

## The essence of successful teams

### Support for effective team learning by team role analysis

Working in teams is an intense and often highly divergent experience. Ideally, teamwork will be effective, enjoyable, and energetic. Sometimes it may be marred by distrust, slack periods, and a general sense of frustration. And frequently it is anything but easy to describe the reasons why teamwork is either effective and enjoyable, or ineffective and frustrating.

Taking years of research as a basis, Meredith Belbin defined nine team roles and applied these as a framework for concrete observations and recommendations for team success. This approach to team role analysis is of particular value as it combines individual learning (highlighting the roles preferred by each team member) and team learning (i.e. the role profile of the team as a whole and the resulting specific strengths and focal points for development relating to the task in hand).

Belbin's model distinguishes between nine roles:

- Action-orientated roles (shaper, implementer, completer finisher)
- People-orientated roles (coordinator, team worker, resource investigator)
- Intellectual roles (plant, specialist, monitor evaluator)

Role analysis is based on a self-assessment questionnaire which is completed by each team member individually. In addition, some team members complete a brief assessment of others in order to verify the results by comparing individuals' own assessments with the feedback of others.

### Team role analysis helps to provide answers to the following questions:

Where do each team member's (role) strengths lie, and what should he/she concentrate on when further developing his/her professional role? This does not refer to **what** people do in the team (i.e. their specific task), but **how** they do it, i.e. the quality and "style" of their work.

How do the team roles relate to the team's task? Does the team's role profile make it easier or harder to fulfill the task at hand?

The Belbin team role analysis may be completed in various contexts and addresses a wide range of issues:

- Initial support for new teams
- Teambuilding for project teams who need to be ready to work together quickly, especially in professionally or culturally diverse teams
- Diagnosis for conflict resolution in impasse situations
- Support in development programs focusing on teambuilding and team learning