

Building a team II: How to build and develop an effective and innovative team

According to the Belbin team role types model, all team members are to be actively involved in all phases of a project, yet, it is only natural to have a clear emphasis on some of the team roles types that correspond with the requirements and specifications of the current phase of the project. Here is a breakdown of the most relevant roles to the three main Project Cycle Management (PCM) phases of a project:

Planning Phase:

- **Plant:** storms and gathers ideas from the Plant who has a unique vision of the end product
- **Shaper:** defines operational steps and milestones with the help of the Shaper
- **Coordinator:** is part of the team management who supports the Planning Phase and oversee the transition of the designed tasks to the implementation phase
- **Resource Investigator:** gathers and analyses relevant information from outside sources
- **Specialist:** supports the Planning Phase and the team management with highly relevant specific input regarding the proposed development and the design of the end product

Implementation Phase:

- **Implementer:** develops the project in reality beyond the ideas and rough sketches developed by the Shaper in the Planning Phase by coordinating closely with the Shaper (from the Planning Phase) to deliver the best results
- **Monitor Evaluator:** oversees and improves the overall implementation processes
- **Team Worker:** ensures the harmonious and complementary work of the team in this phase
- **Specialist:** provides technical support to teammates and clients in the area of his expertise

Completion Phase:

- **Completer Finisher:** ensures the quality of the product/project by coordinating closely with the Implementer (from the Implementation Phase) to deliver the best results
- **Monitor Evaluator:** oversees the process which provides the product/result planned in timely manners and within the specified budget
- **Team Worker:** continues the complimentary work of the team and keeping the peace

As you have noticed, finding the right people and identifying the right roles for them within a team is not an easy task for a leader. Even figuring out your qualities and skills as a team member and finding the correct position within a team that fulfils all of your personal and professional aspirations is also no walk in the park. Check out our checklists to help you conquer these difficulties.

a) Worksheet - Personalities and Role Preferences in Teams (The Belbin Model)

As we have covered in our factsheets, the Belbin Team Role Types Model is a popular tool that helps you, as a team member and/or team leader, understand the diverse roles within your team, decide on your preference, and track the performance and responsibilities in a project lifecycle.

In this worksheet, you are going to reflect upon these nine different role types and identify your top 3 role preferences within a team.

Exercise 1:

Take ten minutes to reflect on Belbin's nine team role types: Implementer, Coordinator, Shaper, Plant, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Team Worker, Completer Finisher, and Specialist.

Can you still remember the characteristics of each role?

Fill in the following table and do not worry if you cannot remember all of them. The process of guessing and checking your answers is a great way to familiarize yourself with these nine roles and understand them in a practical way. When you are done feel free to scroll down to the annex to find the correct answers!

Role	Main Characteristic
Plant (PL)	
Resource Investigator (RI)	
Completer Finisher (CF)	
Implementer (IM)	
Coordinator (CO)	
Monitor Evaluator (ME)	
Shaper (SH)	
Team Worker (TW)	
Specialist (SP)	

Exercise 2:

The nine Belbin team role types are also associated with possible deficiencies and weaknesses that need to be addressed. For example, missing a team member who can assume one or more of the nine Belbin team roles. Therefore, it is important to identify these weaknesses and prepare a plan to overcome them.

Take ten minutes to reflect on the weakness you think are associated with Belbin’s nine team role types: Implementer, Coordinator, Shaper, Plant, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Team Worker, Completer Finisher, and Specialist by answering the following two questions:

- 1. What are the characteristic weaknesses associated with Belbin’s nine team role types?**
- 2. Give one example for each role explaining when should a team leader intervene**

Fill in the following table and do not worry if you cannot remember all of them. The process of guessing and checking your answers is a great way to familiarize yourself with the weaknesses of the nine roles. When you are done feel free to scroll down to the annex to find the correct answers!

Role	Characteristic weaknesses	Example of when this needs to be addressed
Implementer (IM)		
Coordinator (CO)		
Shaper (SH)		
Plant (PL)		
Resource Investigator (RI)		
Monitor Evaluator (ME)		
Team Worker (TW)		
Completer Finisher (CF)		
Specialist (SP)		

Exercise 3:

Now that you are familiar with the characteristics and weaknesses of each role, it is time to reflect on the nine Belbin team role types and identify your own top 3 role preferences within a team:

1. Use the following table to analyse your own features, strengths, weakness, and aspired roles.
2. Write your top three favourite roles in the second attached table and explain why you think you are a good fit for this role reflecting on your added value to the team.

Role	Features	Strengths	Weakness	In One Word
Implementer (IM)	Calm, confident, controlled	Disciplined, reliable, turns ideas into practical actions and works well across different tasks and settings	Dislikes change, somewhat inflexible	Applies
Coordinator (CO)	Intelligent, charismatic, mature, good chairperson	Clarifies team goals, understands the strengths of each team member, leads by good task delegation	Delegates own tasks to others, can be seen as manipulative	Generalises
Shaper (SH)	Challenging, outgoing, dynamic	Leads by focussing on task, dynamic, works well under pressure	Push limits, rely on provocation	Drives
Plant (PL)	Individualistic, serious-minded, unorthodox	Creative, unorthodox, free-thinking, generates many ideas and is likely to be able to solve difficult problems	Ignores working constraints, preoccupied to effective communication	Theorizes
Resource Investigator (RI)	Extroverted, enthusiastic, curious, communicative	Enthusiastic communicator, explores opportunities, develops and builds contacts external to team	Struggles to maintain long-term enthusiasm, over-optimistic	Recognises opportunities
Monitor Evaluator (ME)	Sober, unemotional, prudent	Discerning, evaluates team processes against project goals, weighs up all options	Dispassionate, lacks drive and ability to motivate others	Judges impartially
Team Worker (TW)	Socially oriented, rather mild, sensitive	Cooperative, perceptive and diplomatic, listens to others, avoids conflict	Remains neutral, indecisive	Supports
Completer Finisher (CF)	Painstaking, orderly, conscientious, anxious	Conscientious, attention to detail, provides quality assurance for team output, meets deadlines	Prone to stress, does not delegate well	Perfects established systems
Specialist (SP)	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated	Provides in-depth knowledge and skills in a narrow subject	Contributes to only a narrow window, dwells on technicalities	Specifies

N°	Preference role	Why? What is your added value?
1		
2		
3		

Keep in mind, that the process of identifying your role in a team according to Belbin's team roles is interchanging over time depending on your team's composition, abilities, and lifecycle stage. This method isn't meant to stereotype your preference and role for good, it is merely a tool to help you set your priorities when thinking about your potential role in your future with your potential team members.

b) Annex:

Exercise 1:

Take ten minutes to reflect on the Belbin's nine team role types: Implementer, Coordinator, Shaper, Plant, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Team Worker, Completer Finisher, and Specialist.

Can you still remember the characteristics of each role?

Role	Main Characteristic
Plant (PL)	Creative, unorthodox, free-thinking, generates many ideas and is likely to be able to solve difficult problems
Resource Investigator (RI)	Enthusiastic communicator, explores opportunities, develops and builds contacts external to team
Completer Finisher (CF)	Conscientious, attention to detail, provides quality assurance for team output, meets deadlines
Implementer (IM)	Disciplined, reliable, turns ideas into practical actions and works well across different tasks and settings
Coordinator (CO)	Clarifies team goals, understands the strengths of each team member, leads by good task delegation
Monitor Evaluator (ME)	Discerning, evaluates team processes against project goals, weighs up all options
Shaper (SH)	Leads by focussing on task, dynamic, works well under pressure
Team Worker (TW)	Cooperative, perceptive and diplomatic, listens to others, avoids conflict
Specialist (SP)	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated, provides in-depth knowledge and skills in a narrow subject

Exercise 2:

Take ten minutes to reflect on the weakness you think are associated with Belbin's nine team role types: Implementer, Coordinator, Shaper, Plant, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Team Worker, Completer Finisher, and Specialist by answering the following two questions:

- 1. What are the characteristic weaknesses associated with Belbin's nine team role types?**
- 2. Give one example for each role explaining when should a team leader intervene**

Fill in the following table and do not worry if you cannot remember all of them. The process of guessing and checking your answers is a great way to familiarize yourself with the weaknesses of the nine roles. When you are done feel free to scroll down to the "section b: annex" to find the correct answers!

Role	Characteristic weaknesses	Example of when this needs to be addressed
Implementer (IM)	Inflexibility. Slow to respond to possibilities.	When their actions obstruct necessary change for the team or the project.
Coordinator (CO)	Manipulativeness. Delegates personal work.	When they take credit for the effort of the team.
Shaper (SH)	Can provoke reactions in others. Hurts people's feelings.	When they are unable to recover a tense situation with good humour or apology.
Plant (PL)	Ignores practical details. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.	When they insist on maintaining 'ownership' of an idea when cooperation and collaboration are required.
Resource Investigator (RI)	Over optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.	When clients are let down by their neglect to follow-up arrangements.
Monitor Evaluator (ME)	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Overly critical.	When their cynicism exists without cause or logic.
Team Worker (TW)	Indecisive in crunch situations. Can be easily influenced.	When they avoid difficult or high-pressure situations.
Completer Finisher (CF)	Inclined to worry more than necessary. Reluctant to delegate. Can be a nit-picker.	When they demonstrate obsessive behaviour towards the completion of a task.
Specialist (SP)	Contributes to only a specific field, dwells on technicalities, tend to be loners, so being part of a team does not often come naturally to them	When they get too focus on the details and forget to see the overall pictures

Further resources:

- BELBIN, R.M. (1981): Management teams: why they succeed or fail. London: Heinemann.
- BELBIN ASSOCIATES (2012): Things to do not to do. URL:
<http://www.belbin.com/media/1145/belbin-uk-2012-thingstodonottodo.pdf> [Accessed: 23.02.2021]
- BELBIN ASSOCIATES (2016): The Belbin Team Role Circle. URL:
<https://www.belbin.com/media/1490/team-role-circle.pdf> [Accessed: 23.02.2021]
- The official Belbin team roles website: <https://www.belbin.com/> [Accessed: 23.02.2021]
- An interview with Dr. Meredith Belbin:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOai178ZiiQ&ab_channel=JoseKeeler [Accessed: 23.02.2021]

Disclaimer: A word about the Belbin team role types:

1. The Belbin team role types are described and discussed in Meredith Belbin's published book in 1981 "the Management teams: why they succeed or fail". It is important to note that the book is protected by copyright and cannot be reproduced in any form. So, our course is mentioning the Belbin team role with different goal in mind which is basically to illustrate the various roles of team members and how to use them innovatively to build your team and avoid conflict

2. The official Belbin team roles [website](#) presents a questionnaire that contains comprehensive information about the team role preferences. These questionnaire is subject to copyright and require paying a fee to access it and have a Belbin team roles profile for yourself. Nevertheless, information about the roles is freely available on this website, and in the book "Management teams: Why they succeed or fail" (Belbin, 1981).

This course has developed its own activities to explain the Belbin team roles, due to their significant importance in building a team and minimize the potential of conflicts within a team.