

FAQ's on the Belbin Team Role Model

Q What exactly is a Team Role?

A Dr Meredith Belbin defines a Team Role as "Our tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way." Although the original research and most people's association with the Team Role model relates to *teams* there is strong evidence to support the view that these natural tendencies exist in workplace activities outside the formal team. (It's worth reading *Management Teams - Why They Succeed or Fail* by Dr Meredith Belbin if you are interested in learning more about Belbin Team Roles and the original research.)

Q Where can I obtain a detailed description of the Belbin Team Role model?

A You will find a description of the Team Role model and useful background information in the book *Management Teams - Why They Succeed or Fail* by Dr Meredith Belbin which is available from Amazon. For a FREE four page summary explanation of the Team Role model email me at barrie.watson@cert-uk.info and I shall be pleased to send you a copy. (Note: It will be sent to you by email as an attachment.)

Q I have expanded my understanding of Team Roles but still have difficulty with the role of 'Specialist'. Can you help me?

A A lot of people get confused about the 'Specialist' role and tend to think of it in terms of a person's function rather than behaviour. This is particularly so at a senior level, for example, the production or operations director may regard the finance director as a 'Specialist'. The true behavioural 'Specialist' however is driven by the pursuit of knowledge and information. These people just love the process of learning. It pervades everything they do and they want to go into things very deeply, thus they will be seen as truly knowledgeable by everyone and not just those who are impressed by their functional expertise.

Q I use the Belbin model but need something to help me explain it, preferably of an interactive nature. Can you suggest anything?

A Yes, there is a Belbin DVD called *Fire Toast and Teamwork*. If you want more information on this contact me at barrie.watson@cert-uk.info and I shall provide you with full details. There is also a very good but rather old DVD from VideoArts called *Building the Perfect Team*. Both explain and demonstrate the use of the Team Role model well and each comes with a trainer guide and exercises, If you want something simple, but not really interactive, CERT has produced an audio slideshow which puts the message across simply and clearly. You can obtain it free by requesting it by using the Contact Us link.

Q Does the Belbin Team Role model only apply when working in a team?

A Although the original research looked at how people behave and interact in teams it is my opinion that the nine clusters of behaviour used by the Belbin Team Role model have applications outside formal team work. For example, building productive relationships between work colleagues by helping them identify and use complementary qualities. I also believe that the tendencies identified by Belbin methodology are still there when we are working alone, for sure I have a preference for using my natural Shaper/Resource Investigator strengths whatever the circumstances and I think this general principle applies to most of us.

Q After studying the concept of Team Roles may I ask if you feel that a person's Team Roles change in different situations?

A There is indeed a dynamic element to Team Roles and, of course, there is scope for modification to respond to different situations and circumstances. People do have their individual recurring patterns of behaviour however and, generally speaking, behaviour modification will mostly be of an incremental nature. The general principle is that *When the going gets tough, people revert to type*, even though they may feel or claim to be behaving quite differently. Thus, the natural enduring pattern of a person's Team Roles may not change as much as many people would believe. The management of Team Roles however is open to more scope for change but this should not be confused with changes to the natural Team Role order.

Q What books can you recommend for explaining the Belbin Team Role model?

A The three books I recommend are: *Management Teams - Why They Succeed or Fail*, *Team Roles at Work*, both by Dr Meredith Belbin. The first describes the experimentation leading to the development of the Team Role model and the second is really about what the title implies. I also recommend a new book called *Succeeding at Work* written by a small team of us who wanted to share our experience of applying the Belbin methodology to improve personal and team performance.

For more information or to raise issues you wish to discuss or clarify please use the *Contact Us* navigation link on the CERT website.

Editor: Barrie Watson - CERT Consultancy & Training

Website: www.cert-uk.info

Email: barrie.watson@cert-uk.info

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