

High Performing Teams using BELBIN®

A team is one of the most important components in any department or organisation. How a team works and performs has a direct contribution to the productivity of the business. The way the team members behave has a direct effect on whether a team meets or exceeds its objectives. A lot of the responsibility for the performance of the team relies on the organisation and the manager, they have to ensure that the right functions and processes are in place. This then creates the question, what can you do to ensure that you are contributing in the right way?

Have you ever wondered why some teams just seem to work and others hit the rocks? When things don't work, it is obvious to all and it often has a profound effect on the people involved, as well as the project or objective. When things do work, it can often be difficult to establish the reasons why the team performs and functions effectively, trying to put your finger on that specific factor.

The team has to have a good mix of individuals who bring different skills, techniques and abilities. The team has to complete its tasks and work to ensure that they meet the goals and objectives, the question is, how do we ensure that this is done in the best way.

Team Roles and Work

To establish a high performing team we need to understand the difference between team work and team roles. It is easy to get these confused as they relate to the work that actually gets done or the job responsibility that we perform. To produce a high performing team it is important to get the distinction between these correct.

Team roles – the behaviour that someone brings to the team

Team work – what needs to be done to achieve the goals.

BELBIN®

One of the most valuable tools in identifying team roles was established by Meredith Belbin. Through the analysis of individual behaviours in team situations he came up with 8 team roles. These were established by profiling individuals and then putting a mix of teams through a team activity. It soon became apparent that the best performing teams had a mix of personalities and attributes, the success of the team was directly correlated to behaviour. The research established separate clusters of behaviour, each of which formed a team role.

A Team Role came to be defined as:

“A tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way.”

Since it was originally created, a new team role has been established, so instead of 8, there are 9 roles. This enables BELBIN® to stay relevant to the current business environment.

Some of you may have come across BELBIN® previously, however it's only by using it in its correct way that you can really understand your own team roles and use it to develop a high performing team. You may have been given a paper copy of BELBIN® to complete and then looked at the results. This doesn't really help you establish all aspects of BELBIN® and recognise what a powerful tool it is for you and your colleagues. This may also have been given to someone who is unaccredited and who does not have access to the online Belbin profiling.

Observers

BELBIN crucially includes observer feedback. Once you have completed a questionnaire, you then nominate observers to give you feedback on how they see you behave. Observer Assessments provide independent evidence about an individual's Team Roles. A Self-Perception test is only as good as your sense of personal realism. Some people answer in terms of how they would like to contribute rather than how they really behave.

Most Psychometric Tests rely on self-reporting, but here the behaviour assumed may not correspond with what others observe. The strength of BELBIN® system lies in its emphasis on validity, for its counselling outputs are designed to take account of a consensus on observed behaviour. This can be made evident by looking at how far the Observers agree with each other.

The BELBIN® system combines your own perception and awareness, along with the observers. That feedback along with your answers, produce a very specific and personalised report. This then gives you your strengths and weaknesses and helps you analyse the whether others see you in the same way that you see yourself or whether there are differences. By combining the two elements an individual gets a much more accurate report.

Whilst some Team Roles are more “high profile” and some team members shouted more loudly than others, each of the behaviours are essential in getting the team successfully from start to finish. The key for any team is balance. By identifying our Team Roles, we can ensure that we use our strengths to advantage and that we manage our weaknesses as best we can.

Sometimes, this means being aware of the pitfalls and making an effort to avoid them.

You will have a number of “preferred Team Roles” or behaviours you frequently and naturally display. We also have “manageable roles”, roles which might not be the most natural course of behaviour for us, but which you can assume if required and might wish to cultivate. Lastly, we have our least preferred roles, those we should not assume, since we’ll be playing against type.

In this instance, the effort is likely to be great, and the outcome, poor. If work requires Team Roles other than our own, it is a much better bet to find and work with others who possess roles complementary to our own. Since people tend to display more than one preferred role, a team of four could quite easily represent all nine BELBIN® Team Roles. So, in a nutshell, the BELBIN® philosophy is about celebrating – and making the most of – individual differences. The message is that there is room for everyone in the team all positive contributions are welcome.

So to produce a high performing team each team member needs to understand, what roles need to be in place to achieve the goals. They then need to understand their strengths and therefore what roles they bring to the team. That will enable them to establish what they bring to the team and where they are best suited in terms of the team work. If we establish this within the team it helps understand where there may be gaps and the best contribution a team member can make to the team.

As an accredited provider of BELBIN® profiling, please let us know if you have any questions or require further information. If you are interested in running a BELBIN® workshop and want to develop your team’s performance, we would be very happy to come up with a workshop for you. If you want to identify your own team roles and gain feedback from some observers, again we can arrange this for you.

