

## Team Types

### **Ever wondered why some teams just seem to work and others hit the rocks?**

When things don't work, it is obvious to all and it often has a profound effect on the people involved, as well as the project or objective to be achieved.

In the 1970s, Dr Meredith Belbin and his research team set about observing teams, with a view to finding out where and how these differences came about. As the research progressed, it revealed that the difference between success and failure for a team was not dependent on factors such as intellect, but more on behaviour. The research team began to identify separate clusters of behaviour, each of which formed distinct team contributions or 'Team Roles'. Belbin defined a Team Role as "a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way." It was found that different individuals displayed different Team Roles to varying degrees.

### **So how can this research help us to improve business performance in today's context?**

Businesses use teams right across their organisations and whether they are recruiting and selecting staff, promoting employees, looking to improve business performance with existing systems, processes, culture and the like or seeking to do things differently; part of solving the jigsaw puzzle is to assess or measure how well the relevant employee(s) are able to work in a team and/or their fit with the existing or 'new-look' team.

There are many ways to gain some insight into an individual's Team Type or what is their "tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way". A common tool is psychometric assessment which attempts to gauge an individual's most characteristic way of behaving and perceiving the world, as well as their most typical attitudes, interests and values. One example of this is the Fifteen Factor Questionnaire Plus – 15FQ+. This assessment generates scores that indicate an individual's degree of inclination towards each of eight possible team roles, based on Belbin's theories.

The information provided in the 15FQ+ is based around the following Team Roles:

**Co-ordinator (Chair)** – takes the role of 'chairman', although this may not be their official capacity. They take the role of presiding over the team and coordinating its efforts. They will set the agenda of the team and establish team priorities

**Shaper-Driver (Taskmaster)** – the person who takes charge of specific projects and the tasks of the group. Their function is to give shape to the team's efforts and to unify the contributions of team members into a clearly defined plan of action

**Evaluator-Critic (Analyst)** – rather than contribute ideas, will see their role as that of providing constructive criticism wherever there is a flaw in a plan or strategy

**Implementer (Company Worker)** – the practical organiser of the group and the one who turns decisions and strategies into defined and manageable tasks

**Team-Builder (Peace Keeper)** – concerned with the social relationships within the group. His/her role is to promote harmony within the group and to counterbalance discord generated by other members of the team

**Resource Investigator (External Contacts)** – the liaison person of the team who communicates the intentions and requirements of the team to others. Is often a good improviser and takes the role of diplomat or salesperson

**Inspector-Completer (Task Finisher)** – the worrier of the group who is not happy until every detail has been checked. He/she ensures that careless mistakes are not made by the team and sees projects through to completion

**Innovator (Ideas Person)** – the team's source of original ideas and the most radical ideas. May be the source entirely fresh ideas and new insights.

Whilst some Team Roles are more 'high profile' and some team members louder than others, each of the team types is essential in getting a team project successfully from start to finish. The key is balance. For example, a team with no Innovator can struggle to come up with the initial spark of an idea with which to push forward. However, if there are too many Innovators, bad ideas can conceal good ones and non-starters given too much airtime. Similarly, with no Shaper-Driver, a team can amble along without drive and direction, missing deadlines. With too many Shaper-Drivers, in-fighting may start and lower morale.

As well as the strength or contribution each Team Type provides, each Team Role can also be found to have an 'allowable weakness': a flipside of the behavioural characteristics, which is allowable in the team because of the strength which goes with it. For example, the unorthodox Innovator could be forgetful or scatty; or the Resource Investigator might forget to follow up on a lead. Co-ordinators might get over-enthusiastic on the delegation front and Implementers might be slow to relinquish their plans in favour of positive changes. Inspector-Completers, often driven by anxiety to get things right, may take their perfectionism to extremes. Team-Builders, concerned with the welfare and morale of the team, can find it difficult to make decisions when morale is compromised or team politics is involved. Shapers risk becoming aggressive and bad-humoured in their attempts to get things done.

With this type of information contained in assessment reports, makes it a very useful recruitment and selection tool that provides more information about a candidate to help improve the chances of hiring the best people for your business. As a business owner or manager, you know for each role in your business or your team, the kind of competencies, skills and attributes that you would like to see in the ideal job holder, this includes team type.

Employers benefit immensely from using the 15FQ+ personality assessment when making hiring decisions, as the assessment gives one more piece of the puzzle about understanding a candidate alongside their CV, interview performance and references. Including psychometric assessment supports the recruitment of high performing employees who fit the culture of the business. The 15FQ+ can provide unbiased, reliable and relevant information

concerning the likelihood of job success and job satisfaction and it can help to reduce selection errors, staff turnover, training costs, lost opportunities and stress to individuals.

Information from the assessment report can aid an interviewer in establishing whether a candidate can provide any evidence of his preferences. In essence, is s/he a good example of the Team Role?

The 15FQ+ can also be used to establish an 'ideal profile' for employees and candidates. For example, you may deduce that certain competencies equate to greater success in your call centre team or your sales team. A profile can be created to match candidates against those particular competencies. Likewise the profile can be used to identify gaps in your team and use the information to establish necessary training to develop your employees further.

Assessing an individual's Team Type or Role indicates an individual's general propensity for a particular Team Role orientation. It can tell us how they are likely to interact with his/her colleagues in a team situation. The specific ways in which s/he will express their preferred team style may vary however, depending on the given situation. Someone may have the Team Role attributes you are looking for, but how will s/he fit in with the existing team? Whilst you can't account for personal differences or personality clashes, a Team Role assessment can help assess whether an individual will be providing a much-needed contribution or whether their Team Role preferences could cause conflict with other team members.