

How Teams Work

Teams are not just groups of individuals. They're high-performing units whose achievements are greater than the sum of their parts. We're all part of a team somewhere in life and understanding how your team works – and how you work within your team – can have major benefits on your own achievements.

What is it?

Over many years, management scientists and researchers have studied teams to try and understand the phenomena behind high-performing teams. This factsheet touches briefly on 3 classic views of how teams work and is designed to give you a taste of some of the resources that are available to help you.

Belbin's Team Roles

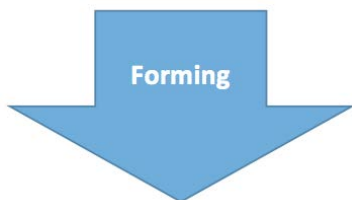
In 1981, Meredith Belbin published his famous Management Teams book based on his work at Henley Management College. He proposed that effective teams feature 9 key roles that describe how the team goes about its work. He was not saying that each role is performed by one person or that each person in a team only performs one role. Otherwise how would a team of five get on? His model is useful in helping to ensure that all of these team roles are fulfilled and perhaps in understanding what's happening when things go wrong.

Role	Description
Plant	The ideas person. A creative, imaginative and often unorthodox problem-solver.
Co-ordinator	The 'chairman' who ensures everyone in the team has a say and can play their part. Summarises goals, clarifies conclusions and allocates action points.
Resource Investigator	The networker who can normally get the team what it needs by knowing 'someone who can'.
Shaper	The driver who thrives on pressure and pushes the team along to reach decisions, overcome obstacles and take action.

Monitor-Evaluator	The analyst who weighs up options and helps the team steer away from misguided judgments. Analyses problems, monitors progress and is cautious against making mistakes.
Team Worker	The diplomat who is concerned about harmonious relationships within the team, sensitive to atmospheres and quick to provide comfort to others and to resolve conflict.
Implementer	The practical one who sorts out how to produce what the team wants, finding workable solutions to problems.
Completer Finisher	The details person who has a great eye for spotting mistakes. Dots the i's, crosses the t's and is meticulous in ensuring that tasks are completed with concern to quality and timescale.
Specialist	The expert who brings specialist technical knowledge or skills to the team.

Tuckman's Stages of Team Development

In 1965, psychologist Dr Bruce Tuckman coined his now famous "Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing" phrase on the development of teams. Later adding 'adjourning' his model aims to describe how teams evolve from when they're first put together to becoming high performing teams and eventually disbanding. The model can be used to work out where your team is in its own evolution, remembering that it can take quite some time to move through each stage and that the team can go back as well as forward – when a team member leaves and a new one joins, for example.



As the team first gets together, people are getting to know each other and perhaps don't fully understand what work the team will do and what is expected of them. Most will be polite, constructive as well as perhaps anxious and excited. The leader's role is pretty dominant in setting out goals and expectations.

People start to challenge each other, jostling to understand their position in the team. Teams may fail at this stage and the conflict that arises can be both

Storming

positive and destructive. Leaders need to navigate carefully through this stage, providing guidance, reassurance and authoritative support.

Norming

Eventually, the team will start to resolve its internal conflicts and mutual trust and respect develops amongst colleagues. The team will generally feel stronger and more sociable and the commitment to shared goals is amplified as people support and encourage each other

Performing

The team is now in full flight, working harmoniously and effectively to achieve its goals. Reward and recognition flows naturally and systems and processes that support the team are seamless parts of everyday life. Leaders are able to delegate much of their daily tasks and concentrate on developing people and setting future goals.

Adjourning

Many teams will eventually disband – where a project has been completed, for example, or where restructuring takes place within the organisation. This stage is also referred to as 'mourning' and individuals may find it hard to let go of close relationships and accept a new future.

Adair's Action Centred Leadership

John Adair looks at the team through his Action-Centred Leadership model, as one of 3 critical components in the life of any leader. Adair says that, in order to be an effective leader, one should adapt the time and effort spent in balancing the needs of these 3 components: achieving the **task**, building the **team**, developing **individuals**:

Adair's model is powerful in looking at the team as a component of the leader's view of the world - distinct from the task at hand and the individuals within the team itself. As such, it reminds us that leaders need to spend time and effort upon building the team as well as trying to get the job done. In fact, Adair's ideal is that the leader spend

TM John Adair



as much time as possible occupied by the intersection of the 3 circles, balancing the needs of task, individual and team, in order to maximise success.

Why is it important to me?

We all know a great team when we see one. Just think of your favourite sports team. What makes them good at what they do? Is it the start individual who shines above all others, carries the rest and takes all the glory? Partly, maybe, but there's a magic ingredient – teamwork – and that doesn't just happen. Professional sports teams and the like spend lots of time looking at the best combination of individual skills, creating a sense of a shared goal and working on the 'glue' that holds a team together.

Understanding a little more about these magic ingredients can help you with your own team – those that report to you and teams that you're a part of with your peers or senior colleagues

IQ believes that teams are at the heart of a great industry, great companies and great quarries. Teams and team-working are therefore important skills for professionals working in the quarrying and minerals products industry. It features on our **Skills Wheel** which captures all the key skill and knowledge areas we believe are vital to successful career development in the industry.

Where Next?

Team Building Ideas at Mind Tools:

www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_52.htm

Institute of Quarrying

IQ supports professionals working within the quarrying and minerals products industry through membership and training. These factsheets are produced across a range of topics to share ideas and best practice. Further information can be found via the resources section on the IQ website www.quarrying.org.