

# Groupwork:

## Allocating and Developing Team Roles

An appreciation of the roles to be performed underpins effective team performance. Please also see ASK's handout, titled "Starting to understand team strengths". This handout gives a basic overview of how roles can be allocated to individuals in order to form an effective team. It first briefly outlines the process, then provides information on team roles and on learning styles. These are set out in two tables.

Table 1 outlines team roles, and the strengths and weaknesses associated with each role.

Table 2 outlines the relationship between learning styles and team roles

Please note that these are very broad descriptions, designed to give you a basic idea of the different types of characteristics which may be associated with various roles. **Please note that most people do not fit just one role. Most have a mix of traits.** Please also note that a team member can perform more than one role. For example, they may undertake another role in a "back-up" capacity, share roles, or hold two roles equally. It may simply depend upon the number of members in a group.

### The Process.

There are three essential things to consider: **task needs, team needs** and **individual needs**. In your first team meeting, you should share and discuss how you prefer to work, and to learn. Doing so enables you all to consider how each of you learns and therefore works. It gives an indication of where the strengths of the team lie, and if there are any "gaps" which need to be adapted to and managed. You can use Table 1, "Team Roles", as a guide. This is a simplified table which focuses on the type of role and its strengths and weaknesses. It uses a simplified version of Belbin's (1993) model of team roles, from his book, "Team Roles at Work" (updated in 2010). To develop the team, you then need to explore how each group member's learning style, characteristics and preferences relate to other possible roles. You can use Table 2, "Learning Styles and Roles" as a guide. The process may involve disagreements and challenges. Some people feel very able, or less able or confident, in some areas, but others in the group may disagree with their self-evaluation.

Open and honest discussion, presented respectfully and politely, are vital if the **whole team** is to work effectively **for the good of the whole team**.

Through team **discussion** and **negotiation**, roles can be allocated to use the strengths of the team members as far as possible. Gaps can provide opportunities for personal development. The group should allocate the role to the person they think would fulfil the role the best. As some team members may not feel comfortable in new roles, it is important that the whole group supports them. It is also important that any problems or difficulties should be acknowledged, and openly discussed in order to find solutions. The most significant gain is that open and honest discussion develops communication between individuals, helping to build rapport and trust. It enables the team to identify current difficulties and possible future challenges, and to develop a firm foundation for dealing with future problems.

**Table 1: Team Role, Strengths and Weaknesses**

<b>Team Role.</b>	<b>Strengths.</b>	<b>Weaknesses.</b>
Team Role. Plant.	They envision, think outside the box and generate inventive solutions.	They can lack attention to detail.
Team Role. Resource Investigator.	They are outgoing and like networking. They tend to prefer unusual options.	They can be unrealistic.
Team Role. Coordinator.	They lead, catalyse decision-making and share work.	They can pass their own tasks onto others.
Team Role. Shaper.	They are energetic, and like deadlines. They cope well with barriers.	They can lack sensitivity to others.
Team Role. Monitor and Evaluator.	They are calm, objective, and have 360 degree awareness of everything that is happening.	They can be a source of negativity.
Team Role. Team worker.	They are empathic, mediators, and sensitive to others' feelings.	They can find decision-making hard when under pressure.
Team Role. Implementer.	They convert concepts into reality. They are rigorous and dependable.	They can take time to adjust to new realities.
Team Role. Completer.	They pay attention to detail, are precise and meet deadlines.	They can be reluctant to share tasks with others.

**Table 2: Learning Styles, Roles and Strengths.**

<b>Learning Style.</b>	<b>Roles.</b>	<b>Strengths.</b>
Learning Style. Activist.	They like to plant ideas and activities. They are a resource investigator.	They like developing and delivering presentations, contacting and liaising with people, and solving problems.
Learning Style. Pragmatist.	They are a coordinator and shaper.	They like chairing meetings, planning and setting goals and deadlines, and researching.
Learning Style. Reflector.	They are a monitor and evaluator and team worker.	They like maintaining team communication, identifying problems, and chasing progress against the plan.
Learning Style. Theorist.	They are an implementer and completer	They like collecting and processing data and information, quality control, and finalising details.

**References:**

Belbin, R. M. (1993). *Team Roles at Work*. Oxford: Butterworth-Hinemann.  
 Belbin, R. M. (2010). *Team roles at Work*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.

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