

## FAQ's on Using the Belbin Reports

### Q Is it possible to use Belbin assessments for selection and career planning purposes?

**A** By using the Belbin Interplace Self Perception Inventory (SPI), Observer Assessment, Job Requirement and the Job Observation assessment the process of matching people to jobs can be greatly enhanced. This applies equally to the selection and recruitment process and to career planning and personal development decisions. For more information email me at [barrie.watson@cert-uk.info](mailto:barrie.watson@cert-uk.info) and ask for a free copy of *A Guide to Matching People to Jobs*.

### Q I am particularly concerned at present about resolving a personality clash. How can the Belbin model help with this?

**A** This issue can be dealt with by using the Belbin Working Relationship report, an example of which, along with other Belbin reports, can be obtained by clicking [here](#). This report enables differences in natural behavioural tendencies between the two people to be identified and areas of difficult chemistry to be pinpointed.

### Q How can I use the Belbin Working Relationship report to improve workplace relationships?

**A** I find that the best way to use this report is to get both of the people to jointly:

- Identify where there is difficult Team Role chemistry.
- Cite examples of where they have experienced difficulties with their working relationship.
- Identify what they do well together by complementing each other. Agree a working relationship strategy.

### Q Is there a link between learning styles and Belbin Team Roles?

**A** I strongly believe there is a link between learning styles and Team Roles as both are influenced by the same things, our DNA, Genetics and Personality. For example, I am a "Shaper" and prefer to learn by *doing* and tend to be motivated to learn primarily as a means to achieve.

### Q How would Belbin profiling benefit a Management Development Programme?

**A** A Management Development Programme would benefit in the following ways:

1. By enhancing managers' awareness of their own management style which could then be used as a basis for improving their personal effectiveness.
2. By providing managers with a better understanding of their subordinates and thereby enabling them to tap into these natural preferences when assigning work and when planning their future development.
3. By equipping managers with the ability to select effective teams and diagnose underlying weaknesses in existing teams.

### Q Are there any particular mixtures of Belbin team types that work (and don't work!)?

**A** This is a good question. There are in fact a number of Team Roles where the chemistry between them is likely to be difficult. For example, the Shaper/Monitor Evaluator, the Resource Investigator/Specialist and the Plant/Implementer.

Without having any understanding on what underlies the causes of this difficult chemistry frictions and possible avoidance behaviour is likely to result. With the knowledge of Team Roles and appropriate interventions these difficult relationships can be reconciled and turned to positive advantage by utilising the complementary to produce highly productive synergistic relationships. The Belbin Interplace Working Relationship report is very effective in identifying Team Role chemistry problems and providing valuable advisory and diagnostic advice to help with managing

relationships. (If you would like to receive an example of the Working Relationship report please email me and I shall be pleased to send you a copy free of charge.)

**Q We need to motivate our staff and would like to know how to assess what would most motivate each individual?**

**A** I suggest you consider getting each person to do a Belbin profile. This will provide you with valuable insights about each person's natural behavioural tendencies. This information can then be used to help decide who should be doing what and, as far as possible, ensure natural preferences and motivations are taken into account. For example, Monitor Evaluators are motivated by having the opportunity to analyse problems and prevent superficial decisions being made based on emotion rather than logic. They are not likely to be motivated however by being placed in situations that require a lot of people empathy or quick results.

**Q Can you please tell me how the Belbin Team Role inventory can be used to improve team performance?**

**A** The Belbin Team Role model can be used to improve team performance in a number of ways. Here are four of them:

1. It helps each person to be clear about their natural contribution when working in a team.
2. By sharing this information between team members each person is aware of the role of other team members and can use this information to improve synergy.
3. By analysing the Team Roles of the whole team the team balance can be checked and steps taken to remedy any imbalance.
4. Hierarchy within teams is de-emphasised and individual contributions are encouraged on merit as teams apply the Team Role model.

**Q Can you kindly advise if Team Roles change with different team members and external factors e.g. company setting, cultural context?**

**A** Yes. All of the factors you describe will have some impact on a person's natural Team Role tendencies. It is important to recognise however that there is not unlimited scope for changing a person's natural Team Roles as this is partly influenced by DNA and genetics. This becomes evident when the 'going gets tough' when you will see people reverting to their natural tendencies. Whilst some behavioural modification is quite realistic, particularly in managing natural Team Roles, my advice is always to build on what comes naturally rather than undertaking massive behavioural re-engineering.

**Q What should I do to realise my full potential now that I am aware of my Team Roles?**

**A** The first thing to say is be sure that you are clear about what your Team Role tendencies are before planning any personal development or your future career. Using the self-reporting questionnaires alone is not robust enough for such important decisions that's why I recommend combining the latest normalised computer version of the Belbin Self Perception Inventory with 4 to 6 Observer Assessments by work colleagues who know you well. Armed with this multi-perspective information and some deep reflection my advice to you is best summarised in the last paragraph of the answer to the previous question on this page. Follow this advice and I promise you will find your work more enjoyable and realise your full potential.

**Q I am concerned that Belbin assessments do not take into consideration cultural influences. What is your view on this?**

**A** This is something I get asked frequently, particularly when I am outside the UK. The fact is that as the Belbin Self Perception Inventory and Observer Assessments are trying to elicit a person's natural or preferred behavioural tendencies they are indirectly taking cultural influences into consideration. This is due to a person's behavioural tendencies being, in part, the result of cultural factors. The fact that it does not specifically identify the causal influences is not very important in most circumstances in my opinion. It is more important to know *what is* than *what caused it* that matters and what we do with this information so don't get overly obsessed about the cultural influences or even waste too much time on the great *nature/nurture* debate if you are interested in results rather than theory.

**Q Don't team members get labelled as being less than competent in their least preferred roles and then they get passed over for future promotion?**

**A** First of all let me say that the ownership of the Belbin profile is vested in the individual and if they are to get 'labelled' it should only be a result of them choosing to communicate their profile to others. This is something we should advocate of course once people are confident about their natural strengths and weaknesses. In doing so however we need to get the message across that none of us will be perfect in every way and will have natural strengths (talents) and weaknesses. I often illustrate this by using the analogy that some people are naturally left handed and weak with their right hand and don't seem to have any reservations about saying "Remember I am not right handed". As far as being "passed over for future promotion" is concerned I can't accept it as an inevitable result. I can see however that where 'Suitability' (The behavioural fit) as well as 'Eligibility' (Skills, qualifications etc.) is taken into account someone may be passed over for a job as being unsuitable even when they are eligible. This is countered however by the occasions where someone who might have been passed over as being ineligible being appointed and developed because they were suitable. The fact is that it is not in the interest of anyone to place people into jobs in which they may under- perform or fail. We must strive hard therefore to get this message across and help people into jobs where they are most likely to succeed. I can't pretend this is easy to put across to people who see things like Team Role profiling in terms of measuring who are the good and bad people but we need to tread a cautious but very clear path towards this end.

**Q One of the participants asked me to comment on how her new Belbin profile report differed from her profile based on the self-scoring Self Perception Inventory from the original Belbin book. What advice can you offer?**

**A** The only advice I can give you is that I would not recommend using the results of a questionnaire that is over 25 years out of date and uses non-normalised data as a basis for sound discussion and deciding what action to take. The old profile may of course be pointing the person in the right direction but I would not have enough confidence about it, and of course, confidence can be improved further by using the Observer Assessment facility that is now available.

**Q After asking the team to complete a Belbin questionnaire, none of the team came out as coordinator. My preference was Completer Finisher followed by Specialist. Is it possible for me to "role sacrifice" and instead take on the role of Coordinator, as the team are missing this role.**

**A** If your team is missing a naturally high Co-ordinator it is a reasonable strategy for someone to make a "Team Role Sacrifice" and try and adopt this role on behalf of the team. I would advise that this is done by someone who has CO as a manageable role however rather than a low or least

preferred role as this would be asking a lot of a person, particularly when things get emotive or heated.

**Q I had one person who was reluctant to accept the results of his Self Perception Inventory as he didn't care much for some of the negative Shaper attributes reported. How would you deal with this?**

**A** This is one of the most common causes of people being reluctant to accept the validity of their reports and here is one of the ways I deal with this:

1. I ask for people to obtain a minimum of four Observer Assessments whenever possible as this provides a more robust multi-perspective report.
2. Two of the additional reports available when there are four or more Observer Assessments show clearly the extent of any negative (allowable weaknesses) aspects of a person's profile as follows:
  - The *Observed Team Role Strengths and Weaknesses* report shows graphically the proportion of positive/negative features for each Team Role.
  - The *List of Observer Responses* report shows the actual words reported by observers.

If you would like to receive free samples of these report please email me.

**Q An 'expert' has asked about moving into a managerial position. His profile is ME/CF/SP – very logical and thoughtful but weak on social/people dimensions. He asked if it might be possible to compare his profile with a general managerial profile from the database and whether this would yield useful data to help him decide whether to remain an expert or make the switch into management. What should I advise?**

**A** This is a question I get asked frequently and always give the same answer which is: It is inappropriate, and possibly irresponsible, to offer advice on how a combination of Team Roles would match the requirements of a job using a job title as the basis for this. The reason being that the job of a manager is contextually specific rather than generically constant. For example, a manager responsible for getting the best out of a group of highly qualified and experienced scientists would be quite different from the requirements of one dealing a crisis situation and so on. The only way to define the behavioural requirements (Team Roles) of a job is to use a process to identify the needs based on the job content and critical performance factors. The Belbin Work Role model works well for defining the job and from this the Belbin Job Requirement and Job Observation assessment can help to define the Team Roles required to succeed. This can then be compared with the characteristics of the candidate to elicit the match. So, this should be the process used to help the person with the ME/CF/SP profile to make an informed decision.

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

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