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BELBIN TEAM ROLES

Discovering Team Skills® – understanding the foundation for high-performing teams

Why Are Teams So Different?

Why do some teams succeed brilliantly while others underperform, despite having access to similar resources and conditions?

One reason is how we define the concept of "competence." In recruitment and leadership, competence has traditionally been linked to education, work experience, and professional knowledge. These factors are, of course, important – but when it comes to how people function in teams, other qualities often become decisive.

This is why we need to complement professional competence with a focus on **team role behavior** – in other words, how a person naturally contributes when working with others.

Team skills are rarely visible in a CV or easily expressed in a job interview. But they have a major impact on how teams perform, solve problems, and create results together.

What Is a Team Role?

A team role is a cluster of behavioral tendencies that emerge when we work with others. According to Dr. Meredith Belbin's research, there are **nine distinct team roles**, each with its own strengths and what Belbin called *allowable weaknesses* – that is, behaviors that may be less desirable but are often a natural side effect of the strengths.

We can all take on different roles to some extent, but most people have **one or two preferred roles** that come more naturally, a few manageable ones that they can use when needed, and some roles that feel unfamiliar or energy-draining.

A well-functioning team does not consist of people who are the same. On the contrary – diversity in thinking, perspective, and work style is often what creates results. But for that to work, we need to understand how each person contributes, and how our behaviors interact in a group.

Belbin Team Roles help us do exactly that.

1. Plant (PL)



Strengths: Creative, original, and imaginative. Solves difficult problems in unconventional ways. Generates new ideas and perspectives.

Allowable weaknesses: May become preoccupied with their own ideas and sometimes miss practical details or input from others.

The Plant contributes best when the team needs fresh thinking or innovative solutions. However, they may need support in communicating their ideas clearly and grounding them.

2. Resource Investigator (RI)



Strengths: Outgoing, enthusiastic, and curious. Explores new possibilities and builds useful external contacts. Brings energy and optimism to the group.

Allowable weaknesses: May lose interest once the initial excitement wears off and can sometimes be easily distracted.

The Resource Investigator is often the team's connection to the outside world. They thrive on variety and opportunity – but may need help in following things through to the end.

Strengths: Calm, confident, and good at clarifying goals. Encourages participation, delegates tasks effectively, and brings the group together.

Allowable weaknesses: May be perceived as manipulative or as offloading personal responsibility onto others.

Coordinators are natural chairs of meetings and often excel at seeing the big picture. Their strength lies in drawing out others' contributions – but they need to be aware of when to step back and when to take ownership.

4. Shaper (SH)



Strengths: Dynamic, determined, and thrives under pressure. Challenges the team to improve and keeps things moving forward.

Allowable weaknesses: May come across as aggressive, argumentative, or insensitive to others' feelings.

The Shaper injects drive and urgency into the team. They help overcome inertia or complacency but may need to tone down their intensity in more sensitive group dynamics.

3. Coordinator (CO)



5. Monitor Evaluator (ME)



Strengths: Analytical, impartial, and strategic. Carefully evaluates ideas, weighs pros and cons, and makes sound judgments.

Allowable weaknesses: May appear overly critical or lacking in enthusiasm.

The Monitor Evaluator provides a calm, reasoned voice in decision-making. While they may not be the most emotionally expressive, their objectivity is invaluable – especially in complex or high-stakes decisions.

6. Teamworker (TW)



Strengths: Supportive, perceptive, and diplomatic. Promotes team harmony, helps resolve conflict, and adapts to different people and tasks.

Allowable weaknesses: May avoid confrontation and find it difficult to take a stand in difficult situations.

The Teamworker is the glue that helps teams hold together. They are often highly attuned to group dynamics and individual needs, and may need encouragement to express disagreement or make firm decisions.

7. Implementer (IMP)



Strengths: Reliable, disciplined, and practical. Translates ideas into action and ensures that plans are followed through efficiently.

Allowable weaknesses: May be resistant to change or hesitant to adopt new methods.

The Implementer is the one who gets things done. They bring order, structure, and consistency to the team – but may need support when flexibility or innovation is required.

8. Completer Finisher (CF)



Strengths: Conscientious, detail-focused, and perfectionistic. Spots errors, meets deadlines, and ensures high quality in delivery.

Allowable weaknesses: May worry unnecessarily or find it difficult to delegate tasks.

The Completer Finisher is the team's final quality check. They take pride in catching what others might miss – though their high standards can sometimes create stress for themselves and others.

Strengths: Dedicated, focused, and self-motivated. Brings deep expertise and knowledge in a specific area.

Allowable weaknesses: May focus too narrowly and show limited interest in areas outside their field.

The Specialist provides unique value through their technical or subject-matter expertise. Their passion and commitment are clear – but they may need help integrating their knowledge into broader team goals.

Research Behind Discovering Team Skills®

The Belbin Team Roles model is grounded in years of research conducted by Dr. Meredith Belbin and his team at Henley Management College in the UK. The model has been tested, refined, and applied across different industries, cultures, and organizational levels since the 1980s.

One of the central insights from Belbin's research is that **a person's value to a team lies not only in their knowledge or skills – but in their behavioral contribution**. When teams understand and use this insight, they can allocate tasks more effectively, manage conflict better, and increase both engagement and performance.

In Sweden, the model for analyzing and developing teams through the work of **Dr. Anders Wendelheim**, researcher and leadership consultant, who has explored how behavioral patterns affect **group learning, decision-making, and leadership dynamics**.

9. Specialist (SP)



This work led to the creation of **Discovering Team Skills®** – the Swedish framework for applying the Belbin model in organizations.

Discovering Team Skills® combines Belbin’s original research with Swedish psychodynamic methods and practical team development tools. It is widely used in:

- Management team development
- Executive coaching
- Leadership training programmes
- Recruitment and selection processes
- Organizational learning initiatives

By focusing on observable behavior and mutual understanding, the method helps individuals and teams discover their potential – and turn insight into action.

Discover how behavioral insight can strengthen collaboration, reduce friction, and unlock your team’s full potential.

Creating Teams with Belbin



Belbin Team Roles provide a practical framework for building and developing well-functioning teams. With individual team role profiles, we gain insight into **how each person naturally contributes**, and we can also identify where **gaps or overlaps** may exist.

The goal is not to create a mathematically perfect mix, but to foster **awareness** – both of our own behavior and how we interact with others.

When individuals understand each other's preferred roles, several things happen:

- Communication improves
- Misunderstandings are reduced
- Cooperation becomes smoother
- Strengths are better utilized
- Weaknesses are managed more constructively

Belbin is often used in **team development workshops**, where team members provide feedback on each other. This allows for a broader and more realistic picture than self-perception alone can provide.

It also opens the door to valuable discussions about **how our behavior is experienced by others** – a crucial insight for anyone in a leadership role or in a team that needs to collaborate closely.

Different Team Configurations

There is no such thing as the perfect team – but there are many ways to create a well-functioning one.

Some teams naturally find balance and cooperation, especially when members are aware of each other's roles and consciously build trust and mutual respect.

Others require a bit more work, perhaps because several people share the same preferred roles, or because certain important roles are missing.

The key is not to strive for mathematical balance but to look at the **team's task and context** and ask:

"Do we have what we need, behaviorally, to succeed together?"

When team members understand their different behavioural preferences, they can begin to:

- Collaborate more effectively
- Make space for each other
- Balance each other's strengths and blind spots
- Avoid unnecessary friction
- Take advantage of team diversity

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Less Successful Teams



Teams often run into problems when:

- Several people share the same role preference and **compete for the same space**
- No one naturally takes on certain key responsibilities — such as finishing tasks, initiating contact, or evaluating risks
- Some team members are **unaware of how their behavior is perceived by others**
- Leadership is unclear — or is exercised in a way that suppresses participation and initiative

- The team lacks trust and psychological safety

Belbin Team Roles can't solve all problems — but they can provide a **shared language and perspective** that helps the team identify what's really happening and what might be missing.

Quality in Decision-Making

Decision-making is a central task in every team — but teams differ greatly in **how** they make decisions and **how good** those decisions turn out to be.

Some teams rush ahead without thorough evaluation. Others get stuck in endless analysis. Some avoid conflict by aiming for consensus at all costs, while others make quick decisions without enough input from those affected.

Belbin Team Roles help highlight how different behavioral contributions influence decision quality:

- **Shapers** push for speed and clarity
- **Monitor Evaluators** slow things down and analyze
- **Team Workers** ensure that perspectives are heard
- **Implementers** want structure and concrete next steps
- **Plants** may offer new angles — or pull the discussion off course

There is no perfect formula. But teams that are aware of **who contributes what** in decision-making can:

- Handle complexity more intelligently
- Avoid groupthink and blind spots
- Balance speed and quality
- Build stronger commitment behind decisions

- **Belbin in Recruitment and Leadership Development**

Belbin is a valuable tool not only for existing teams, but also for **recruitment and leadership development**. It adds a behavioral perspective that complements CVs, interviews, and traditional assessments.

In recruitment, Belbin helps answer not only:

“Can this person do the job?”

but also:

“How will this person work together with others?”

By including Belbin in the recruitment process, companies can:

- Match candidates not only to roles but to **team dynamics**
- Predict **collaboration challenges** before they arise
- Avoid unbalanced team compositions
- Increase the likelihood of a smoother onboarding process
- Identify how to best support and develop the new hire



In leadership development, Belbin supports self-awareness and reflection. Many leaders discover that the strengths that helped them succeed individually may

limit their impact as team leaders if not balanced with complementary roles.

A leader who is, for example, highly results-oriented and decisive (Shaper) may need to actively encourage and involve more people-oriented roles (like Team Workers or Coordinators) to ensure sustainable performance in the team.

Belbin offers a **common language** for leadership teams to explore how individual preferences shape the group dynamic – and how to build a culture that brings out the best in everyone.

Recruiting the Right Person for the Team

When recruiting, it's natural to focus on the role's tasks and requirements. But in team-based organizations, the most important question is often:

“What does the team need – not just in terms of skills, but in terms of behavior?”

Two candidates may have similar qualifications on paper, but very different behavioral tendencies. One might enjoy structure and process; another may prefer creative brainstorming. One might push the group forward; another may smooth over tensions. None is better than the other — but one may fit **this** team better than the other.

By including team role behavior in the recruitment process, we increase the chance of:

- Hiring someone who complements the existing team
- Avoiding hidden friction or duplicated behaviors

- Supporting the team's development in a strategic direction
- Giving the new member a faster, smoother integration

Belbin Team Roles help us see beyond the CV and into the **team dynamic** — the level where most success (or failure) is created.

Team or Group? – Six Key Differences

We often use the words "team" and "group" as if they mean the same thing. But in practice, there are important differences — differences that impact both performance and collaboration.

Below are six key variables that distinguish a true team from a group of individuals working side by side:

Variable	Group	Team
1. Purpose	Each person has their own task	Shared purpose and mutual goals
2. Decision-making	Done individually or by a single leader	Done together, based on dialogue and shared insight
3. Roles	Based on formal job descriptions	Based on actual contribution and behaviour
4. Leadership	Often directive and hierarchical	Often facilitative and participative
5. Interaction	Limited to what's necessary	Frequent, engaged, and oriented

Variable	Group	Team
		toward learning
	Individual	Collective
6. Learning	knowledge development	learning and reflection

- Working as a true team often requires more effort — but it also leads to better results when the task is complex, fast-changing, or dependent on collaboration.
- Belbin Team Roles help clarify where the team is today, and what it might need to move from **just a group of people** to a **high-performing team**.

Why Behavior – Not Personality – Should Be Your Focus in Team Development

When it comes to building effective teams and strengthening collaboration across an organisation, too many companies rely solely on **personality tests**. While personality insights can be interesting, they often tell us **how people see themselves**, rather than how they actually **behave in a team setting**.

This is where the **Belbin Team Roles** model offers a crucial advantage.

Belbin focuses on **observable behaviour** – the kind of contribution someone naturally makes when working with others. Behaviour is dynamic. It adapts to the environment, the task, and the team's needs. And unlike personality traits, **behaviours can be developed, adjusted, and balanced** through feedback, awareness, and team dialogue.

By working with Belbin, organization's gain:

- A clearer understanding of how **individuals function in teams**
- Insights into how to **combine strengths** and manage "allowable weaknesses"
- Tools to improve **communication, collaboration, and shared responsibility**
- A behavioral language that leaders and team members can apply directly in real work situations

Teams don't fail because of personality mismatches. They struggle because of **unbalanced behaviors, unclear roles, and lack of mutual understanding**. That's why development should start with what people **do**, not just who they are.

Belbin gives your team a shared framework to understand and respect **different contributions** — leading to more effective meetings, stronger performance, and better results.

Accreditation, Licensing and the Consultant Network

A Belbin accreditation: Is 2+1 day education and can also be done online from one to many. Just ask as for a proposal and we will come back. Inger@belbin.se

Each accredited consultant receives:

- In-depth training in Belbin Team Roles and behavioral analysis
- Access to feedback tools and team role reports
- Membership in a professional network of trained users

- Ongoing updates, support, and development opportunities

The method is used by:

- Internal HR departments and leadership developers
- Independent Consultants and coaches
- Training firms and business psychologists

Discovering Team Skills® is available through certified trainers who are accredited in the use of the Belbin model. Accreditation is required to access the full toolkit and to deliver workshops, training, and coaching using the materials. You need first to be Accredited to Belbin and the training is five days with minimum 6 participants.

The Discovering Team Skills® approach is based in Sweden and currently represented in several European countries.

If you are interested in becoming accredited or bringing the method (Team Skills) into your organization, please get in touch with christer@belbin.se

The accreditation is done with Christer B Jansson and Dr Anders Wendelheim with minimum 6 people. Please ask for a proposal.

Want to Know More?

If you are interested in learning more about how Belbin Team Roles and the Discovering Team Skills® framework can support your team, leadership, or recruitment process – we're happy to help.

For more information, training opportunities, or access to team role assessments in your language:

Contact: Christer B Jansson or Inger Melkersson at Belbin Sweden.

 **Website:** www.belbin.se
 **Email:** christer@belbin.se
inger@belbin.se

Location: Based in Sweden – working across Europe.



Belbin 2024 conference. From the left Dr Meredith Belbin, Inger Melkersson, Christer B Jansson and Leg Psychologist Emelie Elebro.