

Discover how to unlock the true potential of your team

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

Organisations all over the world are recognising that the intellectual capital in their employees is the most valuable asset that they have. As a result, many organisations spend substantial sums in coaching, training, mentoring and in the personal development of their team.

Having effective teams is the most powerful thing that an organisation can have in its pursuit of the ultimate objective to WOW the customer.

Since people are the most important assets that a company has, it's crucial that, in the context of work, they should be deployed to maximum effect.

But simply putting a number of people together and expecting them to work as a team isn't enough.

Effective team working depends on getting a number of things right. Individuals within a team need to understand:

- the roles that others play;
- when and how to let another team member take over;
- how to compensate for shortcomings.

Belbin is a set of tools designed to unlock the issues that usually prevent effective teams from coalescing.

These tools are not new. They're already used widely with many of the UK's largest companies as its subscribers applying the tools on a daily basis.

The product is called INTERPLACE and it addresses the issues described above. It was developed by Professor Meredith Belbin, a world-authority on the dynamics of teams and team working.

Teams and Groups – is there a difference?

There are fundamental differences between teams and groups - according to Professor Meredith Belbin the differences are:



Meetings

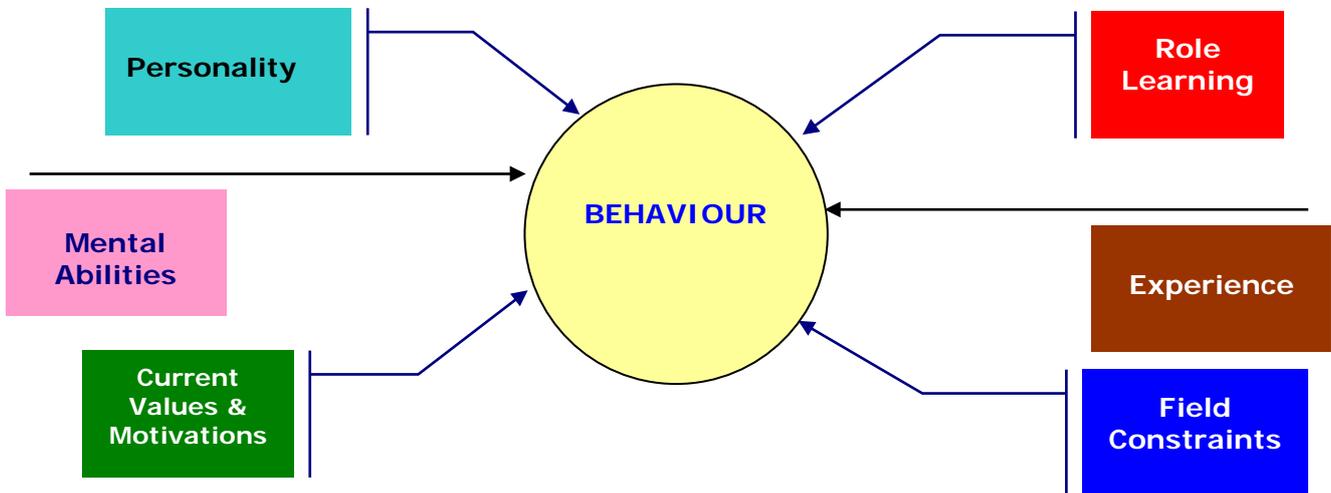
It's interesting to see how the dynamics work for meetings of a different size and different purpose.

	Team	Group
SIZE	Limited	Medium or Large
SELECTION	Crucial	Immaterial
LEADERSHIP	Shared or Rotating	Solo
PERCEPTION	Mutual Knowledge Understanding	Focus on Leader
STYLE	Role Spread Co-ordination	Convergence Conformism
SPIRIT	Dynamic Interaction	Togetherness Persecution of Opponents

Description	Likely Size	Purpose	Mode of Conduct
CHANCE ENCOUNTER	Under 4	Spontaneous creation of ideas	Leaderless
THE CREATIVE TEAM	Selected 4-5	Purposive creativity	Rotating leader
THE PROJECT TEAM	Selected 4-6	Problem solving	Appointed project leader
THE TASK FOCUSED GROUP	6-8	Operational planning	Project co-ordinator
THE STRUCTURED GROUP	8-12	Redirected effort	Manager-led
FORMAL MEETING	12-20	Inter-departmental meeting with fixed agenda	Best senior co-ordinator
FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENTS	Over 20	Focus on new policies	Solo leader role

Team Role Behaviour

Belbin sees behaviour as the hub of many interactions as is depicted below:



InterPlace described in full

Small to medium sized companies cannot usually afford the time or cost to develop their teams. They know that effective teams may be the answer to many of their problems - but they simply cannot find the time or resources to do anything about it.

InterPlace, integrates data about two things:

- people;
- jobs.

The data is collected through a standardised procedure which is made up of:

- self-perception;
- observer assessments;
- job requirement evaluations.

These three sets of input data are fed into a computer program (INTERPLACE). The program produces computer-generated advice - which is the result of work by the world's leading authority on team working (Dr Meredith Belbin¹).

What can InterPlace offer?

InterPlace can be used for:

- **Team building** - advising on the overall balance of the team and suggesting how responsibilities might be distributed;
- **Counselling (or Mentoring)** - to provide individuals with direction that's appropriate to their personal style;
- **Self-Awareness** - Bringing things out of the shadow by giving feedback on how the rest of the team view each other team member;
- **Job Placement** - assisting decisions on placement and reducing the chance of appointing misfits;
- **Assessment** - discovering special behavioural talents;
- **Management Education** - increasing the understanding of managers about different human behaviours in the work place;
- **Career Progression** - looking for jobs that would best suit an individual.

InterPlace is a set of software-based assessment packages that take paper-based information and provide feedback on an individual's characteristics and the likely impact of that profile on others.

There are nine characteristics in the InterPlace assessments that relate to team working - based on research by Dr Belbin over the last 25 years.

Each of the nine characteristics or descriptions has a positive "plus" or advantage while accompanied by allowable weaknesses. These are real and you'll be surprised at how they work in any situation - one of the good things that comes out of this analysis is that otherwise "shadow" or "whispered" comments about people come out into the open.

You can test out your own organisation - take a look at the Table below. Can you spot your own characteristics? Can you identify the characteristics of your work colleagues - and their weaknesses that you know about and put up with (in other words, their "allowable weaknesses")?

Benefits for users

The benefits from using InterPlace are:

- The ability to create high performance teams;
- Reconstructing existing uncoordinated and under-achieving teams to become effective and this improve performance;
- Effective processes for selecting new recruits.

Whilst the "number crunching" of the assessments is handled by the software, the service to customers will be the work needed to:

- brief and build confidence among team members;
- collect information;
- give feedback;
- provide counselling.

What you will get out of the service will be to:

- Have the use of an external, non-involved consultant with "no axe to grind";
- Make dysfunctional teams work;
- Avoid making mistakes through wrong decisions in recruitment;
- Save the cost of creating otherwise ineffective teams;
- Have access to a service that already works but is not otherwise available in a cost-effective way to small/medium-sized businesses.

Description	Team-Role Contribution	Allowable Weaknesses
PLANT	Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR	Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.	Over optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
CO-ORDINATOR	Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads personal work.
SHAPER	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
MONITOR EVALUATOR	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.
TEAMWORKER	Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations.
IMPLEMENTER	Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turn ideas into practical actions.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
COMPLETER FINISHER	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
SPECIALIST	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes on only a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

Reference:

¹ BELBIN® is headed by Dr R. Meredith Belbin, one of the world's leading gurus on team building. Since the establishment of the company in 1987, BELBIN® has developed INTERPLACE® with its unique Team-Role Advice. The system has recently undergone further development and now appears in its 6th generation as e-interplace, utilising the power of email and network technology.

e-interplace is based on Dr Belbin's Team Role concepts and research. Various questionnaires are used to produce useful and unique behavioural based reports on individuals, teams and jobs.

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