Leading Self & Others
Motivation & Leadership

Belbin Team Roles
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Effective Teams and access to key skills and capabilities

Building an effective team to deliver the vision of the business is considered a core competence of a leader. The leader needs to: learn and teach, deal with adversity, be resilient, exhibit integrity, dependability, honesty and build entrepreneurial culture. The team needs to have: relevant experience and track record, motivation to excel, commitment, determination and persistence, tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty, creativity, team focus of control, adaptability, opportunity, obsession, leadership and communication.

The building of the team depends to a great extent on the skills, know-how, business strengths and networks of contacts. The nature of the opportunity and how value is to be generated from it might also require a particular set of skills and capabilities that can be derived from additional team members. Prior to forming an effective team, key characteristics to be considered in potential team members are:

- Diversity of skills to create a balanced team
- Shared values that unite team members
- Openness in communication
- Commitment to the common/shared vision

Entrepreneurial teams may also provide access to unique knowledge, key skills and capabilities that are essential to build the new business venture. These may be specific to the domain such as product design and development, general business skills with application in the chosen industry sector, such as marketing skills and experience in the education sector, finance skills for not-for-profit ventures etc.

The team needs to have relevant experience and track record; motivation to excel; commitment determination and persistence.

There are typically two stages to the evolution of a team – the formation and the continued development. In the first instance, selection of team members is accomplished through examining track records, references, skills needed in the team and the potential for the chemistry to work between team members. "Once a team starts to form and shape – other dynamics take over such as compatibility, work rate, ability to deliver on promises and the day to day experience of working together in good and hard times".

Underlying much of what happens in team formation and development may be described as the softer aspects of team building, such as personal skills, social dynamics, preferred work styles, personalities, motivations, values and ethics.

What is Social Skills?

It's emotional intelligence: a group of five skills that enable the best leaders to maximize their own *and* their followers' performance. When senior managers at one company had a critical mass of EI capabilities, their divisions outperformed yearly earnings goals by 20%. It was originally Daniel Goleman who first brought the term "emotional intelligence" to a wide audience with his 1995 book called Emotional Intelligence, and it was Goleman who first applied the concept to business. "He looked at nearly 200 large, global companies. Goleman found that while the qualities traditionally associated with leadership—such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision—are required for success, they are insufficient. Truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill." (HBR 1998)

There are many psychometric instruments, coaching tools and models for opening up discussions on team formation and development. Scholars on the one hand and people in organizations on the other develop their own preferred approaches. Belbin's theory of team roles was developed after many years of observation and research using personality tests and behavior analysis. Belbin found that human behaviour in decision making groups is not random. He acknowledged, that a team role is simply "*a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way.* "

Belbin Model

When a team is performing at its best, usually each team member has clear responsibilities. Just as importantly, 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 what you expect them to do. Perhaps others are not quite flexible enough, so things "fall between the cracks." Maybe someone who is valued for their 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 or she disagrees with the approach of another team member.

According to the Belbin Team roles everyone has 2 or 3 preferred roles and most can be flexible to them. When we talk about Belbin Team roles, we need to emphasize that context does matters.

Teams can become unbalanced if all team members have similar styles of behaviour or team roles. If team members have similar weaknesses, the team as a whole may tend to have these weaknesses. If team members have similar team-work strengths, they may tend to compete (rather than cooperate) for the team tasks and responsibilities that best suit their natural styles

Plant	Role: To act as a prime source of ideas and innovation for the team
	As a person: Individualistic, intellectual, serious minded, unorthodox, creative
Resource Investigator	Role: To explore outside resources and develop contacts that may be helpful to the team
	As a person: Enthusiastic, extrovert, communicative, good under pressure
Coordinator	Role: To control and organize the activities of the team, making best use of the resources available
	As a person: Mature, calm, self-confident, fair minded, quietly charismatic
Shaper	Role: To give shape and form to the team's activities
	As a person: Outgoing, dynamic, challenging, has drive and courage
Monitor-Evaluator	Role: To analyse ideas and suggestions both from within and outside the team and to evaluate their feasibility and practical value in terms of team's objectives
	As a person: Highly intelligent, sober, strategic, critical, skeptical
Team Worker	Role: To help individual members to achieve and maintain team effectiveness.
	As a person: Socially oriented, mild, likeable, sensitive, perceptive
Implementer	Role: To translate general concepts and plans into a practical working brief and carry out that brief in a systematic fashion.
	As a person: Disciplined, reliable, conservative, hard-working, predictable
Completer Finisher	Role: To ensure that the team's efforts are as near perfect as possible and that nothing gets overlooked
	As a person: Conscientious, orderly, anxious painstaking

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 behaviour 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.

According to our interrelationships with others, we can identify 3 different ways of interaction. Action Oriented, People Oriented, and Thought Oriented. Each team role is associated with typical behavioural and interpersonal strengths.

Action Orientated Roles	Shaper	Challenges the team to improve.
	Implementer	Puts ideas into action.
	Completer Finisher	Ensures thorough, timely completion.
People Orientated Roles	Coordinator	Acts as a chairperson.
	Team Worker	Encourages cooperation.
	Resource Investigator	Explores outside opportunities.
Thought Orientated Roles	Plant	Presents new ideas and approaches.
	Monitor-Evaluator	Analyzes the options.
	Specialist	Provides specialized skills.

The Belbin Team Roles Model can be used in several ways: you can use it to think about team balance before a project starts, you can use it to highlight and so manage interpersonal differences within an existing team, and you can use it to develop yourself as a team player. The tool helps you analyze team membership, using the Belbin team roles as checks for potential strengths and weaknesses within your team.

Additional Readings:

Goleman, D., (1998). The Emotional Intelligence of Leaders. Leader to Leader, Fall 1998, Issue 1

S.Vyakarnam and J. Handelberg: (2005) *Four Themes of the Impact of Management Teams on Organizational Performance: Implications for Future Research of Entrepreneurial Teams.* International Small Business Journal. Special issue 6; vol23:pp236-254