

Tool 35: Belbin Team Roles

Aim of the tool

Optimise team work in a MSP.

When to use it?

The co-creation stage, when the emphasis shifts towards developing group outputs.

What are the Belbin Team Roles?

In the 1970s, Dr Meredith Belbin and his research team investigated why some teams seem to work and while others hit the rocks. Their research revealed that the difference between success and failure of a team was not dependent on factors such as intellect, but more on behavior of the team members.

The research team began to identify separate clusters of behaviour, each of which formed distinct team contributions or “Team Roles”. Analysing these Team Roles uncovers the behavioural strengths and weaknesses of the individuals that you work with in the team.

The underlying idea of identifying Belbin Team Roles is to engage and develop the talent that is already around you. Use Team Roles to help build high-performing teams, maximise working relationships, and to enable people to learn about themselves.

This [2-minute clip](#) provides a quick introduction.

The nine different Belbin Team Roles:

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

The next Team Role to emerge is the **Monitor Evaluator**, who provides a logical eye, makes impartial judgements where required and weighs the team’s options in an objective way.

Coordinators are needed to focus on the team’s objectives, draw out team members to engage in team activities, and delegate work appropriately.

When the team is at risk of becoming isolated and inwardly-focused, **Resource Investigators** provide inside knowledge on the opposition and make sure that the team’s idea will be successfully carried out in a different context.

Implementers are needed to plan a practical, workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible.

Completer Finishers are 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 help 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 keeps moving and does not lose focus or momentum.

It was only after the initial research on the above Team Roles had been completed that Dr. Belbin’s research team added the ninth Team Role: the **Specialist**. 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.

How to analyse and use the Belbin Team Roles:

Participants are asked to take a 20 minute self-evaluation test to determine which role they expect to play in teams. This is called a Self-Perception Inventory and can be taken online, after which a report is produced about their behavioural strengths and weaknesses in the workplace.

These results can be shared and used for reflection on how team-work can be optimised in the specific MSP.

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.

If work requires Team Roles other than our own, it is much better 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.

Learn more

Belbin Team Roles website: www.belbin.com

Personalized reports certified by Belbin can be purchased here:
<https://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-reports/individual-reports>

You may be able to google free variations of Belbin tests. They can provide a useful indication, but are not as thorough as the certified tests.

Belbin (2011). Team Roles in a Nutshell: <https://www.belbin.com/media/1288/belbin-for-students.pdf>

This MSP Tool Guide is curated by WUR, but we recognize that many of the tools included are in the public domain or credited to other authors. Where relevant, they are referenced in the ‘Learn more’ section.