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

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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).

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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:

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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 shown denotes 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.

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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.

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

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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.

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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.

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Profiles and Reports:

We can easily generate additional Belbin Profiles and Reports for you. These are completed online and automatically emailed to you as PDF files.

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- Team Combination Reports for detailed insights into a team's dynamics
- Working Relationship Reports for pairs of team members
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