

Despite clear roles and responsibilities, a team will sometimes fall short of its full potential.

### Q: How often does this happen in the teams you work with?

Perhaps some team members don't complete what you expect them to do. Perhaps others are not quite flexible enough, so things "fall between the cracks." Maybe someone who's valued for their expert input fails to see the wider picture. Or perhaps one team member becomes frustrated because they disagree with the approach of someone else on the team.

*Dr Meredith Belbin studied teamwork for many years, and he famously observed that people in teams tend to assume different "team roles."*

**BELBIN**



- **Shaper (SH)**

- Shapers are people who challenge the team to improve. They're dynamic and usually extroverted people who enjoy stimulating others, questioning norms, and finding the best approaches for solving problems. The Shaper is the one who shakes things up to make sure that all possibilities are considered and that the team doesn't become complacent. Shapers often see obstacles as exciting challenges, and they tend to have the courage to push on when others feel like quitting. **Their potential weaknesses may be that they're argumentative, and that they may offend people's feelings.**

- **Implementer (IMP)**

- Implementers are the people who get things done. They turn the team's ideas and concepts into practical actions and plans. They're typically conservative, disciplined people who work systematically and efficiently and are very well organised. These are the people that you can count on to get the job done. **On the downside, Implementers may be inflexible and can be somewhat resistant to change.**

- **Completer-Finisher (CF)**

- Completer-Finishers are the people who see that projects are completed thoroughly. They ensure that there have been no errors or omissions, and they pay attention to the smallest of details. They're very concerned with deadlines and will push the team to make sure that the job is completed on time. They're described as perfectionists who are orderly, conscientious and anxious. **However, a Completer-Finisher may worry unnecessarily, and may find it hard to delegate.**

- **Coordinator (CO)**

- Coordinators are the ones who take on the traditional team-leader role and have also been referred to as "chairperson." They guide the team to what they perceive are the objectives. They're often excellent listeners, and they're naturally able to recognize the value that each team member brings to the table. They're calm and good-natured, and delegate tasks very effectively. **Their potential weaknesses are that they may delegate away too much personal responsibility and may tend to be perceived as manipulative.**

- **Team Worker (TW)**

- Team Workers are the people who provide support and make sure that members of their team are working together effectively. These people fill the role of negotiators within the team and are flexible, diplomatic and perceptive. These tend to be popular people who are very capable in their own right, but who prioritise building a strong team and helping people get along. **Their weaknesses may be a tendency to be indecisive, and to maintain uncommitted positions during discussions and decision making (fence sitters).**

- **Resource Investigator (RI)**

- Resource Investigators are innovative and curious. They explore available options, develop contacts, and negotiate for resources on behalf of the team. They're enthusiastic team members who identify and work with external stakeholders to help the team accomplish its objective. They're outgoing and often extroverted, meaning that others are often receptive to them and their ideas. **On the downside, they may lose enthusiasm quickly, and are often overly optimistic.**

- **Plant (PL)**
- The Plant is the creative innovator who comes up with new ideas and approaches. They thrive on praise, but criticism is especially hard for them to deal with. Plants are often introverted and prefer to work apart from the team. **Because their ideas are so novel, they can be impractical at times. They may also be poor communicators and can tend to ignore given parameters and constraints.**
- **Monitor-Evaluator (ME)**
- Monitor-Evaluators are best at analysing and evaluating ideas that other people (often Plants) come up with. These people are shrewd and objective, and they carefully weigh the pros and cons of all the options before coming to a decision. Monitor-Evaluators are critical thinkers and are very strategic in their approach. **They're often perceived as detached or unemotional. Sometimes they're poor motivators who react to events rather than instigating them.**
- **Specialist (SP)**
- Specialists are people who have particular knowledge that's needed to get the job done. They pride themselves on their skills and abilities, and they work to maintain their professional status. Their job within the team is to be an expert in the area, and they commit themselves fully to their field of expertise. **This may limit their contribution, and lead to a preoccupation with technicalities at the expense of the bigger picture.**