

# **BELBIN TEAM ROLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



# TEAM ROLES EXPLAINED

Just like a sports team any other kind of team needs balance if it is to perform effectively. The individuals who make up the team need a range of attributes that are complementary so that, to coin a well know phrase, 'its whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. This is how teams achieve exceptional performance and, again, sporting analogies abound.

At Henley Management College whilst researching effective teamworking some years ago, Dr Meredith Belbin analysed the composition of high performance teams and discovered that there were a number of behavioural attributes that were crucial. These he named:

Plant  
Completer Finisher  
Monitor Evaluator  
Shaper  
Implementer  
Teamworker  
Coordinator  
Resource Investigator  
Specialist



Belbin's Team Roles have been enduring. Thousands of companies and organisations around the world use them to help build high performance teams and to assist with recruitment.

Although Meredith Belbin's research and subsequent Team Roles methodology was based on adults, it has now also been applied to young people aged 16 to 25.

Some people think that the Team Roles assessment is a psychometric test: it isn't. Psychometrics are about *personality traits*, whereas Belbin's Team Roles are about *behavioural preferences* or preferred ways of working.

Some people also think that completing an assessment to find out their Team Roles profile must be time consuming. Well, the 'self-assessment inventory' takes up to 20 minutes and is straightforward. Once submitted the results take approximately 3 days to convert into a personalised report, which shows the young person's preferred team roles in rank order.

The report cannot be good or bad. In the self-assessment there are no right or wrong responses. A person's team role profile simply describes their behavioural preferences when working in a team: what they are good at, what they are reasonably good at and what they are least good at.

## How are Team Roles to young people?

Knowing their preferred ways of working can help young people in the following ways:

- Gain a good understanding of themselves – especially what they are good at
- Include preferred team roles in Personal Statements when applying for places at university
- Gain a head start over others when applying for jobs

## Here is a description of each of Belbin's Team Roles:

### **Shaper (SH) - *the whip cracker***

Shapers are young people who usually display high energy and are desperate for achievement. They tend to display extrovert qualities, considerable drive and they like to win. In some ways Shapers are obvious leaders, particularly at the start of a task, but their assertiveness and abrasiveness can make them unpopular. They thrive under pressure and like to get things done their way, hence the name 'Shaper'. They don't mind upsetting people, as long as the task gets done and they can be determined, argumentative and combative. A team containing two or more strong Shapers can expect conflict as the individuals battle for supremacy.



### **Plant (PL) - *generates the light of new ideas***

Plants tend to be imaginative, innovative and creative young people. They provide the ideas, sometimes appearing a bit zany, that may lead to the solution of a problem or achievement of a task. They usually prefer to work on their own, some distance from the team, where they can let their mind wander. They are often introverted and react strongly to both praise and criticism. Their ideas may be radical and they will not be concerned by practical constraints.



### **Completer Finisher (CF) - *gets things done***

Completer Finishers throw themselves into whatever needs to be done by the team. These young people are motivated by an internal anxiety to complete a task, even though they may look calm to other team members. Typically, they are introverted and do not need externally generated motivation or stimulation. Completer Finishers are not keen to delegate tasks to other people because they fear relinquishing control over the quality of output required. They have a sense of urgency to complete a task, apply high standards and they will be seen by others as precise, task focused and dedicated.



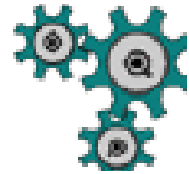
### **Monitor Evaluator (ME) - *the critical eye***

Monitor Evaluators are serious-minded young people who tend to take decisions cautiously, preferring accuracy over speed. They are unlikely to be overly enthusiastic about anything, preferring to make careful judgements about whether a proposed course of action will be successful. Monitor Evaluators will tend to take all factors into account and they are rarely wrong. They are well suited to leadership roles, even though they appear to be dry humoured and critical, because they are seen as 'thinkers' and by their very nature they are rarely wrong.



### **Implementer (IMP) - *the cogs of a team***

Implementers are practical young people with common sense, self-control and discipline. They are not afraid of hard work and prefer to tackle tasks in a systematic way. They are well organised and will be seen as having loyalty to the team above loyalty to themselves or other groups outside their team. Implementers, however, may be seen as dull, hardworking and inflexible. They frequently rise towards the top of organisations because they are seen as efficient and well organised, even though they may sometimes lack charisma.



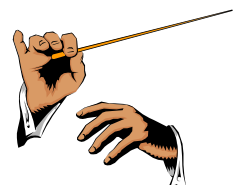
### **Team Worker (TW) - *helps the team pull together***

Team Workers are the most supportive members of a team. These young people tend to be mild mannered, sociable and concerned about the wellbeing of other team members. They demonstrate flexibility and adapt to suit different situations taking into account the wishes of other people. They have high levels of emotional intelligence and are diplomatic, but they can be indecisive in dynamic situations. Young people with strong Team Worker preferences are an ideal counter to Shapers because they work hard to ensure that conflict in the team is minimised. They are not seen as a threat to anyone and, therefore, they are often chosen for the position of team leader. In short, Team Workers can be thought of as the oil that ensures the smooth running of a team and morale is usually higher when they are around.



### **Coordinator (CO) - *ensures that the team works together***

Coordinators have the ability to cause other people to work towards shared goals. These young people are naturally inclined to be leaders of teams or as chairs of meetings. They are usually happy to delegate tasks and will be good at it. They tend to have a broad outlook and, as a result, they command respect from people around them. Coordinators are consultative and this sometimes brings them into conflict with Shapers because of the wide difference in management styles.



**Resource Investigator (RI) - *knows how and where to find resources***

Resource Investigators are usually enthusiastic and outgoing young people. They are effective communicators inside and outside the team and they are natural negotiators. Not particularly innovative themselves, Resource Investigators tend to be good at taking other people's ideas and developing them. As the name suggests, Resource Investigators are skilful at finding out what is available and how it can be accessed; they are good at exploring possibilities and reporting back to the team, but they get bored easily.



**Specialist (SP) - *the expert***

Specialists can be hard to find but they can be invaluable members of team. These are young people who are naturally keen to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a particular task. Whilst they will take great pride in their own area of expertise they are unlikely to be interested in other people's expertise. When they find themselves appointed as team leaders they usually command considerable respect from other team members because they seem to know so much about the technical aspects of the task to be achieved. Furthermore, they can be called upon to take decisions based on deep knowledge and sometimes experience too, but as team leaders their single-mindedness tends to limit their effectiveness.



Reading the descriptions above, you might be able to work out which team roles best fit you. If you put them in rank order (most like you to least like you) you will have a Team Roles profile.

However, if you want to have a validated and objective view of your profile you will need to complete a short questionnaire (self-perception inventory) which can be analysed by the Belbin computer. Shortly after submitting it you will receive a report about yourself showing your Team Roles profile and containing some commentary and personal advice.

The following web site provides you with details for how to do this:

[www.aurora-tds.co.uk/belbinforyoungpeople.html](http://www.aurora-tds.co.uk/belbinforyoungpeople.html)