Leadership Bites:
Belbin Team Roles
LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

NHS
Leadership Academy
South East

Belbin Team Roles: Background

Belbin Team Roles is the language of teams, enabling individuals to be able to project and talk about their behavioural strengths in a productive, safe and non-confrontational way.

By using Belbin, individuals have a greater self-understanding of their strengths, which leads to more effective communication between colleagues and managers. Great teams can be put together, existing teams can be understood and improved, and everyone can feel that they are making a difference in the workplace.

> 'A team is not a bunch of people with job titles, but a congregation of individuals, each of whom has a role which is understood by other members.'

The Nine Belbin Team Roles

Research showed that the most successful teams were made up of a diverse mix of behaviours.
Dr Meredith Belbin and his team discovered that there are nine clusters of behaviour - these were called 'Team Roles'.

Each team needs access to each of the nine Team Role behaviours to become a high performing team. However, this doesn't mean that every team requires nine people! Most people will have two or three Team Roles that they are most comfortable with, and this can change over time. Each Team Role has its strengths and weaknesses, and each has equal importance.

However, not all are always required at the same time - it is important to first look at the team objectives and work out which tasks need to be undertaken. Once this has been done, discussions can take place regarding which and when each Team Role behaviour should be utilised.

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A Guide to the Nine Team Roles

Resource Investigator	Teamworker	Co-ordinator
Uses their inquisitive nature to find ideas to bring back to the team. Strengths: Outgoing, enthusiastic. Explores opportunities and develops contacts. Allowable weaknesses: Might be over-optimistic and can lose interest once the initial enthusiasm has passed. Don't be surprised to find that: They might forget to follow up on a lead.	Helps the team to gel, using their versatility to identify the work required and complete it on behalf of the team. Strengths: Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction. Allowable weaknesses: Can be indecisive in crunch situations and tends to avoid confrontation. Don't be surprised to find that: They might be hesitant to make unpopular decisions.	Needed to focus on the team's objectives, draw out team members and delegate work appropriately. Strengths: Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Allowable weaknesses: Can be seen as manipulative and might offload their own share of the work. Don't be surprised to find that: They might over-delegate, leaving themselves little work to do.
Plant	**Monitor Evaluator**	**Specialist**
Tends to be highly creative and good at solving problems in unconventional ways. Strengths: Creative, imaginative, free-thinking, generates ideas and solves difficult problems. Allowable weaknesses: Might ignore incidentals and may be too preoccupied to communicate effectively. Don't be surprised to find that: They could be absent-minded or forgetful.	Provides a logical eye, making impartial judgements where required and weighs up the team's options in a dispassionate way. Strengths: Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately. Allowable weaknesses: Sometimes lacks the drive and ability to inspire others and can be overly critical. Don't be surprised to find that: They could be slow to come to decisions.	Brings in-depth knowledge of a key area to the team. Strengths: Single-minded, self-starting and dedicated. They provide specialist knowledge and skills. Allowable weaknesses: Tends to contribute on a narrow front and can dwell on the technicalities. Don't be surprised to find that: They overload you with information.
Shaper	**Implementer**	**Completer Finisher**
Provides the necessary drive to ensure that the team keeps moving and does not lose focus or momentum. Strengths: Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles. Allowable weaknesses: Can be prone to provocation and may sometimes offend people's feelings. Don't be surprised to find that: They could risk becoming aggressive and bad-humoured in their attempts to get things done.	Needed to plan a workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible. Strengths: Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done. Allowable weaknesses: Can be a bit inflexible and slow to respond to new possibilities. Don't be surprised to find that: They might be slow to relinquish their plans in favour of positive changes.	Most effectively used at the end of tasks to polish and scrutinise the work for errors, subjecting it to the highest standards of quality control. Strengths: Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects. Allowable weaknesses: Can be inclined to worry unduly, and reluctant to delegate. Don't be surprised to find that: They could be accused of taking their perfectionism to extremes.

Give it a go

Why not apply the Belbin team roles in your team and try and determine which tasks are better suited to the strengths of each members? You could try different activities and exercises found here to better understand the different team roles

Time to reflect…

Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?