

## From in-depth research to practical solutions

During the 1970s, Dr Meredith Belbin and his research team began a unique study into team effectiveness at the Administrative Staff College at Henley (now known as Henley Business School). They had noticed that some teams fared better than others and they wanted to control the dynamics of teams to discover if – and how – problems could be pre-empted and avoided.

## They discovered nine clusters of behaviour needed to facilitate team performance – the nine Team Roles.



In 1969, Dr Belbin was invited to study cohorts of international management teams taking part in a business game. A highly respected academic and industrialist, Meredith was the chairman and co-founder of The Industrial Training Research Unit (ITRU), founded by the Manpower Services Commission.

## The business simulation

Participants in the study were invited to take psychometric tests, including:

- High level reasoning ability (the Critical Thinking Appraisal)
- Personality (the 16 scales of the Cattell Personality Inventory or 16PF)
- Outlook (the Personal Preference Questionnaire or PPQ, developed specifically for the purpose)

## The findings

At first, the researchers assumed that high-intellect teams would outperform lower intellect teams. However, the research revealed that the key determinant for team success was not intellect (IQ), but a balance of behaviours.

Successful "companies" in the game were characterised by behavioural diversity, whilst unsuccessful companies were more homogenous in their styles and approaches. Using information from psychometric tests and the CTA, the team were then able to predict both individual behaviour and the success of a team.

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## The Belbin Story

Having an interest in group as well as individual behaviour, but with no particular theories about teams, Dr Belbin enlisted the aid of three other scholars: Roger Mottram, an occupational psychologist, Jeanne Fisher, an anthropologist, and Bill Hartson, a mathematician and international chess master.

Together they began a nine-year research project, studying three business games a year with eight teams in each game. The researchers designed teams on the basis of these individual test scores. Whilst the teams took part in the business simulation, the researchers conducted a rigorous study of the participants using Bales Analysis, a technique whereby every detail of the team's interaction was observed, categorised (according to a standardised code) and recorded every thirty seconds. At the end of the exercise, each team's results from the business simulation were compared to gauge effectiveness.

### An Introduction to Belbin Team Roles

[This webinar](#) introduces you to the theory and research carried out at Henley Management College in the 1960s and 70s.



The team identified a number of distinct clusters of behaviour which were useful to the team. These were called "Belbin Team Roles". A ninth role, based on specialist knowledge, was to emerge later

### Belbin reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are concepts commonly used in evaluating psychometric tests. Reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test. Validity is concerned with the strength of the conclusions and inferences drawn.

The Belbin TRSPI does not have psychometric properties (it measures behaviour rather than personality), so some of the tools are applied differently.

### Is Belbin reliable?

Yes. Belbin reliability is good across all nine Team Roles. Internal consistency is highest where test items are repeated, but this narrows the focus of the test overall. Rather than repeating questions, or introducing items which are virtually identical, our algorithm seeks for clusters of related behaviour. For example, the Shaper cluster refers to an individual who is challenging, competitive, hard driving, tough and outspoken.

# BELBIN®

## The Belbin Story

Listen to how the nine Belbin Team Roles were discovered during a 9 year study at Henley Management College in the UK. We will take you through the research and techniques that were used to identify the now iconic Belbin Team Roles: Implementer, Plant, Resource Investigator, Co-ordinator, Shaper, Monitor Evaluator, Completer Finisher, Teamworker and Specialist.



**Dr Meredith Belbin**

More information on Dr Meredith Belbin, [click here](#).

**A Team Role came to be defined as a cluster of behavioural attributes needed to facilitate team progress. It was discovered that different people displayed different Team Roles to varying degrees.**

The Belbin Team Roles discovered at Henley have been used in organisations and teams across the world ever since.



However, that does not mean to say that everyone who is competitive will necessarily be outspoken.

### **Does Belbin have validity?**

Yes. A series of independent, peer-reviewed studies have demonstrated that Belbin has good convergent, discriminant and concordant validity. Please see the review document below for more information.

Most psychometric tests rely on self-reporting. However, the behaviours identified may not correspond with what others observe. The strength of our algorithm rests in its emphasis on **construct validity**: using multiple sources of evidence (the Self-Perception and Observer Assessments) to draw a conclusion. The system's outputs are designed to take account of the degree of consensus on observed behaviour.

Disparities between self-analysis and the perceptions of others can provide valuable leads for action. Formal correlations are, however, difficult to calculate, as those providing feedback are not required to make a fixed number of responses.

## The Belbin inventories and reports

Once the research was complete, Dr Belbin devised the Belbin Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) and Observer Assessment (OA), designed to measure an individual's Belbin Team Roles. The SPI is designed to be completed by the individual, and the Observer Assessment, by colleagues.

Over the years, the inventories have been subject to rigorous statistical analysis to ensure that they measure Team Role behaviours as accurately as possible. More information on the reliability and validity of the Belbin inventories is provided below. Inventories are completed online to produce a **Belbin Individual report**. There is no sanctioned self-scoring inventory available.

Detail on the research conducted at Henley can be found in Dr. Meredith Belbin's first book:

- [Management Teams - Why they Succeed or Fail](#)

Additional titles by Meredith Belbin that explain the theory and its application:

- [Team Roles at Work](#)
- [Beyond the Team](#)

This is because genuine responses are more easily obtained – and more valuable – when forced choices are avoided.

Self and Observer Assessments feature several different behavioural traits for each Team Role. This is not the case in a psychometric test, where single personality traits are measured. To be a good example of a particular Team Role, an individual would have to demonstrate the cluster of positive traits for that role.

For more information on Belbin inventories, scoring, reliability and validity, please download our comprehensive report.

*"I always respond to the word 'impossible'. I have heard it uttered many times and always see it as somewhat of a challenge!"*

**Dr Meredith Belbin**