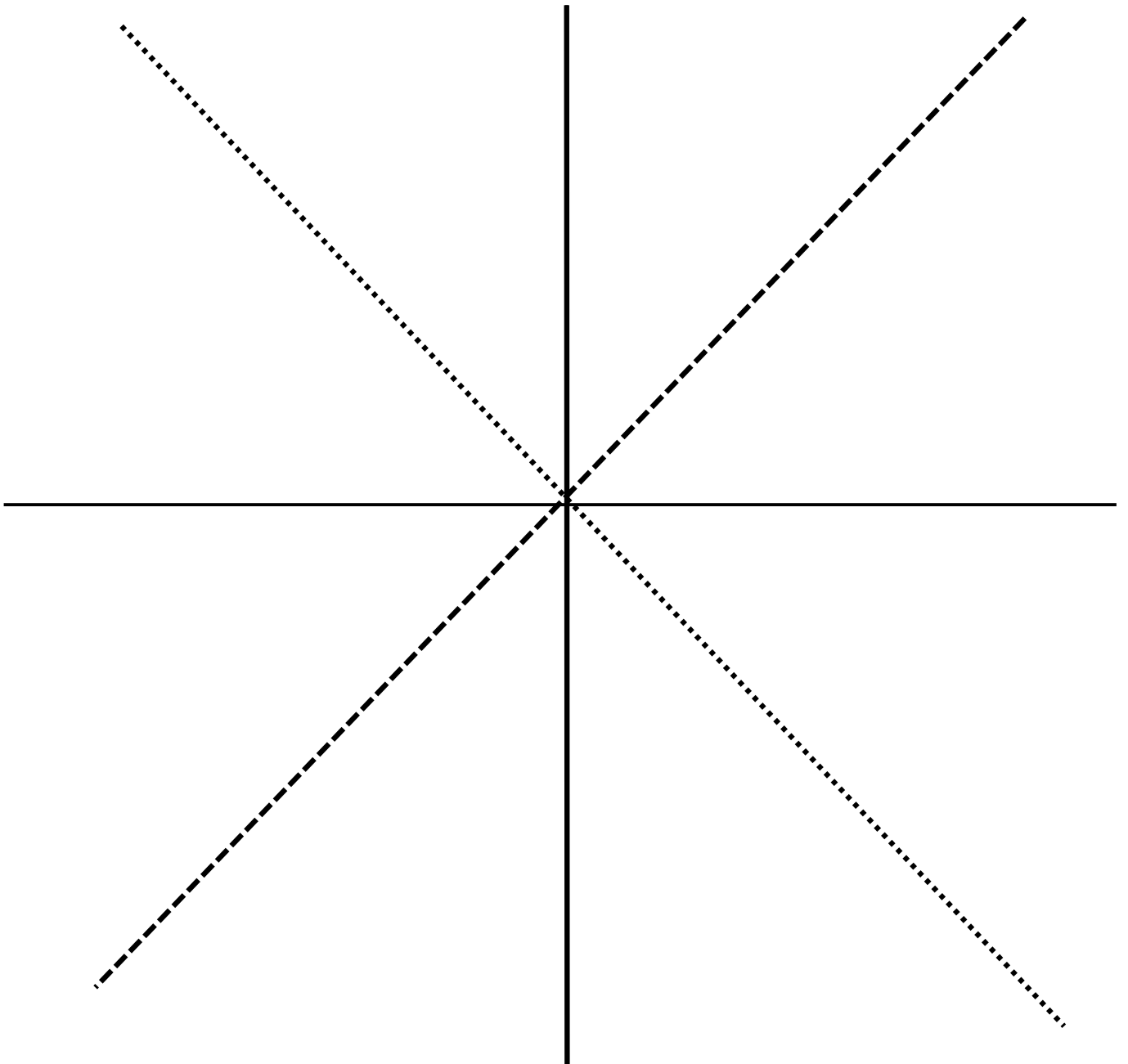


# Belbin - team types

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Meredith Belbin & his research

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## **Co-ordinator**

The Co-ordinator may not be intellectually outstanding. Their primary characteristic is that they carry the respect of the others. The Co-ordinator's role is to direct the group, but this tends not to be done in an overbearing manner. They are dominant without being overly assertive. During meetings, for example, the Co-ordinator may intervene at critical points, particularly if there is controversy amongst other team members. The Co-ordinator is the one who stops the discussion from becoming uncontrolled, they will draw other team members back to the intended purpose and are able to do this without offending individuals.

The Co-ordinator is always prepared to sound out the opinions of their team members and places an emphasis on communication with others in preference to a more individual approach to work. Their approach to other individuals is flexible but in general the Co-ordinator tends to be tolerant and will demonstrate that they have faith in their team members.

The Co-ordinator has an enthusiasm which serves as a motivator to others. Whilst the Co-ordinator is very capable of showing warmth and support at an interpersonal level, they are also inclined to distance themselves from the forefront of social interactions because they recognise that there is no purpose in contributing for the sake of it. The Co-ordinator's enthusiasm tends to be goal orientated; they think positively and perhaps most importantly they know how to make the best use of the resources which each of their team members can offer.

## **Plant**

The plant is creative and innovative. They are responsible for the production of ingenious new ideas and novel strategies. They are very bright; their ideas may often be radical and practical constraints may sometimes be overlooked.

The Plant's preferred approach is to work independently, thinking intensively and following up his own schemes. They are not very 'team orientated' though their contribution to the team is very likely to improve the team's success. Plants tend to be introverted and it may take a good Co-ordinator to draw out useful ideas from the Plant: the Co-ordinator and/or the Monitor-Evaluator will also have the job of rejecting impractical schemes the Plant presents.

The way in which the Co-ordinator and other team members treat the Plant is of great importance: the Plant is easily offended but responds well to discerning praise. The Plant's behaviour towards other team members can be off-hand and critical. However, if the Plant is handled well the benefits are great. 'Handling well' involves recognising the Plant's potential and giving them the space to realise this potential whilst also controlling their direction so as to avoid the pursuit of fruitless schemes.

Soon after the identification of the Plant as a team role, Belbin's research revealed that teams incorporating more than one Plant were no more successful than teams with no Plants at all. As is the case with Shapers, productivity may be undermined by interpersonal problems so 'too much of a good thing' is clearly to be avoided.

## **Shaper**

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The Shaper is highly motivated. They have a high degree of nervous energy and a great need for achievement. The Shaper may lead the team, but their personal characteristics and approach are quite different from a typical Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator's commitment to team objectives tends to be morally based, whereas as the Shaper endeavours to reach objectives by whatever means are available, even if these are illegitimate. The Shaper's concern is to win and reach goals by putting every effort into the process. The Shaper tends to be opportunistic and will show a strong emotional response to any form of disappointment or frustration.

The Shaper is suspicious and impatient. They are single minded and critical, having few reservations about challenging others, arguing or being critical; at a personal level the Shaper tends to be an aggressive extrovert and as such may elicit an aggressive response from other team members. The Shaper may lack the interpersonal understanding and warmth which are characteristic of the Co-ordinator: the Shaper's directive approach is far more orientated towards achieving objectives than towards the stable maintenance of the team. Interestingly, the Shaper's reaction to the aggressive response which they elicit to others is generally good humoured, as if this is to be expected as part of the process of directing a team.

Since the Shaper's primary role is to inspire action and dispel complacency, their usefulness is severely limited in a team which is already functioning well and in a stable fashion, particularly if the team is already led by a typical Co-ordinator. Under these circumstances, the Shaper's presence may be simply disruptive. Furthermore, several Shapers in a team may be unproductive because despite much goal-directed effort, interpersonal problems are likely to arise as a result of conspicuous frustration and open criticism of others.

Shapers are excellent when it comes to sparking life into a team and are, for example, very useful in teams within organisations where political complications are apt to slow down progress. Shapers rise above problems of this kind and forge ahead regardless.

### **Implementer**

As in the case with the Completer-Finisher type, the Implementer is an essential complement to the team's innovative enthusiasts. The Implementer is conscientious and like the Completer-Finisher is concerned with detail. Implementers are excellent implementers of schemes which others have devised. They are good organisers, are capable of directing subordinates, tend to be well controlled emotionally and have a preference for orderliness and routine.

The Implementer differs from the Completer-Finisher in some subtle ways. For example, while the Completer-Finisher is driven by an anxiety to do the job well and reach completion, the Implementer is not anxious but is driven instead by their identification with the organisation, together with a set of principles which favour hard work and application. It is because of the Implementer's capacity for application that they are often left to cope with aspects of work which are held by others to be both difficult and undesirable. Good Implementers are extremely valuable.

### **Monitor-Evaluator**

It may be that the innovative members of a team, in particular the Plant, the Resource Investigator and possibly the Shaper, will find themselves in debate. The ideas presented

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by each may be incompatible, with each advocate being equally committed to their own view. Since the Co-ordinator is not necessarily intellectually outstanding, they may not be the best person to evaluate which of the ideas is in fact the best. A person who is intelligent, discerning and objective is required to step in: the Monitor-Evaluator's role is to do just this. The Monitor-Evaluator has an attitude of detached indifference to the team and may, for the most part, take a back-seat role, but will come into prominence when a crucial decision is to be made.

Though not creative themselves, the Monitor-Evaluator is very good at weighing up the facts, carefully considering the pros and cons of each option and finally coming to a well considered decision. This will be an objective process free from influence of emotional factors. The Monitor-Evaluator shows little enthusiasm or personal commitment; they are no achiever but their judgement is sound. In many ways the lack of commitment to team goals facilitates the task of the Monitor-Evaluator because this enables them to be impartial in decision-making. Though rather dry and critical, the Monitor-Evaluator fits comfortably into the team, especially if their role is recognised for what it is, both by themselves and by other team members.

### **Completer-Finisher**

The Completer-Finisher pays attention to detail. They are hard working and conscientious. As their title suggest they are good at picking up the loose ends and tying them up, but the Completer-Finisher does more than this because they are also an organiser; they are concerned to ensure that the detailed aspects of a project, such as testing, trialling and general administrative matters, are planned into schedules.

The Completer-Finisher tends to be anxious but their anxiety is not usually apparent to others. Their emotions generally are kept to themselves. They have great self-discipline and thus reflects discipline and orderliness in others. The Completer-Finisher tends to work consistently and to aim for success by these means rather than going for the opportunistic approach with spectacular success in mind. The Completer-Finisher is reluctant to let a matter go unfinished. While this tenacity is clearly desirable in most circumstances, there are occasions when the Completer-Finisher may hold on too long, refusing to accept defeat even when a project is not worth pursuing further.

The Completer-Finisher is a necessary complement to the more radical team members who are apt to show great enthusiasm for projects during their early stages of design and planning but tend later to transfer their enthusiasm elsewhere. The final stages of implementation may be left to a large extent in the reliable hands of the Completer-Finisher, who will ensure that completion is finally achieved with no detail overlooked. Although rather retiring at a social level, the Completer-Finisher will be well accepted by other team members because of the appreciation which the Completer-Finisher elicits through performing their role.

### **Resource Investigator**

Although not a great source of original ideas, the Resource Investigator is highly effective when it comes to picking up ideas and making them work. The Resource Investigator has a critical role to play in the team's new innovations. In particular, the Resource Investigator, as the name suggests, is adept at finding out what is available and what can

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be done. They explore beyond the team itself, having no reservations about probing others for information. The Resource Investigator is skilled interpersonally: they are sociable and friendly, far more extrovert than a typical Plant, who is the other half of the team's innovative division. The Resource Investigator typically gets a good reception from others because of their warm and friendly nature; this clearly facilitates liaison which is in fact the Resource Investigators speciality.

In many cases the Plant and the Resource Investigator may be complementary, the Plant contributing the original ideas and the Resource Investigator contributing information which allow decisions about feasibility and strategy to be made.

While the Plant thinks intensely, the Resource Investigator thinks on their feet. Though creative, the Plant may not be adaptable; if their scheme starts to flounder they may not be capable of wriggling out of the situation. Conversely the Resource Investigator is adaptable: in circumstances of imminent failure, as well as in times of success, the Resource Investigator will look into every corner for some valuable piece of information, which may facilitate improvisation and ultimately save the day. Furthermore, the Resource Investigator is a negotiator, which in itself clearly has great value in the process of realising ideas. The Resource Investigator is a curious explorer, but enthusiasm is inclined to flag if the Resource Investigator does not receive stimulation from others.

### **Team Worker**

The Team Worker is sociable but not dominant. They are a good communicator, trusting, sensitive and caring. They will tend to place the group's objectives and the smooth running maintenance of the group itself before their own personal ambition. The Team Worker is perceptive and diplomatic. They are not critical of other team members and tend not to make group decisions. One potential source of a team's failure is the in-fighting which may occur between difficult team members. These team members may well have skills which are essential to the team's success, but unconstructive debate, mutual criticism or frustration at the lack of acceptance of one's personal contribution may well result in the waste of the valuable resources which these team members possess. The role, therefore, of the Team Worker is to avert such interpersonal problem and hence allow each of the team members to contribute effectively. This may be done in a variety of ways: possibly through a good-humoured remark, a word of encouragement, or any form of input which is likely to reduce tension.

It is not uncommon for senior managers to be Team Workers, particularly if their line managers are competitive and strongly goal-orientated themselves. The presence of a Team Worker may contribute greatly to the teams' success simply by allowing better co-operation amongst team members. It is quite common for an individual to be both Team Worker and another type; so the team-orientated role may well be accompanied by a goal-orientated role within the same person.