



7 Types of Classic Team

And how Team Role theory helps

Teams are often composed based upon 'functional role' (what a person has been hired to do), whilst a person's natural Team Role behaviours (their unique tendencies to behave, contribute and relate to others) is given little or no thought.

At the key stages of any workplace project "Team Roles" will come to the fore and determine whether a team succeeds or fails, often irrespective of what ability, experience and skill is present.

The research of Dr Meredith Belbin resulted in his "9 Team Roles" that help measure the major clusters of behavioural style that influence how people contribute and work with one another. Furthermore our friend and organizational psychologist Dr David Marriott has spent years looking at the psychological aspects of common team types.

A person does not just project one Team Role style into a team, rather they have a unique blend of natural, manageable and least preferred behavioural styles. Where a surplus or deficit of such roles exists within a team it can predispose it to quite predictable biases, strengths and weaknesses. Here is a brief insight into some common team types, and how Belbin's model and profiles can help better understand and work with them.

The Delta Team

Often comprises people who have long experience and highly relevant specialisms, but their distinguishing psychometric feature is a lack of 'thinking power' and creativity. This results generally in mediocre results. The introduction of a good Plant or Resource Investigator can transform them through the injection of new ideas and creativity.

The Apollo Team

A team full of ideas and originality – full of Plants, is very prone to failure. Trumping of each other's ideas, sulking, going round and round in circles is the usual scenario. The answer can be to restructure the team so as to encourage the “second cleverest Plant’ to deploy their other team role strengths, suggesting to them they are clever enough to fill other roles possibly needed by the team.

The Super-Analyst Team

A team of Monitor Evaluators or strongly analytical thinkers seems to have a poor record of success. They may not be natural ‘interactors’, and they tend to argue over the fine points and become stuck in a cycle of negative thinking. A cleverer than usual Co-ordinator is generally able to enhance the performance of such a team.

The Isolates Team

Team members are composed of anxious introvert personality types. Anxiety seems to interfere with the process of social bonding and clear thinking. They tend to fuel each other's anxiety level and it takes time for them to settle down. The introduction of a clever Plant or a Strong Co-ordinator can help transform such a team into a more powerful force.

The Alliance Team

A team of just two key figures. The Co-ordinator as manager and the Plant as the innovator. A successful pairing of these two role types can rapidly establish a close understanding with the Co-ordinator recognizing and channeling the Plant's creative ability and thinking power whilst the Plant recognizes the Co-ordinator as a strategic, people oriented leader who can find the right people to turn the Plant's ideas into practical, focused ways of getting things done.

The Stable Extrovert Team

Some successful teams possess no outstanding members and their achievement is a function of the way that they have learned to

interact together. Collectively they think better than they do individually. Members of such a team incline to high extroversion scores with low anxiety scores. Superior intellectual ability does not seem to be a necessary attribute or even an advantage unless the task involves very high levels of complexity.

The Balanced Team

This team follows a pattern of key Team roles being present. It has a Co-ordinator or a Shaper more intellectually able than the team average. A Plant supplies the creative input; a Monitor Evaluator who provides analysis, one or more Implementers and Team Workers to help to actually do the work, a Resource Investigator for networking and contacts, and a Completer Finisher to make sure that things are done properly and on time. Input from a relevant Specialist is also useful. The balanced team offers greater flexibility and resilience. There is less dependence on the brilliance of leadership of one person. In this it can resemble a Stable Extrovert team, but a good “Balanced Team” usually produces more outstanding results whilst being just as reliable.

It's amazing just how far a little understanding can go towards making hugely productive and positive developments to real workplace teams by using Belbin's Team Role Theory.

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