

MEREDITH BELBIN TEAM ROLES AND MODES OF CONFLICT BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY IN WORK TEAMS FROM THE BASQUE COUNTRY ORGANIZATIONS.



*Reoyo, A.M.; *López, R. and **Lucha, V.

*MAS Innovacion Organizacional; ** University of the Basque Country

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Theoretical frame

The small group's theory considers a critical matter the mode teams carry out decision-making to accomplish in a satisfactory way the task (Hirokawa, 1982, 1985; Poole, 1983, 1985). Farmer and Roth (1998) conclude that the cohesion and structure in teams influence the mode people make decisions. The co-operation is the only win-win form of making decisions (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). According to social exchange (Blau, 1964) cooperation is only possible if the relationships are based on the complementary of resources, allowing for balanced power relations. The complementary of resources is linked to task complementary and the roles members accomplish in teams. The more the resources greater is the capacity for individuals to have influence on the team. A great difference in intellectual and social resources hinders the development of cooperation within teams. Belbin's theory (1981; 1993; 2000) seeks to explain the complementary through the analysis of skills components contribute to task in teams. Each member dispose of some skills and the lack of others, and the team is balanced when all the skills are present. According to Belbin theory, skills are categorized in mental (plan, monitor evaluator and specialist), social (resource investigator, coordinator and team worker) and action skills (shaper, finisher and implementer). Plan solves difficult problems, monitor evaluator judges accurately, specialist provides technical knowledge, resource investigator develops contacts, coordinator promote decision making, team worker averts frictions, shaper thrives on pressure, completer finisher searches out errors and implementer is conservative and efficient.

Method

Sample
175 workers from 9 Basque Country Organizations (127 male and 48 female aged between 23-60 years) worked in 27 work teams for 12 weekly sessions.

Task
People engaged in management strategies and problem solving tasks.

Instruments
We collected data during the second session through:
- Belbin self- Evaluation Questionnaire (e- interplace 1.3.23 version), which measures peoples roles.
- Team Evaluation Questionnaire, created by 3 judges (Alpha .7910) which includes items related to communication, task and conflict behaviour.

Procedure
Belbin Self- perception Questionnaire establishes that roles with punctuations higher than 6.5 can be considered natural roles (a role that a person can acquire naturally). This study is basing results in people's natural roles and relates them with the results in the Team Evaluation questionnaire with the objective of finding differentiated behaviour patterns in communication, task and conflict management.

The aim of the study

Based on Belbin's team roles and social exchange theory, and taking into account that teams dynamic depends on the interaction between task, members and knowledge, this study pretends to confirm that mental, social and task roles cooperate in a different way to the team dynamic:

- Cooperation of Social roles will be related to interpersonal interaction behaviours and wellbeing.
- Cooperation of Mental roles will be related to cognition and problem resolution.
- Cooperation of Action roles will have a task orientation

Results

Means

Figures 1 to 4 show details.

People with **Action skills** (Shapers, Completer Finishers and Implementers), especially Completer Finisher, perceive that teams define and distribute tasks and responsibilities. Shapers, more than others, perceive competitive behaviours (imposition, persuasion, alliances) and low communication (low punctuation in items like "Everybody's opinions are listened", "Ideas are expressed") and low level of integrative behaviours ("Ideas are integrated").

Members with **Mental skills** (Plants, Monitor Evaluators and Specialists) perceive more behaviours addressed to problem resolution (Disagreements are accepted).

Team components with **Social skills** (Resources Investigators, Coordinators and Team Workers) perceive more integrative behaviours in teams (Everybody ideas are integrated). Team Workers perceive less competition behaviours than Shapers (Action role) or Specialists (Mental Role), and coordinators perceive more cooperative behaviours (consensus in decision making, shared objectives and integration of ideas) than Shapers (Action role) or Plants (Mental roles). Resource Investigator perceives a great participation in communication behaviours (Ideas, opinions and information are offered).

Pearson Correlations:

Related to **communication**, Resources Investigators have a great facility to offer ideas, opinions and all kind of information in teams (.23; $p < 0.01$).

Related to **decision making**, Monitor Evaluator has more sensibility to perceive consensus in teams (.21; $p < 0.05$).

Related to **conflict management**, Team Workers did not perceive active competition behaviours in teams, like imposition, persuasion and/or alliances (-.17; $p < 0.05$).

Related to **conflict management**, as more Plant skills people have, less perceive people's avoidance behaviours related to task (matter are postponed in teams, and people deviate attention from subjects) (-.19; $p < .05$).

No correlation were found in action roles.

Figure 1. Differences in task, problem solving and personal interaction behaviours between Social, Mental and Action Roles

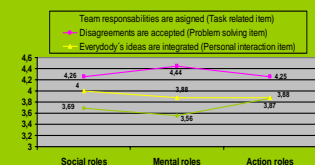


Figure 2. Differences in task behaviours between Social, Action and Mental Roles

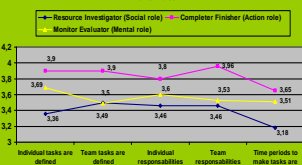


Figure 3. Differences in competition behaviours between Social, Action and Mental roles

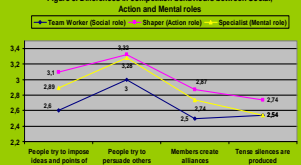
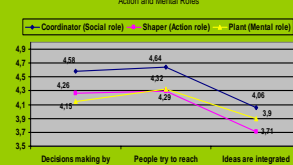


Figure 4. Differences in co-operation behaviours between Social, Action and Mental Roles



Discussions and conclusion

Results confirm our hypothesis. Different roles show differences in social, action and mental motivational behaviours.

• Behaviours related to Social, Mental and Action role

Coordinators behaviours, as social role, are more related to integrative than disruptive solutions (they promote and perceive consensus in decision making and try to reach shared objectives).

Shapers behaviours, as the most competitive role in team according to Belbin, are more related to disruptive than integrative solutions (they perceive more imposition of ideas and points of views, more persuasive behaviours and alliances between members).

Specialist, as mental role, show a low level on disruptive solutions than shapers (Action role) but higher than Team Worker (Social role).

Plants (Mental role) and Coordinators (Social role) perceive more communication skills: people listen carefully everybody's opinions.

Completer Finisher means are greater in task items than those of resource investigator (social role) or monitor evaluator (mental role).

• Teams dynamic as role interdependence

Teams are dynamic systems and members interact each other motivated by task, social and mental drives.

Social roles drive more cooperative behaviours thinking on members and related to communication system, consensus and shared objectives

Mental roles contribute to teams with problem resolution behaviours, and they also show a middle level of competition related to cognition, because they try to impose ideas and persuade others.

Action roles contribute to define tasks and distribute responsibilities.

As a conclusion, we assume that this study is only a first step that may allow to understand, at a glance, team motivational behaviours depending on Belbin team roles. We understand that integrative behaviours as well as disruptive behaviours may be related to motivational drives (social, mental and action motivation).

For example, for mental roles, conflict motives may be related to the defence of their ideas. For social roles conflict motives may be related to interaction defence addressed to interpersonal wellbeing. For action roles, the motive of conflict may be related to task and the need of share responsibilities and distribute times of execution.

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