

Plant



Objective To act as a prime source of innovation and ideas for the team.

Strengths

Creative and inventive individuals, Plants are the ones in the team most likely to come up with new ideas and suggestions. The name comes from Dr Belbin's original research. It was discovered that there was no initial spark of an idea in a team unless a creative person was "planted" in each team.

Plants can tackle complex problems in new and interesting ways – they're lateral thinkers who can provide imaginative and original lines of thought when the team is stuck for ideas. As a result, they need to be given the space and time to think, producing ideas the team can put to good use.

Plants are not always appreciated in very structured organizations, because their way of thinking can cause disruption and change the way things are done. But that's what makes them essential. It is the Plant who offers the germ of an idea which can lead to success, and without this, teams can stagnate.

Potential weaknesses

When they're preoccupied with whatever they're working on, they can be unaware of what is going on elsewhere in the team. They're one of the Team Roles who can seem at

a distance from the rest of the team, off in their own little world, and may have difficulties communicating with others in the team who do not see things the same way they do.

Because of their original way of thinking, Plants' ideas may be radical and lacking practicalities. In addition, they might focus on an idea that interests them, rather than the one that meets the team's requirements. This is why they must depend on others in the team to evaluate their ideas and put them into practice. But it isn't always plain sailing. Plants can reject criticism or take offence if their chosen idea is not taken on by the rest of the team.

Too many Plants in a team can cause problems too, because each person will be more concerned with their own ideas, rather than working with others to bring one idea to fruition.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Plants are bound to want to take ownership of their ideas, this can be taken too far. Plants shouldn't be allowed to try and take over, when collaboration with others would offer better results for the team.

Team Role compatibility

Plants are best managed by a **Co-ordinator** who can make best use of their talents and help keep their ideas in line with the team's needs. As managers, Plants work well when supported by a **Monitor Evaluator**, whom they can use as a sounding board, or an **Implementer**, who can transform their ideas into practical action.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Give them time and space to be creative. Listen to their ideas and encourage them to explain them.

✗ Don't...

Impose too many restrictions, or be overly critical before they've had the chance to explore an idea fully.

Optimum working environment

Plants need space and time to think. They can struggle with bureaucracy and find very structured workplaces too restrictive.

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Resource Investigator

Objective To explore external resources and develop contacts on behalf of the team.

Strengths

Resource Investigators are natural communicators, who are able to establish a rapport quickly, to extend the range of the team’s useful contacts and partnerships.

Outgoing and inquisitive, Resource Investigators are likely to be found at conferences and exhibitions, exploring new ideas and opportunities. They are best placed to go out and discover new possibilities that they can report back to the team. In this way, Resource Investigators can ensure that the team capitalizes on new developments and keeps a handle on their competitors. Without them, the team risks stagnating – becoming too inward-looking and losing track of their marketplace.

Since they are both persuasive and affable, Resource Investigators make strong and capable negotiators. They are good at thinking on their feet and, because of their boundless enthusiasm, they enjoy convincing others of the benefits of a potential idea or possibility.

Potential weaknesses

Resource Investigators thrive on the excitement of novelty, and whilst this allows them to respond quickly to new developments, their

enthusiasm can fade as quickly as it arose. While they move on to the ‘next big thing’, this can leave others in the team to pick up the pieces, and this expedience can cause resentment – or worse, lead to a missed opportunity.

Even with the best of intentions, their natural optimism can be misplaced. Resource Investigators focus on the potential and not necessarily on the detail. If the ideas they present are not sufficiently vetted by others in the team, this can lead to unnecessary work and wasted time.

Resource Investigators enjoy talking, but this can have an adverse impact on the team too. Sometimes, they are over-talkative, which means that others aren’t given sufficient time to air their views. Whilst they may enjoy a lively workspace, others who need a quieter working environment may struggle.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Resource Investigators are likely to want to move on to the next exciting possibility, this shouldn’t be at the expense of the client. It’s not acceptable for them to let customers down by failing to follow up – or make arrangements

for someone else in the team to do so.

Team Role compatibility

Resource Investigators are likely to get along with most colleagues, but may work well for a **Shaper** manager who appreciates their ability to think on their feet. As managers, Resource Investigators often need a **Completer Finisher** to follow up on the details.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Allow them to enthuse and discuss with others when a new possibility has caught their attention.

✗ Don’t...

Ask for too much detail about a new venture, or expect them to carry out in-depth research.

Optimum working environment

Resource Investigators need to work with others – they thrive on the buzz, and are likely to become bored when working alone. They are often adept at working in fast-paced working environments where they can act on opportunities as they arise.

Co-ordinator



Objective To combine the team’s efforts, promote consensus and manage talent.

Strengths

Mature, calm and confident, Co-ordinators are responsible for pulling the group together towards a shared objective. In a team with diverse skills and behaviours, Co-ordinators are able to identify and use the talents of each individual to best effect, delegating work accordingly and encouraging each person to give of their best for the team.

Co-ordinators are often adept at facilitating meetings, ensuring that all important contributions are drawn out, and that consensus is achieved to allow the team to move forward.

With a blend of tact, insight and control, Co-ordinators are sometimes required to play a political role, smoothing over disagreements in such a way that the team will benefit.

Potential weaknesses

Owing to their considerable abilities to influence others, at worst, Co-ordinators can create a negative atmosphere through ‘office politics’. There is a difference between orchestrating the best situation for the team, and manipulating others for the Co-ordinator’s own benefit.

Proficient delegators, Co-ordinators can end up being too ‘hands off’ and simply allowing others in the team to take the lion’s share of the work. If they fail to pull their weight in the team, this can cause resentment and frustration, leaving others less likely to do their bidding.

In order to play their role effectively, Co-ordinators need to recognise and develop talent without seeking to compete with others. Good Co-ordinators recognise that the team’s successes reflect well on them without the need for self-aggrandizement.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst delegating work appropriately is an important part of the role, Co-ordinators should ensure that they do their part and do not take sole credit for the team’s efforts.

Team Role compatibility

Co-ordinators can work well for a **Plant** or **Shaper** manager who is willing to give them control of organising people while they focus on ideas or goals, respectively. As managers, Co-ordinators can work

well with any other role, but may find themselves grappling with a **Shaper** who is intent on taking charge.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Give them the opportunity to bring out the best in others. Approach them to ensure that your ideas and views are taken forward.

✗ Don’t...

Undermine them with hidden agendas or by pursuing personal conflicts and vendettas.

Optimum working environment

Co-ordinators require a collaborative environment in which they are given responsibility and can exercise some autonomy and control. They may become detached if given work requiring extensive detail or focus.

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Shaper



Objective To challenge and drive the team forward to achieve its goals and objectives.

Strengths

Shapers are dynamic and highly-motivated individuals with a lot of nervous energy and a great need for achievement. They're primarily interested in getting things done – as quickly as possible.

Headstrong and assertive, Shapers enjoy competition and challenges, and they're determined to overcome obstacles and win. They're likely to come across as self-confident, even if they have doubts that they don't allow others to see.

Shapers like to lead and push others into action. They're impatient to get things done and they don't mind taking unpopular decisions to make things happen. They thrive under pressure and are well suited to managing change. As the name implies, they exert a directive influence and can shape group discussion or activities into objectives and targets. They are good at tackling inertia and complacency in teams, or intervening when a team is straying too far from its original brief.

Potential weaknesses

In their eagerness to get things done, Shapers can neglect other people's feelings and ruffle a few

feathers. They can be argumentative and are often to be found in the centre of a team conflict.

Because they are deeply invested in the team's success, they also tend to show a strong emotional response to disappointment or frustration, which may need to be managed by the team.

Too many Shapers in a team can cause problems too, because they're likely to lock horns and end up in heated arguments. To work successfully together in teams, Shapers often need to demarcate their areas of authority clearly, and to stick to work on parallel lines.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

The Shaper's impetus to shake things up can help rejuvenate an apathetic team, but it can also result in arguments. Where conflict arises, Shapers shouldn't hold grudges, but should be encouraged to recover the situation with good humour or an apology.

Team Role compatibility

Shapers are best managed by a **Co-ordinator** who can channel

their drive, or a **Monitor Evaluator** who can help them to think before acting. As managers, Shapers work well when supported by a **Implementer** (whose efficiency and task focus will be appreciated) or a **Teamworker**, who can smooth over any misunderstandings that might arise.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Use a factual and goal-oriented approach. Talk in terms of what can be achieved and when the deadline might be.

✗ Don't...

Make personal attacks in arguments, or allow yourself to get off-topic in discussions. Avoid ambiguity wherever possible.

Optimum working environment

Shapers are well suited to working in a changing, fast-paced team, where there are no ambiguities of leadership and they are accountable for the results they produce.



Monitor Evaluator

Objective To analyse ideas and suggestions, and evaluate their feasibility.

Strengths

Monitor Evaluators are serious-minded, prudent individuals best suited to analysing problems and evaluating ideas and suggestions to determine their viability, and help develop them further. To this end, if they can develop a strong working relationship with the team's **Plant**, this is likely to serve the team well.

Fair-minded and proficient at critical thinking, they are adept at weighing up the pros and cons of a situation, reaching decisions using logic, rather than being swayed by enthusiasm or personal and emotional considerations. Accordingly, they may keep a distance from the team in meetings or other group settings, allowing them to observe proceedings whilst remaining impartial.

Monitor Evaluators enjoy debate and are likely to pride themselves on taking their time to get the big decisions right. As such, they should be the arbiters of decision-making within the team. The more complex the decision-making process – and the more variables involved – the more important this role becomes to the team's chances of success.

Potential weaknesses

With an in-built immunity to enthusiasm, Monitor Evaluators may be perceived as dry and boring

to colleagues. As a result, they often lack the ability to inspire others in the team. It is the Monitor Evaluator's low sense of drive which allows impartiality, but this may be perceived as lacklustre.

Monitor Evaluators are likely to take their time when deliberating over a decision, which may be frustrating to others in the team who want things to move faster. At worst, they can become caught up in academic debate without reaching a judgement.

They can also be tactless and overly critical when debunking unsound ideas, which can cause friction with the **Plant** or **Resource Investigator** who offers it for consideration, and lower team morale. This upset may not be apparent to a Monitor Evaluator who expects to see his or her own detachment mirrored in others.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Monitor Evaluators may be skeptical about new ideas, responding with cynicism – and without any underlying logic – is unacceptable.

Team Role compatibility

Monitor Evaluators are best managed by a **Co-ordinator** who

can ensure they are consulted at the relevant points. They manage most other roles well, with the possible exception of **Shapers** (who are likely to become frustrated with the pace of change) and fellow **Monitor Evaluators**, since the relationship is likely to result in prolonged debate without conclusion.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Invite them to assess an idea thoroughly, express their concerns and resist hasty decision-making.

✗ Don't...

Attempt to influence them with optimism or emotional appeals. Avoid pressuring them to make a quick judgement.

Optimum working environment

Monitor Evaluators fare best in strategic situations where success or failure depends on taking a small number of crucial decisions.



Teamworker

Objective To support others, and promote harmony and unity within the team.

Strengths

The most supportive members of a team, Teamworkers help to maintain a positive team atmosphere. They're sensitive to emotional undertones that can affect the way the team is working together, and can be instrumental in resolving difficulties.

Teamworkers are adept at responding to people and situations with diplomacy and sensitivity. They have a key role to play in defusing conflict, keeping things running smoothly and helping all team members to contribute effectively. Versatile and willing, they do whatever is needed to support others.

As well as being good listeners and proficient at internal communication, they are sympathetic and personable individuals, making them popular amongst their colleagues. Their influence on the team may be subtle, but when they are not present, their loss is certainly felt.

Potential weaknesses

Teamworkers dislike conflict – interpersonal conflict especially – and will try to avoid it. This can be a valuable attribute, but sometimes heated debate is healthy, and necessary for the team to move forward. The Teamworker may be the one best

placed to defuse the friction in a tense situation. Whilst they are not necessarily comfortable in this environment, it's important that they do not avoid all confrontation at the team's expense, as this may mean either that important discussions do not take place, or that they take place without the Teamworker's calming influence, which can lead to further discord in the team.

Teamworkers can also be hesitant in taking important decisions in crunch situations, especially if the decision is difficult and likely to alienate or upset certain team members. Where the Teamworker is in a position of responsibility, this may undermine their authority.

If there are too many Teamworkers in a team, whilst the team is likely to get along well, there is a risk that it may coast, with important decisions delayed or avoided in order to save people's feelings.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Teamworkers seek to minimise conflict, they should not avoid all situations which entail necessary pressure or useful debate.

Team Role compatibility

Teamworkers can work well when managed by any other role, but might perhaps be most valuable to **Shaper** manager who needs help defusing conflicts arising. Again, Teamworkers are likely to make popular managers for most other roles, but may struggle to prevent a dominant **Co-ordinator** or **Shaper** from taking the reins.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Harness their supportive qualities for the team's benefit; ensure that feelings are not overlooked.

✗ Don't...

Take them for granted, assume that they will agree to everything or force them to make big decisions alone.

Optimum working environment

Teamworkers need to work in a positive, caring environment where there is an opportunity to provide support, whether to clients or colleagues.

Implementer



Objective To translate concepts and plans into a working brief, and carry it out.

Strengths

Hard-working and practical, Implementers turn ideas into working plans. They focus on what is feasible, and then get on with the task at hand. No stranger to a spreadsheet or Gantt chart, they tend to tackle work in a systematic, methodical fashion that ensures maximum efficiency.

Implementers are reliable and disciplined members of the team and are useful to an organization because of their inclination and capacity to do whatever work needs to be done. Where others may struggle to maintain interest in routine tasks, Implementers are ideally suited to this kind of work and are likely to develop a reputation for getting things done on time.

Typically, Implementers are recognized for their loyalty to the organization in which they work. In Meredith's Belbin's original research, Implementers were referred to as 'Company Workers'.

Potential weaknesses

Once plans are in place, Implementers can be reluctant to entertain new suggestions, in case the disruption threatens productivity and leads to

inefficiency. As such, they may object to changes without due consideration and can be seen as rigid and inflexible.

They might be seen as unadventurous by other members of the team, who wonder why their Implementer colleagues are content to keep doing things the same way without considering the greater purpose or objective in their work. Implementers are most effective when they are able to strike a balance between accommodating important changes and maintaining productivity.

If there are too many Implementers in a team, there is a risk that the team simply continues along its track and fails to respond to stimuli which demand change and threaten the *status quo*.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst the Implementer's drive for efficiency and stability is commendable, they must not be allowed to obstruct change altogether, or the team is likely to become stagnant and unable to adapt to its environment.

Team Role compatibility

Implementers may work well with a **Shaper** manager who will appreciate their task focus and productivity, or equally a **Plant** manager who will welcome their ability to translate ideas into action plans. As managers, Implementers can benefit from support from a **Monitor Evaluator**, who can advise on the logistics of a plan, or a **Completer Finisher**, who can ensure that efficiency does not come at the expense of accuracy.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Give responsibility for organizing things, and delegate in a way that leaves no room for ambiguity.

✗ Don't...

Use them as a sounding board for new or vague ideas, or delegate in broad, conceptual terms.

Optimum working environment

Implementers like to know what to expect from their working day. They need organization and structure, and a role that includes routine work.

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Completer Finisher



Objective To correct mistakes and ensure that important details are not overlooked.

Strengths

With an eye for detail and always striving to reach the highest possible standards, Completer Finishers are adept at areas of work which requires careful follow-through, close concentration and a high degree of accuracy, such as proofreading or checking figures.

Within the team, Completer Finishers may be relied upon as “quality control”, catching mistakes – of omission or commission – which might otherwise threaten to spoil the end product or outcome. This can be especially important for work which falls between the responsibilities of two people or teams.

Motivated by an internal anxiety to get things right, Completer Finishers need little external impetus in their quest for perfection. Given their own high standards, they hold themselves accountable and are unlikely to hand work over to others, for fear that someone else may not bring the same care and attention to the task.

Potential weaknesses

Completer Finishers ‘finish’ in terms of adding polish to work, rather than finishing it off. Whilst they might be called in at the end of a task to apply a finish to the work, they may struggle to keep to deadlines, because they place more importance on getting something right than on getting it done in time.

The anxiety that drives the Completer Finisher can also work to their detriment, leading them to commit to an unmanageable workload and potentially letting the team down. Since the anxiety operates internally and may not be expressed, the team may not be aware until the last moment that a deadline is going to be missed. Equally, Completer Finishers expressing excessive worries may lower team morale.

Completer Finishers can pursue finer details to the point of fussiness or “splitting hairs”. Whilst these qualities might be useful at the end of a project, they are likely to prove an unwelcome distraction when the team is trying to determine an overall plan or direction. They might also be dismissive of others in the team for what they see as a more cavalier or sweeping approach.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Completer Finishers may be admired for their perseverance in getting every little detail right, this tendency shouldn’t be allowed to spill over into obsessive behaviour.

Team Role compatibility

Completer Finishers are likely to work well for **Resource Investigator**, **Shaper** or **Plant** managers – each of whom may

need help with handling details. A Completer Finisher manager leads by raising the standards of others in the team, but may struggle to manage an expedient **Resource Investigator** who values excitement and innovation over detail.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Clarify priorities to help them manage workload. Allow them adequate time to complete work thoroughly and carefully.

✗ Don’t...

Overload them with work or set unrealistic deadlines. Don’t make light of their anxiety about getting things right.

Optimum working environment

Completer Finishers work best in an environment conducive to concentration and where they are given adequate time to check things through.

Specialist



Objective To provide in-depth knowledge on a particular subject.

Strengths

Dedicated to a specific interest or field, Specialists pride themselves on acquiring skills and knowledge in their particular subject area, and this rare skills is often essential to the successful operation of the team.

Specialists love learning for its own sake, and their attention is focused on honing their knowledge and understanding, ensuring they are up-to-date with the latest developments in their field and maintaining high professional standards.

Specialists often enjoy talking about their subject with others, particularly those who share their interests. They are likely to be keen to attend training in their subject area, not just because of a sense of obligation, but out of love for their subject. For some Specialists, work is just like a hobby, because they derive such enjoyment from what they do.

Potential weaknesses

Because of their narrow focus, Specialists may struggle to take a broader view. Colleagues may find that they tend to focus on the technicalities of a new idea, before the wider issues and viability has

been addressed.

Since they work in a particular area, Specialists may become isolated from others in the team, and may gain a distorted view of the team's function or purpose, based on their own interests and priorities. An effective Co-ordinator can help make the most of the Specialist's unique expertise, whilst situating this within the team's wider goals.

Owing to the love of their subject, Specialists can find it difficult to judge how much detail or explanation is required. As a result, they may be over-informative when explaining an issue to the team, losing others' interest and potentially causing unwelcome delay in meetings.

Non-negotiable weaknesses

Whilst Specialists contribute on a narrow front, they should not be permitted to ignore – or downplay the importance of – all factors outside their own area of expertise.

Team Role compatibility

Specialists are likely to work well for a **Co-ordinator** who can draw out – and show appreciation for –

their contributions or for an **Implementer** or **Teamworker** who values their specific knowledge and can help build it into the everyday running of the team. As managers, Specialists are likely to do best when managing other **Specialists**, since their expertise and experience is likely to be most valued by those who share their interests.

How to handle

✓ Do...

Demonstrate that you value their contribution as a source of information. Involve them when undertaking research or study.

✗ Don't...

Neglect or underestimate their area of expertise. Don't allow them to become too isolated from the team.

Optimum working environment

Specialists may need a quiet work space which allows them to focus on their subject in depth and without distraction. This said, they may benefit from working alongside others who share their interests and expertise.