

BELBIN®

How to...

Use Belbin Team Role
Reports

To Form a Team



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How to... Use Belbin Team Role Reports To Form a Team

In many organisations, teams are well-established in set locations with team members having defined job descriptions and roles. However, in Belbin terms, it can be beneficial to assemble a team to meet a specific challenge – for example, when beginning a new project or introducing change.

The formation of a new team provides an opportunity to move outside existing structures and to put together a number of individuals who may not previously have worked together, but who – in combination – provide the best spread of roles to meet the requirements of the task at hand.

Being more flexible about the composition of teams (and setting up and disbanding teams for specific purposes) can help to ensure that the most suitable individuals are able to contribute, regardless of rank or role. It can also prevent stagnation and circumvent interpersonal conflicts or ineffective management diplomatically and without undermining traditional hierarchical structures.

So how do you go about assembling a new team?

Decide on the team's purpose

Before you can begin to put the team together, you need to decide what the team needs to do and consider which Team Roles are required to make this happen. This table shows the Team Roles which are most appropriate to each stage of a hypothetical project's life cycle:

As Projects progress different Team Roles are required

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| Identify goals |  Shaper |  Co-ordinator |
| Ideas |  Plant |  Resource Investigator |
| Plans |  Monitor Evaluator |  Specialist |
| Contacts |  Resource Investigator |  Teamworker |
| Organisation |  Implementer |  Co-ordinator |
| Follow through |  Completer Finisher |  Implementer |

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When deciding on the make-up of your new team, there are a few key points to remember:

Size – although there are nine Team Roles, this doesn't mean that you need nine people in the team, since individuals tend to have more than one preferred Team Role. An ideal size for a team is about 4-6 people. Often, beyond this number, the team becomes a group, with different associated characteristics and behaviours.

Differentiating Teams from Groups



Group

People brought together for a common purpose while being too numerous to allow Team Role relationships to form



Team

A limited number of people selected to work together for a shared objective in a way that allows each person to make a distinctive contribution

Timing – whilst it is important to have a balance of Team Roles, not all Team Roles are required at every stage of the project. If a role is introduced at the wrong stage, this can have adverse consequences on the project. For example, a Monitor Evaluator should not be present at the initial “ideas” stage, since there is a risk that they might dampen enthusiasm and cause a potentially strong idea to be rejected too early. Instead, consider the idea of a “fluid” team where members join the team to make their contribution and drop out again when their stage of the project is at an end.

Abundance – with certain Team Roles, it is fair to say that “a little goes a long way”, so overpopulation of a specific Team Role in a team is not a good idea. This primarily applies to Plants (too many ideas competing for attention) and Shapers (potential for aggressive behaviour).

Find out which Team Roles are in the pool

The next step is to find out the Team Role composition of everyone in the “pool” of individuals from which the team will be drawn. Each person must complete a Belbin Self-Perception Inventory and obtain Observer Assessments so that you can ensure that you have the most accurate information about each person’s Team Role contributions.

The Belbin Team/Group report can help you to draw this information together, so that you have an “at a glance” reference from which to work:

| BELBIN® | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|--|
| Team: Sample Team | | | | | | | | | | |
| Overview of Team Composition | | | | | | | | | | |
| This report shows Team Roles in order from most prominent (column 1) to least (column 9) for each person in the team. For each individual, the first line shows views from Self-Perception, the second shows combined Observer views and the third shows the overall composition. | | | | | | | | | | |
| This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| B. Ali | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 14/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | SP | IMP | PL | CO | RI | SH | CF | TW | ME | |
| Observations (4) | SP | SH | IMP | ME | CF | RI | PL | CO | TW | |
| Overall | SP | IMP | SH | CF | PL | RI | CO | ME | TW | |
| D. Lee | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 08/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | SH | CO | TW | ME | IMP | RI | SP | PL | CF | |
| Observations (5) | CO | RI | SP | IMP | ME | PL | SH | CF | TW | |
| Overall | CO | RI | ME | SH | SP | IMP | TW | PL | CF | |
| M. Nita | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 14/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | TW | CF | IMP | SP | RI | ME | CO | SH | PL | |
| Observations (5) | TW | SP | RI | IMP | PL | CF | SH | CO | ME | |
| Overall | TW | SP | CF | IMP | RI | CO | ME | PL | SH | |
| P. Jon | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 13/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | SH | CO | RI | IMP | PL | TW | CF | ME | SP | |
| Observations (6) | CO | SH | RI | TW | PL | IMP | ME | CF | SP | |
| Overall | CO | SH | RI | PL | TW | IMP | CF | ME | SP | |
| R. Kris | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 08/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | RI | PL | SH | CO | SP | TW | CF | ME | IMP | |
| Observations (5) | CO | RI | SP | PL | TW | SH | IMP | ME | CF | |
| Overall | RI | CO | PL | SH | SP | TW | IMP | ME | CF | |
| T. Sam | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPI completed on 11/06/2012 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-Perception | IMP | ME | SP | CO | CF | SH | TW | RI | PL | |
| Observations (4) | IMP | ME | TW | SP | CF | CO | SH | RI | PL | |
| Overall | IMP | ME | SP | CF | TW | CO | SH | RI | PL | |

It is important to note that whilst the Overview of Team Composition report lets you know preferred roles, it does not necessarily give an idea of the strength of these roles. In this case, it might be useful to cross-reference with some other pages from the Team/Group report: Team Contributions and Strong Examples of Team Roles.

The Team Contributions report offers an idea of how Team Roles might be distributed amongst the team. Bear in mind, these suggestions are made on the basis of Team Role analysis alone. Whilst they should provide some useful pointers, you may want to review the Team Role allocations in light of your knowledge of the individuals concerned and where they fit within the organisation.

Team: Sample Team
Team Contributions

Particular individuals will need to be brought in at the right time if the team is to be effective. This report offers suggestions as to who should take on the work of each Team Role. Some roles are shared; some individuals are suggested to play most them.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

- When some new line of thought is desired, ask Kim R.
- When the team needs to exploit new opportunities, turn to Jon P. and Kim R.
- When someone is needed to orchestrate team effort, call on Jon P. Also ask Kim R.
- When there is a need to increase the pace and arrive at decisions, go to Jon P.
- When the team needs someone to choose between competing options, turn to Sam T.
- When arguments break out and team atmosphere needs to be improved, turn to Nita M.
- When decisions need to be turned into workable procedures, turn to involve Ali B.
- There is someone in the team showing the strengths of this Team Role in J.
- When the team needs someone to research a subject in depth and give the team requires, ask Ali B. Also involve Sam T.

Team: Sample Team
Strong Examples of Team Roles

This report shows strong examples of Team Roles in the team in alphabetical order. A strong example of a Team Role is someone who has a clear idea of his or her Team Role preferences, has a good level of agreement between Self-Perception and Observer views (if applicable) and displays considerably more positive than negative behaviours for that role.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

The following are strong examples of each Team Role:

- Resource Investigator:**
Jon P.
Kim R.
- Co-ordinator:**
Jon P.
- Shaper:**
Jon P.
- Monitor-Evaluator:**
Sam T.
- Teamworker:**
Nita M.
- Implementer:**
Sam T.
- Specialist:**
Ali B.

There are no strong examples of the following Team Roles:

- Plant**
- Completer Finisher**

The Strong Examples report is important because it gives an idea of who might be able to perform best in any given Team Role. An individual could have a top Team Role of Completer Finisher, but someone else in the team (who may have Completer Finisher second or third in their ordered list of roles) might be stronger in the role. To be considered a Strong Example of a Team Role, an individual must meet several criteria:

- The Self-Perception Inventory must demonstrate evidence of the Team Role tendency
- The individual and observers must be in general agreement as to the order of Team Roles
- The observers must have indicated that the individual's strengths for the Team Role outweigh the associated weaknesses.

If you have more than one contender for a given Team Role, you might be able to use the Strong Examples report to help you resolve the issue of who should play the role.

Health check

Once you have a possible team assembled, there are a number of steps you can take to “health check” the team. This table can help you to decide whether you have all of the behaviours you need and ensure that no project stage has been missed. N.B. Bear in mind that you may not need all of the Team Roles at once.

A Team Problem – Have we got...

| | |
|---|--|
| People with any good ideas? |  PLANTS |
| Someone who chooses which idea would work best? |  MONITOR EVALUATORS |
| Someone who is going to allocate the roles and orchestrate the team effort? |  CO-ORDINATORS |
| Practical people who can realise these suggestions? |  IMPLEMENTERS |
| People who are going to produce high standards? |  COMPLETER FINISHERS |
| People who are going to make contacts outside the group and find external resources? |  RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR |
| Someone who is going to move the group forward and stop complacency? |  SHAPERS |
| Someone who is going to stop arguments and pull the team together and improve atmosphere? |  TEAMWORKERS |
| People who are knowledgeable in certain areas of expertise? |  SPECIALISTS |

Belbin Team/Group reports can help to analyse the make-up of the team you are planning to assemble. If you wish, you can run different sets of reports to represent the team at different stages of the project with different team members.

For example, the Team Role Circle provides a visual representation of the individuals who fulfil each role (represented by their initials) and can identify any gaps or potential overlaps of Team Roles.



Help the team to work together

Once the team has been assembled, they will need ongoing support to ensure that they are working productively together.

With the team in place, you might wish to revisit the Team Role Circle with the team, encouraging discussion and analysis of the findings. Once you have introduced Team Roles, ask participants to come up with a list of five strengths of the team, and five possible weaknesses. This may include statements such as: “We have three Teamworkers and no Shapers. This means that we are at risk of losing direction and focus. However, the atmosphere within the team is likely to be very supportive.”

On completion of this exercise, ask participants to come up with three action points, based on their discussions, which will enable the team to increase its effectiveness.

In an effective team:

- Members understand their own and others’ strengths and weaknesses
- The required Team Roles are represented
- Relationships promote strengths and contain weaknesses

Once the team has been working together for some time, Observer Assessments can be completed to assess each individual’s place within the new team and to address any issues which may arise.

Notes:

Further Information

This 'How to...' guide is one in a series to help you use the Belbin Team Role reports to maximise the performance of individuals and teams.

Additional copies of this guide are available.

Team/Group Reports

The Team/Group reports discussed in this guide can be produced once the individuals have completed their Self-Perception Inventory and received all the Observer Assessments (if required).

- If you have a Belbin Full Online Account you can produce Team/Group reports free of charge.
- If you use a 'Pay as you Go' Belbin Online Account, the Team/Group report cost £75 + VAT.

Accreditation

The Belbin model has numerous other applications. To ensure that you are using the Belbin Team Role reports to their maximum potential, and making the most of your investment, we would recommend attending the Belbin Accreditation Course. Details and prices can be found at www.belbin.com.au

Further Reading

Team Roles at Work - offers managers a practical guide to improving their teams within the workplace to deliver significantly better results for their organisations. This reflects well on them as a manager whilst also saving them time and energy, by using each team member to their best advantage to achieve overall team goals.

(R Meredith Belbin, *Team Roles at Work*, (Butterworth Heinemann, 2nd ed., 2010 ISBN: 978-1-85617-8006)

For more information regarding Belbin Team Roles, please visit www.belbin.com.au, or phone 1300 731 381

Team Role Summary Descriptions

| Team Role | Contribution | Allowable Weaknesses |
|---|--|---|
| Plant  | Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems. | Ignores incidentals. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively. |
| Resource Investigator  | Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts. | Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed. |
| Co-ordinator  | Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively. | Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work. |
| Shaper  | Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles. | Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings. |
| Monitor Evaluator  | Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately. | Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical. |
| Teamworker  | Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction. | Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation. |
| Implementer  | Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done. | Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities. |
| Completer Finisher  | Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects. | Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate. |
| Specialist  | Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply. | Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities. |

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