



The Helper



The Mixer



The Planner



The Driver

The link between the 4 ACE communication styles and Belbin team roles

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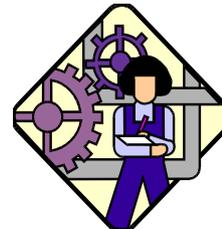


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Belbin's team roles.....	1
How Belbin's model was created	1
Belbin's Model.....	3
Plants (PL)	5
Co-ordinators (CO).....	6
Monitor Evaluators (ME)	7
Implementers (IMP)	8
Completer Finishers (CF)	8
Resource investigators (RI).....	10
Shapers (SH).....	11
Team workers (TW)	12
Specialists (SP)	13

Introduction

Since it was first set out in Management Teams – why they succeed or fail the model of team roles developed by Dr Meredith Belbin has been used extensively to explore team roles. Many people who use **ACE** as a way of understanding more about themselves and their teams have also used Belbin and often ask: *What is the relationship between the two models?* This short paper sets out the Belbin Team roles and their counterparts in **ACE** – although it should be treated with some caution as the two models are not directly equivalent.

Belbin's team roles

A team role as defined by Dr Meredith Belbin is:

"A tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way."

Belbin team roles describe a pattern of behaviour that characterises one person's behaviour in relationship to another in facilitating the progress of a team

How Belbin's model was created

Over a period of nine years, Meredith Belbin and his team of researchers based at Henley Management College, England, studied the behaviour of managers from all over the world who were attending programmes at the College. Managers taking part in the study were given a battery of psychometric tests and put into teams of varying composition, while they were engaged in a complex management exercise.

Their different core personality traits, intellectual styles and behaviours were assessed during the exercise. As time progressed different clusters of behaviour were identified as underlying the success of the teams. These successful clusters of behaviour were then given names describing the model's nine team roles.

These are:

'Action-oriented roles' - Shaper, Implementer, and Completer Finisher

'People-oriented roles' - Co-ordinator, Team-worker and Resource Investigator

'Cerebral roles' - Plant, Monitor Evaluator and Specialist

Belbin's Model

Team role type	Contribution	'Allowable weakness'
<p>Plant (PL)</p> 	<p>Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems</p>	<p>Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively</p>
<p>Coordinator (CO)</p> 	<p>Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well</p>	<p>Can often be seen as manipulative. Off loads personal work.</p>
<p>Monitor Evaluator (ME)</p> 	<p>Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.</p>	<p>Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.</p>
<p>Implementer (IMP)</p> 	<p>Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions.</p>	<p>Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.</p>
<p>Complete Finisher (CF)</p> 	<p>Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time</p>	<p>Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.</p>

Team role type	Contribution	'Allowable weakness
<p>Resource Investigator (RI)</p> 	<p>Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.</p>	<p>Over - optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed</p>
<p>Shaper (SH)</p> 	<p>Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles.</p>	<p>Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.</p>
<p>Team worker (TW)</p> 	<p>Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction.</p>	<p>Indecisive in crunch situations</p>
<p>Specialist (SF)</p> 	<p>Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.</p>	<p>Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.</p>

Plants (PL)



Plant characteristics

Plants are innovators and inventors and can be highly creative. They provide the seeds and ideas from which major developments spring. Usually they prefer to operate by themselves at some distance from the other members of the team, using their imagination and often working in an unorthodox way. They tend to be introverted and react strongly to criticism and praise. Their ideas may often be radical and may lack practical constraint.

They are independent, clever and original and may be weak in communicating with other people who are on a different wavelength.

Job roles and team function

The main use of a PL is to generate new proposals and to solve complex problems. PLs are often needed in the initial stages of a project or when a project is failing to progress. PLs have usually made their mark as founders of companies or as originators of new products.

Too many PLs in one organisation, however, may be counter-productive, as they tend to spend their time reinforcing their own ideas and engaging each other in combat.

ACE profile

High Driver with Mixer backup a long way back.

They have Driver confidence and self-motivation supplemented with Mixer flexibility of thinking but lack Mixer sensitivity and diplomacy.



Co-ordinators (CO)



Co-ordinator characteristics

The distinguishing feature of Co-ordinators is their ability to cause others to work towards shared goals. Mature, trusting and confident, they delegate readily. In interpersonal relations they are quick to spot individual talents and use them in the pursuit of group objectives. While COs are not necessarily the cleverest members of a team; they have a broad and worldly outlook and generally command respect.

Job roles and team function

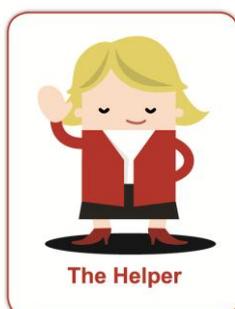
COs are well placed when put in charge of a team of people with diverse skills and personal characteristics. They perform better in dealing with colleagues of near or equal rank than in directing junior subordinates. Their motto might well be “consultation with control” and they usually believe in tackling problems calmly. In some firms COs are inclined to clash with Shapers due to their contrasting management styles.

ACE profile

Relatively balanced profile with strong Helper backed up by Mixer, Driver and Planner in that order.

They are able to access all aspects of all four styles. They rely first on their ability to convey trust and sensitivity to others to create the right atmosphere-using Planner to organise and Driver to decide as back up.

*COs are referred to as Chairmen in “Management Teams: why they succeed or fail”



Monitor Evaluators (ME)



Monitor Evaluator characteristics

Monitor Evaluators are serious minded, prudent individuals with a built in immunity from being over enthusiastic. They are slow in making decisions preferring to think things over. Usually they have a high critical thinking ability. They have a capacity for shrewd judgements that take all factors into account. A good ME is seldom wrong.

Job roles and team function

MEs are best suited to analysing problems and evaluating ideas and suggestions. They are very good at weighing up the pro's and con's of options. To many outsiders the ME may appear as dry, boring or even over critical. Some people are surprised that they become managers. Nevertheless, many MEs occupy strategic posts and thrive in high-level appointments. In some jobs success or failure hinges on a relatively small number of crunch decisions. This is ideal territory for an ME; for the person who is never wrong is the one who scores in the end.

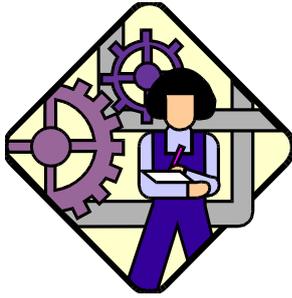
ACE profile

High Planner

They are consistent, methodical and serious, seeking to understand the problem comprehensively through careful sifting of the evidence and analysis of options and risks. Low Mixer comes from the inflexible, data driven approach that focuses on task rather than people.



Implementers (IMP)



Implementer characteristics

Implementers have practical common sense as well as a good deal of self-control and discipline. They favour hard work and tackle problems in a systematic fashion. On a wider front the IMP is typically a person whose loyalty and interests lie with the organisation and who is less concerned with the pursuit of self-interest. However, IMPs may lack spontaneity and show signs of rigidity.

Job roles and team function

IMPs are useful to an organisation because of their reliability and capacity for application. They succeed because they are efficient and because they have a sense of what is feasible and relevant. It is said that many executives only do the jobs they wish to do and neglect those tasks, which they find distasteful. By contrast, an IMP will do what needs to be done. Good IMPs often progress to high management positions by virtue of good organisational skills and competence in tackling necessary tasks.

ACE profile

High Planner with a strong Helper back-up and low Mixer.

Their systematic follow through relies on Planner organisation and attention to detail backed up by Helper commitment and loyalty. The lack of Mixer enables excesses of rigidity to surface on occasion.

*IMPs are referred to as Company Workers in "Management Teams: why they succeed or fail"



Completer Finishers (CF)



Completer Finisher characteristics

Completer-Finishers have a great capacity for follow through and attention to detail. They are unlikely to start anything that they cannot finish. They are motivated by internal anxiety, yet outwardly they may appear unruffled. Typically, they are introverted and require little in the way of external stimulus or incentive. CFs can be intolerant of those with a casual disposition. They are not often keen on delegating; preferring to tackle all tasks themselves.

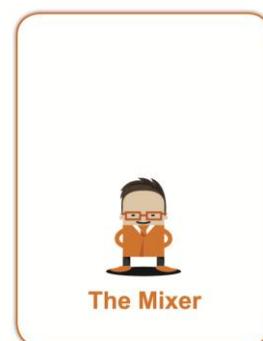
Job roles and team function

CFs are invaluable where tasks demand close concentration and a high degree of accuracy. They foster a sense of urgency within a team and are good at meeting schedules. In management they excel by the high standards to which they aspire, and by their concern for precision, attention to detail and follow-through.

ACE profile

High Planner with Helper and Driver back-up and low Mixer.

Their Planner attention to detail and precision are backed up strongly by Helper concerns for standards and sense of purpose with the occasional burst of Driver decisiveness. Low Mixer may mean they tend to take more on themselves and on occasion fail to consider using the resources of the team or individuals within it.



Resource investigators (RI)



Resource Investigator characteristics

Resource Investigators are often enthusiastic, quick off the mark extroverts. They are good at communicating with people both inside and outside the organisation. They are natural negotiators and are adept at exploring new opportunities and developing contacts. Although not a great source of original ideas, the RI is effective when it comes to picking up other people's ideas and developing them. As the name suggests, they are skilled at finding out what is available and what can be done. They usually receive a warm reception from others because of their own outgoing nature.

RI's have relaxed personalities with a strong inquisitive sense and a readiness to see the possibilities in anything new. However, unless they remain stimulated by others, their enthusiasm rapidly fades.

Job roles and team function

RI's are good at exploring and reporting back on ideas, developments or resources outside the group. They are the best people to set up external contacts and to carry out any subsequent negotiations. They have an ability to think on their feet and to probe others for information.

ACE profile

High Mixer with low Helper and Planner.

They display the Mixer characteristics of relaxed, adaptable and flexible behaviour with an external focus and strong networking. Correspondingly low Helper and Planner, as they will be inconsistent, extrovert and lack follow through when the going gets tough.



Shapers (SH)



Shaper characteristics

Shapers are highly motivated people with a lot of nervous energy and a great need for achievement. Usually they are aggressive extroverts and possess strong drive. SHs like to challenge others and their concern is to win. They like to lead and to push others into action. If obstacles arise, they will find a way round. Headstrong and assertive, they tend to show strong emotional response to any form of disappointment or frustration.

SHs are single-minded and argumentative and may lack interpersonal understanding. Theirs is the most competitive team role.

Job roles and team function

SHs generally make good managers because they generate action and thrive under pressure. They are excellent at sparking life into a team and are very useful in groups where political complications are apt to slow things down; SHs are inclined to rise above problems of this kind and forge ahead regardless. They are well suited to making necessary changes and do not mind taking unpopular decisions. As the name implies, they try to impose some shape or pattern on group discussion or activities. They are probably the most effective members of a team in guaranteeing positive action.

ACE profile

High Driver need to achieve with weak Planner back-up ensuring some follow through and low Mixer

These characteristics help to define the patterns. Low Mixer fails to curb the excess Driver aggression which surfaces on occasions.



Team workers (TW)



Team worker characteristics

Team Workers are the most supportive members of a team. They are mild, sociable and concerned about others. They have a great capacity for flexibility and adapting to different situations and people. TWs are perceptive and diplomatic. They are good listeners and are generally popular members of a group. They operate with sensitivity at work, but they may be indecisive in crunch situations.

Job roles and team function

The role of the TW is to prevent interpersonal problems arising within a team and thus allow all team members to contribute effectively. Not liking friction, they will go to great lengths to avoid it. It is not uncommon for TWs to become senior managers especially if line managers are dominated by Shapers. This creates a climate in which the diplomatic and perceptive skills of a TW become real assets, especially under a managerial regime where conflicts are liable to arise or to be artificially suppressed. TW managers are seen as a threat to no one and therefore the most accepted and favoured people to serve under. Team Workers have a lubricating effect on teams. Morale is better and people seem to co-operate better when they are around.

ACE styles

Helper/Mixer blend with low Driver

Loyal, sensitive and supportive, the lack of Driver behaviours makes them indecisive in crunch situations.



Specialists (SP)



Specialist characteristics

Specialists are dedicated individuals who pride themselves on acquiring technical skills and specialised knowledge. Their priorities centre on maintaining professional standards and on furthering and defending their own field. While they show great pride in their own subject, they usually lack interest in other people's interests. Eventually, the SP becomes the expert by sheer commitment along a narrow front. There are few people who have either the single-mindedness or the aptitude to become a first-class SP.

Job roles and team function

SPs have an indispensable part to play in some teams; they provide the rare skill upon which the organisation's service or product is based. As managers, they command support because they know more about their subject than anyone else and can usually be called upon to make decisions based on in depth experience.

ACE profile

High Helper with a Planner back-up and low Mixer.

An introverted profile, they work on their own and pursue excellence and thorough understanding through attention to detail. Low Mixer means they are not often driven by the need to relate to others or work in team environments.





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