

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Belbin Team Roles?

A Team Role as defined by Dr Meredith Belbin is “A tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way.”

The value of Belbin Team Role theory lies in enabling an individual or team to benefit from self-knowledge and adjust according to the demands being made by the external situation.

How did the concept originate?

The concept was derived from a study of successful and unsuccessful teams competing in Business Games at Henley Management College, England. Managers taking part in the exercise were given a battery of psychometric tests and put into teams of varying composition. As time progressed different clusters of behaviour were identified as underlying the success of the teams. These successful clusters of behaviour were then given names. Hence the emergence of nine Team Roles:

Action-oriented Roles:	Shaper	Implementer	Completer Finisher
People-oriented Roles:	Co-ordinator	Teamworker	Resource Investigator
Thinking-oriented Roles:	Plant	Monitor Evaluator	Specialist

What can be gained by identifying people’s Team Roles?

It is difficult to work effectively with people without some reasonable expectations of how they are going to perform. Self and Observer Assessments show how an individual feels and how an individual behaves in a group.

Why use Observer Assessments?

Observer Assessments provide independent evidence about an individual’s Team Roles. A Self-Perception test is only as good as an individual’s sense of personal realism. Some people answer in terms of how they would like to contribute rather than how they really behave.

Can I change Team Roles?

Team Roles develop and mature. These may change with experience and conscious attention. Different Team Roles may come to the fore in response to the needs of particular situations.

Shall I let people know my preferred Team Roles?

The sharing of Team Roles increases understanding and enables mutual expectations to be met. Disappointments will then be less frequent.

What is an ‘Allowable Weakness’?

Sometimes strength in one role has to be bought at the cost of what might be seen as a weakness in another context. For example, a person whose preferred Team Role is Monitor Evaluator is likely to be objective, impartial and good at carefully weighing up all possibilities to make the right decision. Yet someone with these strengths may well come across as being unenthusiastic or even boring. Any failure to inspire is apt to obscure the true strengths of a Monitor Evaluator. That weakness can be reckoned the price that necessarily has to be paid for the strength and in this sense it is termed Allowable.

What is a ‘Team-Role Sacrifice’?

In some circumstances an individual will need to forego using his/her leading or preferred team role and adopt another in its place. This shift may be rendered necessary due to the lack of a good example of a desired role within the team or because another person is already contributing on common preferred ground. Such a shift from preferred behaviour is known as “making a team-role sacrifice”.

When I know my strongest Team Roles, what shall I do about it?

A person’s overall strongest roles are the ones most appreciated by other people. Develop and play these roles with enthusiasm, because this is where you are likely to make a mark. At the same time take note of your lowest roles and find a strategy to avoid exposure by trying to play them. So try to work with people who are strong in the roles in which you are weak.

What about the reliability and validity of Interplace?

Reliability and validity are concepts commonly used in evaluating Psychometric Tests. Reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test, while validity relates to whether a test measures what it purports to measure.

Internal consistency is highest where test items are repeated, but this narrows their focus. Rather than repeating questions, or dealing with items that are virtually identical, **Interplace** seeks to find clusters of useful forms of related behaviour. For example, the Shaper cluster refers to an individual who is challenging, competitive, hard driving, tough and outspoken. However, that does not mean that everyone who is competitive happens to be outspoken.

Most Psychometric tests rely on self-reporting. But here the behaviour assumed may not correspond with what others observe. The strength of **Interplace** 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. Formal correlations are, however, difficult to calculate as Observers are not required to make any fixed number of responses. Genuine responses are more easily obtained, and are more valuable, when forced choices are avoided. Differences in perception between the self and others provide valuable leads for action.

The demands of jobs also have to be taken into account when assessing validity since the many varied forms of behaviour can be seen as effective or ineffective according to the context. Here the fit between the profile of the individual and the profile of the job plays a key consideration.