teamworkers, concerned with the welfare and morale of the team, found it difficult to make

decisions where this morale might be compromised or team politics, involved. Shapers risked becoming aggressive and bad-humoured in their attempts to get things done.

It was only after the initial research had been completed that the ninth Team Role, **"Specialist"** emerged. The simulated management exercises had been deliberately set up to require no previous knowledge. In the real world, however, the value of an individual with in-depth knowledge of a key area came to be recognised as yet another essential team contribution or Team Role. Just like the other Team Roles, the Specialist also had a weakness: a tendency to focus narrowly on their own subject of choice, and to prioritise this over the team's progress.

The Team Roles that Meredith Belbin identified are used widely in thousands of organisations all over the world today. By identifying our Team Roles, we can ensure that we **use our strengths to advantage and that we manage our weaknesses as best we can.** Sometimes, this means being aware of the pitfalls and making an effort to avoid them.

Most people have a number of "preferred Team Roles" or behaviours they frequently and naturally display. We also have "manageable roles", roles which might not be the most natural course of behaviour for us, but which we can assume if required and might wish to cultivate. Lastly, we have least preferred roles, those we should not assume, since we'll be playing against type. In this instance, the effort is likely to be great, and the outcome, poor. If work requires Team Roles other than our own, it is a much better bet to find and work with others who possess roles complementary to our own. Since people tend to display more than one preferred role, a team of four could quite easily represent all nine Belbin Team Roles.

So, in a nutshell, the Belbin philosophy is about celebrating – and making the most of – individual differences. The message is that there is room for everyone in the team: all positive contributions are welcome.

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