



Famous Examples of Team Roles

What are the Belbin Team Role styles that have contributed most to the successes and failures of some famous people?

You may or may not agree with the list at the end of this article, but hopefully it will stimulate some useful thought and debate. Often the most interesting (and heated) conversations around Team Role theory are about the possible Team Role preferences of a famous person, movie character or villain.

Take the genius Albert Einstein for example.

Was he a creative and unorthodox "Plant" for his visionary and original approaches to complex problems? Was he an analytical "Monitor Evaluator" for his capacity for unparalleled critical thinking? Was he a "Specialist" for his phenomenal dedication to the field of physics?

One of the beautiful things about Belbin's Team Role theory is that people can comfortably have more than one natural Team Role, and so he was most likely a potent blend of all three. Many highly successful folks will have a useful repertoire of team role strengths and weaknesses that have helped them to get where they are. This is based upon a lifetime's worth of unique experiences. Quite often it's also down to just how well or poorly they have managed and timed the use of their gifts, and concurrently managed the natural areas of associated weaknesses that will offset them.

On the flip side of humanity how about a classic villain, Adolf Hitler?

Hitler is an historical example of where areas of Team Role strength provided some initial success, but then by allowing the associated weaknesses to go un-checked, a terrible downward spiral occurred. Was he a darkly inspired Plant / Shaper on a tragically flawed mission? Many students of both history and Team Role theory would argue that he was (consider how far-fetched ideas and visions became progressively more divorced from reality, yet forcefully pursued without compromise).

Whilst there are often obvious superficial traits projected by those in the limelight, what are those people really like behind closed doors as they work in or lead their own teams? Are the behaviours that they project in public forums simply those they want you to see, and perhaps not at all authentic to that person's actual style?

Media celebrities and politicians are a good example here.

When they are riding high and better enabled to control the narrative of how their story is presented, perhaps it is easier to project only the traits they wish to be seen. When the real pressure is on behind the scenes, and in post event analysis, only then perhaps does the truth emerge about their actual traits and "allowable" and "non-allowable" weaknesses.

Often it takes an actual profile, or a good read of a biography or two from someone well-versed in Team Role theory to be sure. Sometimes it's just too hard to get it right from afar. It's also easier to spot the more flamboyant roles that seek the spotlight perhaps, as opposed to those who may get their hard work done behind the scenes.

Just as our good friend Einstein can easily be rated in at least 3 natural Team Roles, so do a number of the famous examples below occur in more than one Team Role category. Some may have styles that sit heavily in just the "Action oriented roles", or perhaps the "Socially oriented roles" or the "Thinking oriented" roles, yet some may have roles from all three? To ponder what makes / made them tick is always fascinating.

It also demonstrates the danger of stereotypes or of type-casting.

If you look at 1 000 Plants for example, you will still have 1 000 unique individuals that whilst all falling into the Team Role category of Plant, will still have myriad other dimensions to their personality that no instrument can adequately measure. The roles that sit astride their top roles will also strongly flavour how their behaviour manifests.

Here are some frequently mentioned examples for each of the team roles.

Let us know if you disagree with any, or would like us to add some more.....

PLANT (creative, unorthodox, independent thinkers, visionary, inventive, dreamers)

Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Steve Jobs, Lady Gaga, Douglas Adams, Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin, Steve Jobs, Adolf Hitler, John Cleese (arguably all of the Pythons?), George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Walt Disney, Madonna.

RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR (explorers, negotiators, curious, entrepreneurs, influential)

Richard Branson, Kerry Packer, Mark Zuckerberg, Andrew Carnegie, Jerry Maguire, Madeline Albright, Jon Bon Jovi, Stephen Colbert, Bill Clinton, James Bond, Donald Trump, Bart Simpson, JFK.

COORDINATOR (calm, mature, natural chairperson, managers of talent in others)

John Howard, Barack Obama, Winston Churchill, Optimus Prime, Mahatma Gandhi, Bob Geldof, Octavian Augustus Caesar, General H Norman Schwarzkopf, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Oprah Winfrey.

SHAPER (dynamic, driven, competitive, challenging, bold, blunt, volatile)

Donald Trump, Margaret Thatcher, Kerry Packer, General George S Patton, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Phil Gould, Simon Cowell, Bob Geldof, Mother Teresa, Chef Gordon Ramsey, Judge Judy, Hilary Clinton, Terry Jones.

MONITOR EVALUATOR (analytical, dispassionate, evaluative, critical thinker)

Bernie Fraser, Mr Spock (Star Trek), Judge Judy, Kryten (Red Dwarf), Stephen Hawking, Sheldon (Big Bang Theory), Henry Kissinger, Alan Greenspan, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein.

TEAMWORKER (caring, supportive, good listener, flexible, relationship oriented)

Kofi Annan, Marge Simpson, His Holiness The Dalai Llama, Katy Perry, Dr Phil, Jimmy Carter, Deepak Chopra, Sidhartha Guatama Buddha, Confucious, St Francis of Assisi, Richard Gere, John Denver, Ban Ki Moon, Mother Teresa, Michael Palin, Santa Claus, Oprah Winfrey.

IMPLEMENTER (well-organised, disciplined, methodical, systematic, dependable, loyal)

General Peter Cosgrove, Mr Miyagi, Wayne Benett, James Bond, General H Norman Schwarzkopf, Santa Claus, Angela Merkel, Ian Kiernan, Bob Geldof.

COMPLETER FINISHER (perfectionist, conscientious, sets high standards, anxious about detail)

Steve Jobs, Michael Schumacker, Tiger Woods, Dexter, Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, Rainman, Madonna, Martin Scorsese, Gordon Ramsey, Santa Claus, Monica Geller, Hilary Clinton, John Cleese.

SPECIALIST (single-minded expert in a particular field, professionally dedicated to their area)

Stephen Hawking, Einstein, Sheldon (from The Big Bang Theory TV sitcom), Michael Shumacker, Tiger Woods, Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, Bill Gates, Usain Bolt.

Can you suggest any more good examples for this list?

We'd love to hear from you.

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