

How to...

Interpret and make the most of

Belbin Team/Group Reports



Belbin Team/Group reports can be used for a variety of reasons, including (but not restricted to):

- Helping to form a new team
- Understanding an underperforming team
- Putting together a project team
- Exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an existing team
- Checking that each team member is being used to his/her full potential
- Ensuring that the right person is being used for the each team task
- Exploring the culture of the Team/Group
- Looking at the gaps within a team with a view to recruiting a new team member

This guide will look in detail at each page of the Team/Group reports to help you use them effectively, and with your end goal in sight.

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How to... Interpret and make the most of Belbin Team/Group reports

Whatever our functional job role, very few of us work entirely in isolation. Individual Belbin reports can help an individual to understand his or her Team Role contribution, but the next step is to situate this contribution within the context of the team, by producing a set of Team/Group reports.

The Team/Group reports have been designed to provide as complete a view of the team as possible. No one report tells you everything you need to know; rather, each provides a different part of the picture. In the facilitation process, you can decide what to use and how much to share, depending on what is appropriate to the team.

According to the team's purpose, history, potential problems and the nature of feedback, you may decide to present some pages to the team and to keep others back for reflection or to use as discussion starters at a later stage. This guide offers advice on how to manage the process to best effect, including an in-depth analysis of each report page.

Getting it right

When producing a Team/Group report, there are a number of key factors to take into account.

Size

Think about who you want to include in a team report. Meredith Belbin suggests that the ideal size for a team is 4-6 people. If there are too many people in a team, essentially it becomes a group, with roles and behaviours overlapping and causing problems. A smaller team ensures that each voice and contribution is heard and valued.

From a practical standpoint, two of the Team/Group report pages can only be produced for 3-15 individuals, for the reasons outlined above. If a department is subdivided into working teams, consider creating a report for each team, not for the department (or "group") as a whole. If you want to look at the culture of a larger group, this can be achieved using a select few of the Team/Group reports. This is discussed in further detail on the next few pages.

For pairings, Belbin Working Relationship reports should be used.

Trust

Belbin is most valuable when individuals are willing to share with one another. Team/Group reports combine data from a number of individual reports (albeit in a restricted way), so it is imperative to receive consent from those to be included to use and share their Team Role information in this way. In order to manage expectations, show the sample Team/Group reports available at www.belbin.com.au to give an idea of how data are combined to recognise each person's contribution.

In situations where trust has broken down and conflicts have arisen, the trust to embark on a joint exercise of this nature is more difficult to come by, but it is also where the common language of Team Roles is most needed – to begin constructing a new way of working together.

Consensus

As a behavioural tool, Belbin is dependent on observations (the behaviour that an individual's colleagues and managers see) in order to be accurate and insightful. If you are asking the team to "buy in" to the Belbin process, it is important that each person has their say as regards the Team Role behaviours they witness in their colleagues at work. Self-Perception merely reflects our own view of ourselves, which may be affected by limited self-awareness or aspirations. For example, if a team has one member who aspires to the role of Co-ordinator but exhibits the behaviours of an Implementer, the observations of the rest of the team will reveal this. However, if relying solely on Self-Perception, that person would be identified as a Co-ordinator. The team's opportunity to recognise the Implementer contribution (and find a more suitable Co-ordinator within the team!) is lost.

There is one notable exception. If a team is newly-formed, individuals will not know one another sufficiently well to comment. In this case, it may be prudent to revisit the Belbin process after a few months or so, incorporating Observer Assessments at this time.

Purpose

When analysing Team/Group reports and preparing for discussions with the team, keep in mind both the purpose of the team and the desired outcome of the feedback. For example, feedback sessions designed to reduce conflict or to improve morale following redundancies are likely to require very different approaches. A workshop intended to form a new team will be different again.

A team should be put together for a specific purpose. Each team member should be chosen to ensure that the correct balance of skill and behaviour is achieved. This does not necessarily mean that all Team Roles are required in every team, so long as the omission of certain Team Roles is deliberate and considered.

Preparation

Owing to the sensitivities which may arise, it is important to read and understand the Team/Group report fully before deciding how the information should be presented to the team. To help formulate your feedback, have a detailed look at each report page and how best to use it.

Percentiles: a note

The Belbin reports make use of percentiles to measure and express the strength of an individual's Team Role propensity relative to that of others (the rest of a given "population").

Percentiles are important for measuring individuals in relation to one another. Person A may have Completer Finisher as his top Team Role and be in the 65th percentile for this role. Although Person B may have Completer Finisher as a second role, he or she may be in the 80th percentile, for example. Of the two, we would expect Person B to be a stronger example of a Completer Finisher than Person A, regardless of the role rankings.

When data are combined to produce a Team/Group report, these comparisons become more evident. For more information on percentiles, please see our handout "Percentiles Explained".

The Summary – Overview of Team Composition (for 3 or more individuals)

This report shows each individual’s Team Roles in order from highest to lowest, allowing you to see at a glance which Team Roles are prominent and which may be missing from the team.

Overview of Team Composition

This report shows Team Roles in order from most prominent (column 1) to least (column 9) for each person in the team. For each individual, the first line shown denotes views from Self-Perception; the second shows combined Observer views and the third shows the overall composition.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Blue, Dave									
SPI completed on 27/01/2012									
Self-Perception	PL	CF	ME	CO	TW	SH	SP	RI	IMP
Observations (4)	PL	CO	SH	IMP	CF	ME	TW	SP	RI
Overall	PL	CO	CF	SH	ME	TW	SP	IMP	RI
Brown, Stuart									
SPI completed on 27/01/2012									
Self-Perception	ME	CF	PL	TW	IMP	SP	RI	SH	CO
Observations (4)	ME	CF	PL	SP	TW	IMP	RI	CO	SH
Overall	ME	CF	PL	TW	SP	IMP	RI	CO	SH
Green, Peter									
SPI completed on 27/01/2012									
Self-Perception	CF	TW	RI	SP	PL	ME	IMP	SH	CO
Observations (4)	TW	RI	CF	CO	PL	IMP	ME	SP	SH
Overall	TW	RI	CF	PL	SP	CO	ME	IMP	SH
Pink, Jo									
SPI completed on 23/01/2012									
Self-Perception	SH	CO	RI	IMP	PL	TW	CF	ME	SP
Observations (6)	CO	SH	RI	TW	PL	IMP	ME	CF	SP
Overall	CO	SH	RI	PL	TW	IMP	CF	ME	SP
Purple, Jill									
SPI completed on 27/01/2012									
Self-Perception	IMP	TW	CF	CO	SP	ME	PL	RI	SH
Observations (4)	CF	IMP	TW	CO	ME	SP	PL	RI	SH
Overall	CF	IMP	TW	CO	ME	SP	PL	RI	SH

For each person, the report shows the Self-Perception ranking, the combined views of Observers, and the overall combination of the two (in bold), so you can see which individuals in the team have good agreement between self and observers and those cases where there are discrepancies.

As some of the other reports focus primarily on top Team Roles, this page can be useful to begin to identify patterns concerning manageable and lower roles.

In this example, the team’s top roles are varied. Shaper (SH) and Co-ordinator (CO) feature frequently at the lower end of rankings, which may indicate a lack of these Team Roles within the team, or a dependency on one individual to fulfil these roles. Other report pages will provide more information on this subject.

Be aware! This report does not give you an indication of the relative strength of roles. For example, it does not tell us who the stronger Resource Investigator is, is it Jo Pink or Peter Green? Neither does it indicate the “distance” between Team Roles. Some individuals may have only a few percentile points separating their top three or four Team Roles, whereas others may have one strongest role which dominates.

Who should do what – *Team Contributions (for 3-15 individuals)*










This page indicates how each individual's Team Role contribution can be brought in to make the team most effective.

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Team Contributions

Particular individuals will need to be brought in at the right time if the team is to be fully effective. This report offers suggestions as to who should take on the work of each Team Role within the team. Some roles are shared; some individuals are suggested to play more than one role.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

-  When some new line of thought is desired, ask Dave Blue.
-  When the team needs to exploit new opportunities, turn to Peter Green, and Jo Pink.
-  When someone is needed to orchestrate team effort, call on Jo Pink. Also involve Dave Blue.
-  When there is a need to increase the pace and arrive at decisions, you can count on Jo Pink.
-  When the team needs someone to choose between competing options, seek advice from Stuart Brown.
-  When arguments break out and team atmosphere needs to be improved, try to involve Peter Green, and Jill Purple.
-  When decisions need to be turned into workable procedures, turn to Jill Purple.
-  When it is imperative that plans are completed to the highest standards, a key part can be played by Peter Green, and Jill Purple.
-  *There is no-one in the team showing the strengths of this Team Role in abundance.*

For each Team Role, the strongest person in that role is named first. Each team member is given a role to play, with some roles shared by several people.

If the team does not include someone who can play a particular role to good effect, this is stated (in this example, the Specialist role).

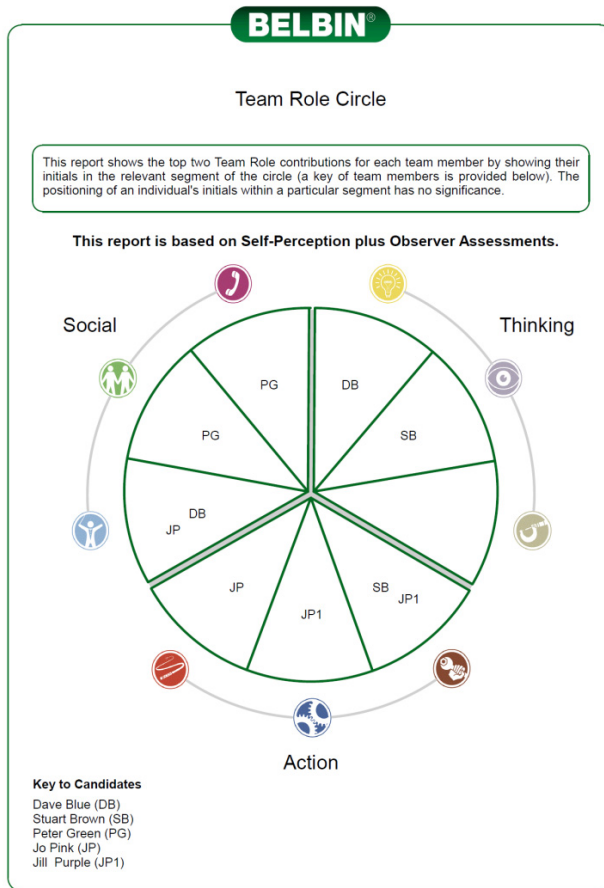
Depending on the purpose of the team, some Team Role contributions may not be required, so the absence of a particular role is not necessarily a cause for concern. For example, if the team has been given an idea for a new product which needs to be manufactured, it could be counter-productive to include a Plant in the team, as he or she may want to create something new altogether and is unlikely to excel in routine work.

If the team identifies that a missing role is required, it is worth considering how that gap can be filled – can someone in the team fulfil the role or should someone else be brought in from outside the team to provide a specific contribution? In this example, if the team in question was a project team, team members might decide to consult a subject expert for the relevant parts of the project. In other cases, an existing team member might be called upon to cultivate one of their manageable roles to fill the gap. If there are no likely candidates, external recruitment might be another option.

Be aware! Although each person will be mentioned at least once in the report, some may feature more prominently than others, depending on the strength of individual Team Roles. If the allocation or balance looks set to create diplomatic difficulties, keep the report to one side and, using the Team Role statements, ask the team to discuss who should play each Team Role. For example, “Who do we need to maintain high standards?” Where there are differences between the report and the team view, investigate how the team members arrived at their decision.

Gaps and overlaps – Team Role Circle (for 3-15 individuals)

This Team Role Circle provides a visual representation of the distribution of Team Roles in the team, showing at a glance where there may be gaps and overlaps in Team Role contribution.



Each individual in the team is represented, with their initials shown in the segments for their first and second Team Roles.

In this example, there is a good spread of roles, with all roles except Specialist represented. When discussing missing roles, it is important to consider whether that role is required in the team.

Also, bear in mind that some Team Roles are better in smaller doses. A large number of Plants in a team will see too many ideas competing for airtime, and too many Shapers can lead to aggressive behaviour. Too many Specialists may become territorial, whilst an over-supply of Completer Finishers may tread on each other's toes, with each looking for the final "sign-off" on a piece of work.

Team Roles are grouped into Thinking, Social and Action roles. Generally speaking, all three areas should be well represented, but again, the purpose of the team is important here. In this example, Thinking roles are not as abundant as are Social and Action roles. There is no right or wrong, but it is up to the team and facilitator to investigate any potential impact this may have on the team.

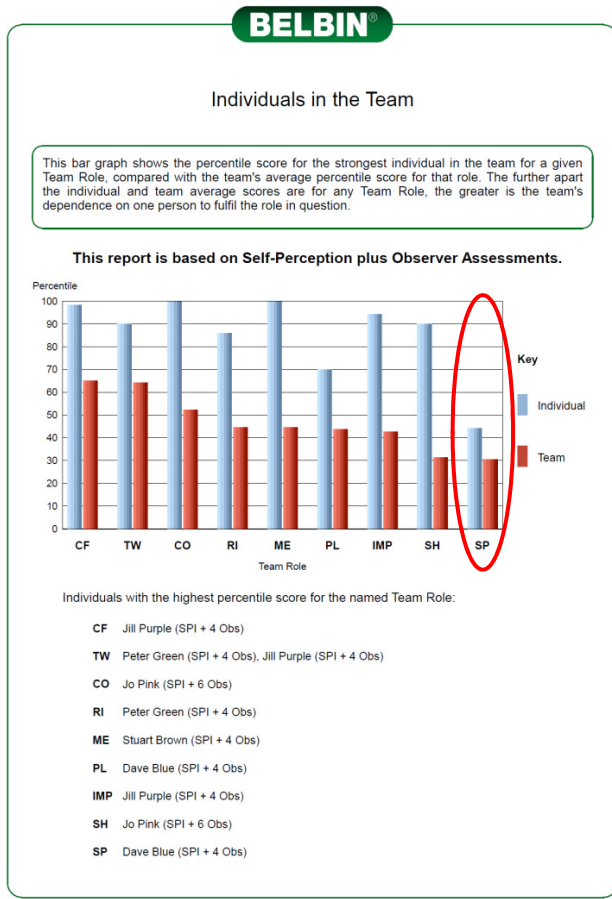
If relevant, you can also indicate each person's their lowest role, by adding their initials outside the relevant segment. For more information on using the Team Role Circle in a team session, please visit www.belbin.com.au

Be aware! This report shows each person's top two Team Roles, regardless of who is best placed to play the role. By contrast, the Team Contributions report takes strength of role into account. In this example, the Team Role Circle shows two Co-ordinators, Jo Pink and Dave Blue. The Team Contributions report shows us that Jo is the stronger Co-ordinator, but that it is also worth consulting Dave Blue.

Team Role sacrifice and succession planning – *Individuals in the Team (for 3 or more individuals)*

This report page shows, for each Team Role, the individual with the highest percentile score (the blue bar) and the team average for that Team Role (the red bar). The section underneath the graph identifies the highest-scoring individual for each role – the individual whose percentile score is shown on the blue bar.

Look at Team Roles for which the blue bar is considerably longer than the red bar. This indicates that the team is reliant on perhaps one individual to carry the team for a given role – in this example, Jo Pink in the Shaper role. If Jo Pink were to leave the team, Shaper would be under-represented.



There may also be examples where the individual with the highest score for a particular Team Role does not have a particularly high percentile score for that role – in this example, Dave Blue in the Specialist role. In this case, it is worth exploring whether Dave Blue is able and willing to play the role.

Be aware! This report indicates only the highest-scoring individual for each role, so some individuals in the team may not be included. This is worth bearing in mind if sharing this report page with the team.

Building Team Role strength – *Strong Examples of Team Roles (for 3 or more individuals)*

This page indicates individuals who are “Strong Examples” of a particular Team Role. A Strong Example is someone who: has a clear idea of his or her Team Role preferences; announces and fulfils these preferences clearly so that Observers are in agreement, and displays more positive than negative behaviours for a given role. Strong Examples within each role are shown in alphabetical order, not in order of strength.

Team Roles for which there are no Strong Examples in the team are shown at the end of the report.

Strong Examples of Team Roles

This report shows strong examples of Team Roles in the team in alphabetical order. A strong example of a Team Role is someone who has a clear idea of his or her Team Role preferences, has a good level of agreement between Self-Perception and Observer views (if applicable) and displays considerably more positive than negative behaviours for that role.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

The following are strong examples of each Team Role:

 **Resource Investigator:**
Peter Green
Jo Pink


 **Co-ordinator:**
Jo Pink

 **Shaper:**
Jo Pink

 **Monitor Evaluator:**
Stuart Brown

 **Teamworker:**
Peter Green
Jill Purple

 **Implementer:**
Jill Purple

 **Completer Finisher:**
Peter Green
Jill Purple

There are no strong examples of the following Team Roles:

 Plant

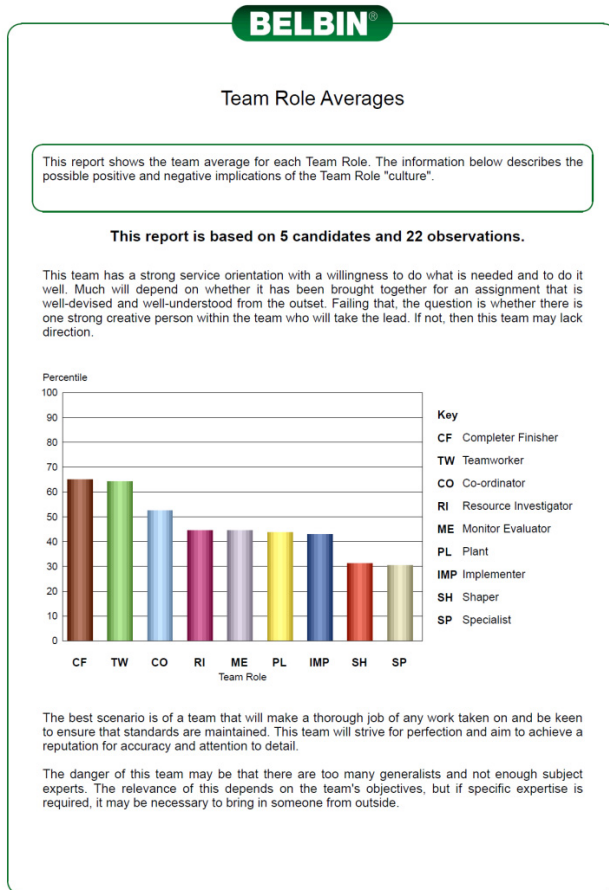
 Specialist

When looking at the spread of roles and deciding who should play each role, it is important to know which team members are Strong Examples of a given role. You may have a team in which four individuals have Implementer as their first or second role. However, perhaps only one is a Strong Example. In this case, he or she is the best choice for the role.

Be aware! By definition, a Strong Example is someone who is considerably stronger than average in that Team Role behaviour, so it is likely that only certain individuals in the team will feature as Strong Examples. In this case, Dave Blue does not feature on this report page. As a result, you may consider it politic to keep this page for reference, rather than share it with the team.

Team Culture – Team Role Averages (for 3 or more individuals)

The Team Role Averages report page gives an overview of Team Roles for a team, group or even organisation. It is usual for the percentiles for a team or group to be considerably lower than for an individual, since they are averages, incorporating all individual scores for a given Team Role.



The purpose is to help the team to understand the prevailing culture and to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of it. In this example, Completer Finisher (CF) and Teamworker (TW) are the most prominent roles. The first paragraph of the report describes a CF/TW culture.

The text underneath the graph provides a "best case" and "worst case" scenario, based on the highest- and lowest-scoring Team Roles for the team or group. In this case, the team is likely to ensure high standards and pay attention to detail, but may be missing out on specific expertise.

Be aware! When looking at the roles in the middle of the graph, bear in mind that there may be either a large number of people in the team with this behaviour to some extent, or the team may be being "carried" by one or two people. To find out, please cross-reference with the "Individuals in the Team" report page. There is no absolute "cut-off point" which signifies that a Team Role is over- or under-represented. With a sufficient understanding of what is lacking, the role can be represented if necessary, by placing someone in the role from outside the team, or by looking to develop an individual's manageable roles.

Team Culture – Overall Observer Responses (for 3 or more individuals)

When looking at Team Role culture, the Overall Observer Responses report is also useful. This report combines scores for observer words for all members of the team or group. Words and phrases from List A of the Observer Assessment are shown in normal type; words and phrases from List B, in italics.



Overall Observer Responses

When observers complete an Observer Assessment, they can tick or double-tick adjectives which apply to a particular individual. This report accumulates the ticks received for each word for all team members, in descending order. Words which denote associated Team Role weaknesses are shown in italics.

This report is based on 22 Observer Assessments.

Please note: if the Observer Assessments were completed in a different language to the one specified for this report, the equivalent word or phrase is used.

caring	23	eccentric	4
helpful	19	<i>absent-minded</i>	4
encouraging of others	18	meticulous	4
consultative	15	<i>impulsive</i>	4
confident and relaxed	14	imaginative	3
broad in outlook	13	impartial	3
accurate	13	<i>manipulative</i>	3
corrects errors	12	<i>frightened of failure</i>	3
conscious of priorities	11	<i>resistant to change</i>	3
inquisitive	10	<i>over-delegating</i>	3
perceptive	10	<i>sceptical</i>	2
logical	10	<i>over-talkative</i>	2
efficient	10	<i>over-sensitive</i>	2
outspoken	9	<i>inflexible</i>	2
practical	9	<i>inconsistent</i>	2
analytical	9	<i>confrontational</i>	2
reliable	9	persevering	2
perfectionist	8	self-reliant	2
diplomatic	8	<i>reluctant to allocate work</i>	2
outgoing	8	<i>unenthusiastic</i>	2
free-thinking	8	<i>pushy</i>	2
creative	7	<i>uninvolved with specifics</i>	2
seizes opportunities	7	<i>impatient</i>	2
hard-driving	7	tough	1
realistic	7	motivated by learning	1
disciplined	7	<i>territorial</i>	1
methodical	7	<i>fussy</i>	1
keen to impart expertise	7	<i>fearful of conflict</i>	1
shrewd	6	dedicated to subject	1
challenging	6	<i>unadventurous</i>	1
studious	6	<i>procrastinating</i>	1
competitive	6	<i>engrossed in own area</i>	1
persuasive	5	<i>restricted in outlook</i>	0
original	4	<i>oblivious</i>	0
inventive	4	willing to adapt	0
enterprising	4	<i>indecisive</i>	0

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Page 10

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The words which emerge at the top characterise the team or group as a whole and could be used to begin a discussion about values and mission.

If there is a predominance of words and phrases in italics at the top of the list, the list can make a useful discussion starter for the team around managing associated weaknesses and creating a more positive team or group culture.

Be aware! This report page is most effective when all team members have collected Observer Assessments. If some individuals have obtained more Observer Assessments than others have, the results may not reflect the team as a whole. It is unwise to use this page unless more than one person has Observer Assessments. It is usual for some words to have a zero score.

Handle with care

Team/Group reports can be powerful tools to explore potential problems and help the team to work more effectively, using the language of Team Roles. However, they are intended to provide suggestions, not to be prescriptive. A team is dynamic and changes as individuals gain greater self-awareness and adapt to arising needs. In order to have greatest impact, the Team/Group report should be used as a starting point for discussions – a working document which develops in consultation with the team itself.

Each report page can be useful for showing the team or group in a different light. When reviewing each page, have a clear vision as to how to use it for the benefit of the team.

In some cases, there may be a risk that the information may do more harm than good – for example, if individuals are likely to feel threatened or excluded. In this situation, it may be more appropriate to keep the relevant report pages for your own reference and encourage the team to arrive at the information through exercises and discussion, rather than sharing the report with the team in its entirety.

Further Information

This 'How to...' guide is one in a series to help you use the Belbin reports to maximise the performance of individuals and teams.

Additional copies of this guide are available.

Belbin Reports

Individual reports (including Observer Assessments at no additional cost) can be purchased online via www.belbin.com.au for just \$83 inc GST each. If you are looking at using more than 50 over 12 months, please contact us for a quote.

The Team/Group reports discussed in this guide can be produced once the individuals have completed their Self-Perception Inventory and received all the Observer Assessments (if required).

- If you have a full Belbin Online Account you can produce Team/Group reports free of charge.
- If you use a 'Pay as you Go' Belbin Online Account, the Team/Group report cost £75 + VAT.

Accreditation

The Belbin model has numerous other applications. To ensure that you are using the Belbin Team Role reports to their maximum potential, and making the most of your investment, we would recommend attending the Belbin Accreditation Course. Details can be found at www.belbin.com.au










Further Reading

The Belbin Guide to Succeeding at Work – provides an ideal introduction to Belbin Team Roles, helping you to understand yourself, and how to project your behaviour to your advantage. (BELBIN, *The Belbin Guide to Succeeding at Work*, Belbin, 2008-12. ISBN: 978-0-955-2979-5-3)

Team Roles at Work – offers managers a practical guide to improving their teams within the workplace to deliver significantly better results for their organisations. This reflects well on them as a manager whilst also saving them time and energy, by using each team member to their best advantage to achieve overall team goals. (R Meredith Belbin, *Team Roles at Work*, Taylor & Francis, 2nd ed., 2010. ISBN: 978-1-85617-8006)

For more information regarding Belbin Team Roles, please visit www.belbin.com.au or phone+44 (0) 1223 264975.

Team Role Summary Descriptions

Team Role	Contribution	Allowable Weaknesses
Plant 	Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.
Resource Investigator 	Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
Co-ordinator 	Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work.
Shaper 	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
Monitor Evaluator 	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.
Teamworker 	Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.
Implementer 	Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
Completer Finisher 	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
Specialist 	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

BELBIN®

BELBIN
PO Box 72
Mudgeeraba 4213

T 1300 731 381
E info@belbin.com.au
www.belbin.com.au

