

THERE'S MUCH MORE TO BELBIN THAN TEAM BUILDING

It always pleases me when I see Belbin being applied in innovative ways that go beyond team building and team development and we hear of many different applications at the last Belbin Symposium. For my part one of my missions, in fact almost an obsession, is to use Belbin to get managers managing people more effectively and it is with this in mind that I would like to share the following thoughts with you.

It is my belief that one of the key things that managers need to give more attention to is acquiring a deep understanding of the natural talents, preferences and motivations of each of the people they manage. They can do this by using their eyes and ears when interacting with people of course but I am convinced that their understanding can be greatly enhanced by using Belbin.

The Belbin individual reports provide a rich amount of information and the deep insights managers need to get the best out of each person. It is no longer good enough for managers to simply use macro motivational principles. While it is always likely to be true that such things as achievement and recognition are important elements of motivation today as they have always been this will be manifested very differently by people with different Team Roles. For example, a Completer Finisher/Monitor Evaluator would describe high achievement along the lines of, "I feel really pleased. I spent a lot of time analysing this process and have eliminated all the errors or omissions." On the other hand a Plant/Shaper would derive satisfaction from a different type of activity and would be more likely to feel a high level of achievement by pronouncing, "I had this great idea which I pushed though, despite the opposition, to improve our performance by 15%".

The really effective manager will understand and tap into these very individual preferences and motivations and take this into consideration when assigning work and planning development. I would describe their role as being similar to that of an orchestra conductor who understands how and when to use the special contributions of each member of the orchestra. It is my contention that the individual Belbin Team Role reports can help managers tune in to the behavioural talents of the people they manage and thereby create something akin to a great orchestra, rather than a cacophonous ensemble.

So, if you are not using Belbin for this purpose give it a try and see if you can play a part in helping managers make the transformation from effective process managers to outstanding people managers. I have had the privilege of helping and encouraging a number of managers to adapt this approach with impressive results so what I am advocating is not just an untried theory or speculation. It really works.

Barrie Watson – Updated September 2013