

Belbin roles essay sample



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When a team is performing at its best, you'll usually find that each team member has clear responsibilities. You'll also see that every role needed to achieve the team's goal is being performed fully and well. But often, despite clear roles and responsibilities, a team will fall short of its full potential.

Perhaps some team members don't complete the things you expect them to do. Perhaps others are not quite flexible enough, so things "fall between the cracks." Maybe someone who is valued for her expert input fails to see the wider picture, and so misses out tasks or steps that others would expect. Or perhaps one team member becomes frustrated because he disagrees with the approach of other team members. Dr Meredith Belbin studied team-work for many years, and he famously observed that people in teams tend to assume different "team roles." He defined a team role as "a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way" and named nine such team roles that he argued underlie team success. Creating Balanced Teams

Team leaders and team development practitioners often use the Belbin model to help create more balanced teams. Teams can become unbalanced if all team members have similar styles of behavior or team roles. If team members have similar weakness, the team as a whole may tend to have that weakness. If team members have similar team-work strengths, they may tend to compete (rather than co-operate) for the team tasks and responsibilities that best suit their natural styles. Knowing this, you can use the model with your team to help ensure that necessary team roles are covered, and that potential behavioral tensions or weaknesses among the team member are addressed. Also, by understanding your role within a

particular team, you can develop your strengths and manage your weaknesses as a team member, and so improve how you contribute to the team.

Tip:

Belbin's "team roles" are based on observed behavior and interpersonal styles. Whilst Belbin suggests that people tend to adopt a particular team-role, bear in mind that your behavior and interpersonal style within a team is to some extent dependent on the situation: it relates not only to your own natural working style, but also to your interrelationships with others, and the work being done. Also, be aware that there are other approaches in use, some of which complement this model, some of which conflict with it. By all means use this approach as a guide – however do not put too much reliance on it, and temper any conclusions with common sense.

Understanding Belbin's Team Roles Model

Belbin identified nine team roles and he categorized those roles into three groups: Action Oriented, People Oriented, and Thought Oriented. Each team role is associated with typical behavioral and interpersonal strengths. Belbin also defined characteristic weaknesses that tend to accompany each team role. He called the characteristic weaknesses of team roles the "allowable" weaknesses; as for any behavioral weakness, these are areas to be aware of and potentially improve. The nine team roles are:

Action Oriented Roles:

Shaper (SH)

Shapers are people who challenge the team to improve. They are dynamic

and usually extroverted people who enjoy stimulating others, questioning norms, and finding the best approaches for solving problems. The Shaper is the one who shakes things up to make sure that all possibilities are considered and that the team does not become complacent. Shapers often see obstacles as exciting challenges and they tend to have the courage to push on when others feel like quitting. Their potential weaknesses may be that they're argumentative, and that they may offend people's feelings.

Implementer (IMP)

Implementers are the people who get things done. They turn the team's ideas and concepts into practical actions and plans. They are typically conservative, disciplined people who work systematically and efficiently and are very well organized. These are the people who you can count on to get the job done. On the downside, Implementers may be inflexible and can be somewhat resistant to change.

Completer-Finishers are the people who see that projects are completed thoroughly. They ensure there have been no errors or omissions and they pay attention to the smallest of details. They are very concerned with deadlines and will push the team to make sure the job is completed on time. They are described as perfectionists who are orderly, conscientious, and anxious. However, a Completer-Finisher may worry unnecessarily, and may find it hard to delegate.

Coordinator (CO)

Coordinators are the ones who take on the traditional team-leader role and have also been referred to as the chairmen. They guide the team to what

they perceive are the objectives. They are often excellent listeners and they are naturally able to recognize the value that each team members brings to the table. They are calm and good-natured and delegate tasks very effectively. Their potential weaknesses are that they may delegate away too much personal responsibility, and may tend to be manipulative. Team Worker (TW)

Team Workers are the people who provide support and make sure that people within the team are working together effectively. These people fill the role of negotiators within the team and they are flexible, diplomatic, and perceptive. These tend to be popular people who are very capable in their own right, but who prioritize team cohesion and helping people getting along. Their weaknesses may be a tendency to be indecisive, and to maintain uncommitted positions during discussions and decision-making.

Resource Investigator (RI)

Resource Investigators are innovative and curious. They explore available options, develop contacts, and negotiate for resources on behalf of the team. They are enthusiastic team members, who identify and work with external stakeholders to help the team accomplish its objective. They are outgoing and are often extroverted, meaning that others are often receptive to them and their ideas. On the downside, they may lose enthusiasm quickly, and are often overly optimistic. Thought Oriented Roles:

Plant (PL)

The Plant is the creative innovator who comes up with new ideas and approaches. They thrive on praise but criticism is especially hard for them to

deal with. Plants are often introverted and prefer to work apart from the team. Because their ideas are so novel, they can be impractical at times. They may also be poor communicators and can tend to ignore given parameters and constraints. Monitor-Evaluator (ME)

Monitor-Evaluators are best at analyzing and evaluating ideas that other people (often Plants) come up with. These people are shrewd and objective and they carefully weigh the pros and cons of all the options before coming to a decision. Monitor-Evaluators are critical thinkers and very strategic in their approach. They are often perceived as detached or unemotional. Sometimes they are poor motivators who react to events rather than instigating them Specialist (SP)

Specialists are people who have specialized knowledge that is needed to get the job done. They pride themselves on their skills and abilities, and they work to maintain their professional status. Their job within the team is to be an expert in the area, and they commit themselves fully to their field of expertise. This may limit their contribution, and lead to a preoccupation with technicalities at the expense of the bigger picture.