How to…

Use Belbin to Increase

Employee Engagement

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Does it matter if your employees enjoy their work? According to a survey spanning four years and workplaces in over 100 countries, it matters a great deal. A report by Gallup, Inc. provides new insight into the relationship between employee engagement and business performance, and offers suggestions as to how companies can promote engagement to improve the bottom line. In this guide, we look at the findings and recommendations from the Gallup report and explore how Belbin Team Roles can be deployed to engage your team or workforce.

What is employee engagement and how engaged are we?

Gallup used a survey to measure employee engagement – the extent to which **employees are emotionally invested in their work and focused on contributing to their organisation every day**. Their findings were concerning: only 13% of employees worldwide were found to be engaged at work.
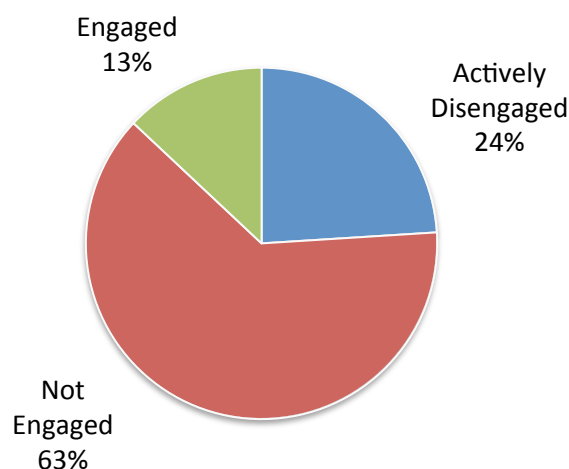
From: *State of the Global Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for Business Leaders Worldwide* (Gallup, Inc. 2013)

13% Engaged: Employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organisation forward.

63% Not Engaged: Employees are essentially "checked out". They're sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but not energy and passion – into their work.

24% Actively Disengaged: Employees aren't just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

The business case for employee engagement

Employee engagement has been shown to link directly with wellbeing and physical health, but it isn't just about creating a positive working environment for employees. It also has a significant impact on the bottom line. The Gallup survey measured performance outcomes affected by employee engagement, which included:

- Customer ratings
- Profitability
- Productivity
- Turnover
- Earnings per share (EPS)

- Shrinkage (theft)
- Absenteeism
- Quality (defects)
- Safety incidents

> **Leaders often say that their organization's greatest asset is its people – but in reality, this is only true when those employees are fully engaged in their jobs. Engaged workers stand apart from their not engaged and actively disengaged counterparts because of the discretionary effort they consistently bring to their roles day after day.**
>
> *Gallup, Inc.*

Play to your strengths

Everyone has strengths: talents, knowledge and skills which can be used to advantage at work. Gallup's research shows that:

> **People who use their strengths are 6 times more likely to be engaged on the job.**

However, many organisations ignore strengths and focus instead on competencies.

Competencies are designed to ensure that everyone achieves certain target standards in pre-defined areas. As a result, individuals expend time and energy (which could be focused on their talents) trying to fix areas of weakness, and strengths are reduced to mediocrity.
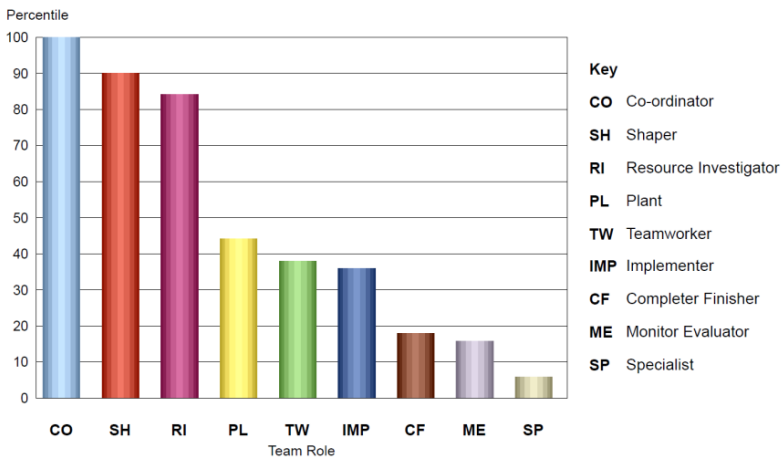
In the example shown opposite, Nathan might mistakenly be encouraged to spend less time developing and using his negotiating skills, in order to try and bring his creativity up to scratch. However, if he left the creative work to Paula and did some negotiating on her behalf, each could work more effectively.

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	Negotiation	Leadership	Creativity

Competence Target Level

■ Nathan ■ Paula ■ Leo
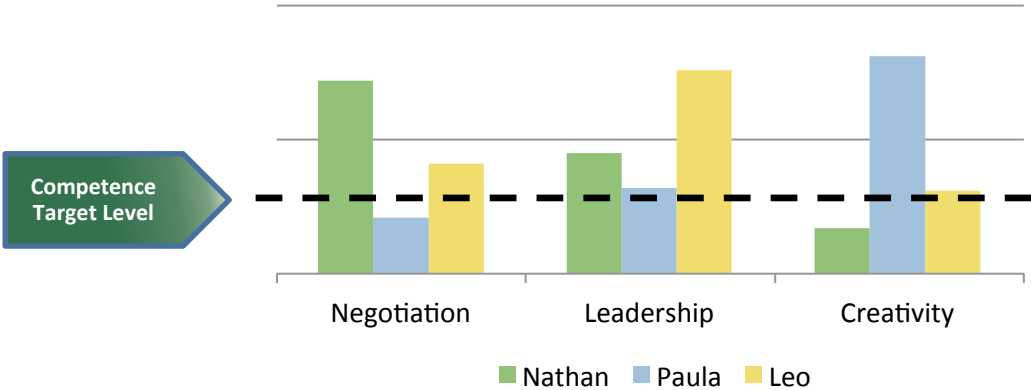
As a result of their findings, Gallup Inc. identified six steps that organisations could take to improve employee engagement levels. Let's look at how we can apply Belbin Team Roles to each one in turn.

1) Help individuals discover their strengths

The **Team Role Overview** report page gives an "at a glance" view of an individual's Team Role scores. In this case, the top three Team Roles are distinct from the other six, indicating that the individual has a propensity for (and might usefully spend time playing and developing) these three roles.

Key

|	
CO	Co-ordinator
SH	Shaper
RI	Resource Investigator
PL	Plant
TW	Teamworker
IMP	Implementer
CF	Completer Finisher
ME	Monitor Evaluator
SP	Specialist

In some cases, people may be unaware of their strengths or may take them for granted, assuming that everyone else must also possess the skill or attribute which comes naturally to them. In this case, Observer feedback (from colleagues and others who have worked closely with someone for some time) can draw out contributions which that person may have missed and can produce a fuller report.

> **"** **People don't change that much. Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in. That's hard enough. "**
>
> *Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, First Break All the Rules: What The Worlds' Greatest Managers Do Differently*

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2) Ensure that job roles and strengths are aligned

For engagement to work, people need to be positioned so that they can use their strengths each day – and this doesn't just mean qualifications. Gallup discovered that, in the developed world, education does not necessarily trend upwards with engagement, meaning that matching CVs and job descriptions is not necessarily a recipe for success.
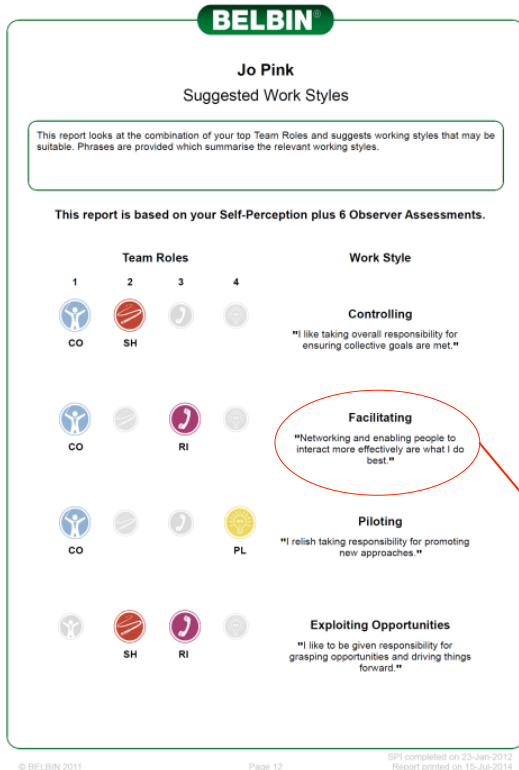
Instead, focus on identifying work styles and ensuring that the individual has the chance to practise these styles during their working day.

The **Suggested Work Styles** report looks at combinations of top Team Roles and suggests suitable words and phrases to summarise the relevant working styles.

> *Facilitating*
> *"Networking and enabling people to interact more effectively are what I do best."*

Rather than identifying a particular job title or department, this allows people to use Team Role language to demonstrate how they work best and what they can bring to a team or project. If an individual feels that he or she doesn't have enough opportunity to exercise a particular working style, then perhaps the parameters of the job could be changed to engage the individual more fully?

The **Feedback and Development** report offers advice on the kind of working environment which might be suitable, so that you can ensure that you are giving team members the best atmosphere in which to engage with their work. A Resource Investigator-Shaper might enjoy a lively, fast-paced environment, whereas a Monitor Evaluator-Completer Finisher (shown in the example below) works best given time and space to make decisions and get things right:

Work Environment

Stuart is likely to work best where accuracy and attention to detail are important and where errors could lead to serious problems. He would probably benefit from having a manager who is also ready to listen to advice, so the reporting relationship will play a big part in how the role ultimately works out.

3) Recognise and use others' strengths to best advantage

Once individuals understand their own contributions, it is important that they recognise one another's strengths and understand how colleagues' talents complement their own.

The Team/Group reports provide useful information to help people do just this. The **Team Role Circle** shows the initials for each team member in the segments of the circle which correspond to their top two Team Roles. The **Team Contributions** page makes a suggestion as to who should play each Team Role.

Please see our guide: **'How to…' Interpret and make the most of Belbin Team/Group Reports** *for more detail on feeding back these reports.*

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Team: Rainbow HR Team

Team Contributions

Particular individuals will need to be brought in at the right time if the team is to be fully effective. This report offers suggestions as to who should take on the work of each Team Role within the team. Some roles are shared; some individuals are suggested to play more than one role.
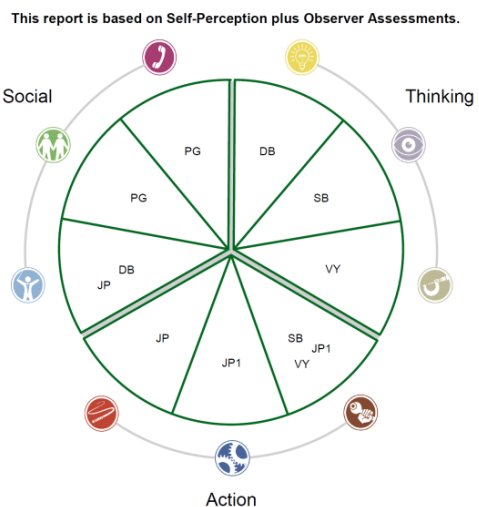
This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

When some new line of thought is desired, ask Dave Blue.

When the team needs to exploit new opportunities, turn to Peter Green, and Jo Pink.

When someone is needed to orchestrate team effort, call on Jo Pink. Also involve Dave Blue.

When there is a need to increase the pace and arrive at decisions, you can count on Jo Pink.

When the team needs someone to choose between competing options, seek advice from Stuart Brown.

When arguments break out and team atmosphere needs to be improved, try to involve Peter Green, and Jill Purple.

When decisions need to be turned into workable procedures, turn to Jill Purple.

When it is imperative that plans are completed to the highest standards, a key part can be played by Peter Green, Jill Purple, and Victoria Yellow.

When the team needs someone to research a subject in depth and gain the expertise the team requires, ask Victoria Yellow.

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Team: Rainbow HR Team

Team Role Circle

This report shows the top two Team Role contributions for each team member by showing their initials in the relevant segment of the circle (a key of team members is provided below). The positioning of an individual's initials within a particular segment has no significance.

This report is based on Self-Perception plus Observer Assessments.

Social   Thinking

PG   DB

PG   SB

DB   VY
JP

JP   SB   JP1
JP1   VY

Action

Key to Candidates
Dave Blue (DB)
Stuart Brown (SB)   Victoria Yellow (VY)
Peter Green (PG)
Jo Pink (JP)
Jill Purple (JP1)

Once team members know how others can contribute, they are more likely to call on one another to play to their strengths, meaning that people do not waste time and effort trying to compensate for their weakest roles.

3) Recognise and use others' strengths to best advantage (continued)

Working Relationships reports focus on a particular pairing of individuals, allowing you to see at a glance where the similarities and differences of contributions lie.

Individuals may be drawn to work with others who share their top Team Roles, finding the commonality of approach reassuring and easy to comprehend. Although working in complementary Team Role pairings might require more effort, it is a better strategy in the long run, because strengths are not duplicated (meaning that people are not vying to play the same role) and each person can compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

Complementary relationships can also be engaging, so long as the difference is valued and codified appropriately. The report text identifies where the pressure points in the relationship might be and how these might be mitigated.
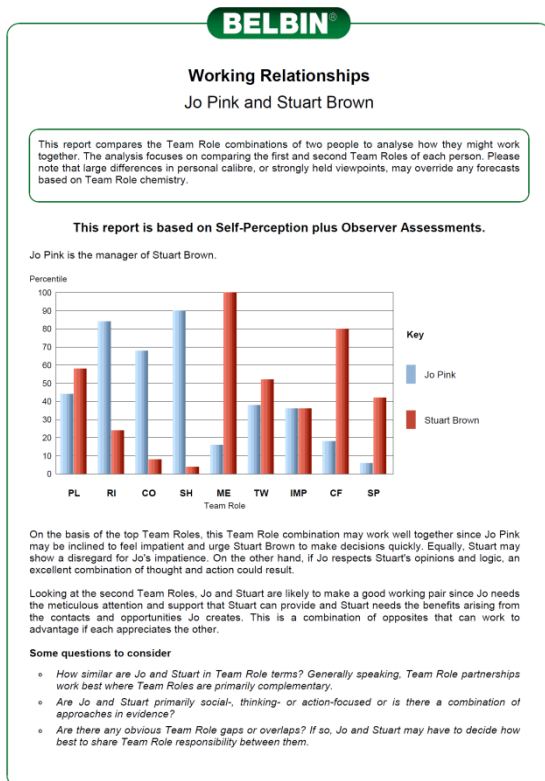
According to Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman in their book, *First Break All the Rules: What The World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, **people don't leave jobs, they leave managers**. Gallup reiterate these findings, confirming that **good management is key to engagement**.

If the relationship between manager and employee is strained, the Working Relationship report can provide a starting-point for discussions.

In this example, Jo Pink is the manager of Stuart Brown. Jo's high Shaper role might clash with Stuart's Monitor Evaluator role, since Jo is likely to push to get things done, whilst Stuart might wish to adopt a slower, more cautious, method of working. Also, Jo's prominent Resource Investigator role might be at odds with Stuart's high

Completer Finisher, as Stuart will likely prize accuracy, whilst Jo may take a more expedient approach. Without Team Role understanding, Stuart could be rushed into delivering work that is incorrect, leaving him anxious and demotivated.

However, if Jo understands these differences in style, she can allow Stuart adequate time to consider the options and attend to the details. Likewise, Stuart can recognise that Jo places considerable importance on meeting deadlines. He can also ensure that he is able to capitalise on the leads and opportunities that Jo creates, by taking care of the detailed follow-up work at which he excels. In other words, both parties are more likely to be engaged in their work if they appreciate (and allow for) each other.

4) Help teams to understand and consider strengths when assigning team projects

As individuals and teams become more familiar with the language of Team Roles, it can be used to assign people to project teams, as well as diagnosing and remedying existing problems.

Each team and project is different, so the team must decide which behaviours are needed and who is best placed to fulfil the corresponding Team Role contribution. The table below identifies the roles which might be required for each stage.

As Projects progress different Team Roles are required

Stage	Role	Role
Identify goals	Shaper	Co-ordinator
Ideas	Plant	Resource Investigator
Plans	Monitor Evaluator	Specialist
Contacts	Resource Investigator	Teamworker
Organisation	Implementer	Co-ordinator
Follow through	Completer Finisher	Implementer

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As well as recognising talents and enabling individuals to play to their strengths, this approach also promotes engagement by removing individuals from a project stage in which their behavioural propensities might be unhelpful and cause others to disengage.

For example, a Monitor Evaluator present at the "Ideas" stage may frustrate Plants and dampen the enthusiasm of Resource Investigators by dismissing ideas too hastily. He or she is also likely to become uneasy at the prospect of so many ideas flying haphazardly around. A Resource Investigator misplaced in the "Follow through" phase may lose interest and fail to follow up adequately, leaving Implementer and Completer Finisher colleagues to pick up the pieces.

5) Incorporate strengths into performance reviews and goals

According to Gallup, performance reviews have a significant effect on engagement.

+36%

Performance reviews which focused on employee **strengths** produced a 36% performance improvement, whereas reviews which focused on employee **weaknesses** resulted in a 27% decrease in performance.

-27%
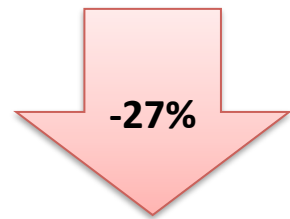
> " Trying to get employees to fix their weaknesses doesn't work.
> Weaknesses can't be developed much at all –
> but employees' strengths can be developed infinitely. "
> *Gallup, Inc.*

For some, their perception of their own contributions will be in alignment with the views of their colleagues. For others, there will be discrepancies between the two. We will consider how to use the reports in either case.

If individual and observer views are in agreement… strengths should be celebrated. The **Maximizing your Potential** report lists *Strengths* derived from different Team Role combinations, giving a rounded picture of the individual's valued behavioural assets. The *Possible Weaknesses* section addresses behavioural traits which are the flipsides of the Team Role strengths that the individual exhibits. These are flagged so that, where appropriate, the individual can develop strategies to work with others in these areas, rather than as recommendations for development.

Strengths

You:
- maintain a broad focus while leaving the details to others.
- are likely to be a high-profile, dominant person, capable of making your voice heard.
- are able to give confidence and direction to others and to steer people towards common objectives.
- are dynamic and entrepreneurial: a developer of new ventures.

Possible Weaknesses

You may:
- take a generalist approach and tend not get involved with specifics.
- depend on continuous stimulation and be inclined to lose interest quickly.
- have difficulties thinking through the potential implications of a given action or set of circumstances.

Additionally, the **Team Role Feedback** report focuses on the individual's top two Team Roles (or the top role, if considerably higher than the second) and gives a person specific advice on how to cultivate a second or third Team Role to add another string to his or her bow. To translate this into real terms, you can use the section of the **Feedback and Development** report which indicates work to which the individual might or might not be suited.

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5) Incorporate strengths into performance reviews and goals (continued)

If individual and observer views differ... it may be more prudent to spend time looking at information derived solely from individual's self-perception, so that the individual is not put off by the Belbin process. In addition to the *Understanding your Contribution* section shown opposite, the report page entitled **Your Team Role Preferences** plots percentile scores for each Team Role, categorising them as Preferred, Manageable and Least Preferred Roles.

Least Preferred Roles			Manageable Roles				Preferred Roles				Team Roles
0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
					X						Plant
						X					Resource Investigator
							X				Co-ordinator
							X				Shaper
	X										Monitor Evaluator
		X									Teamworker
					X						Implementer
		X									Completer Finisher
	X										Specialist

The report is derived from the individual's own responses and is not modified to include observer feedback.
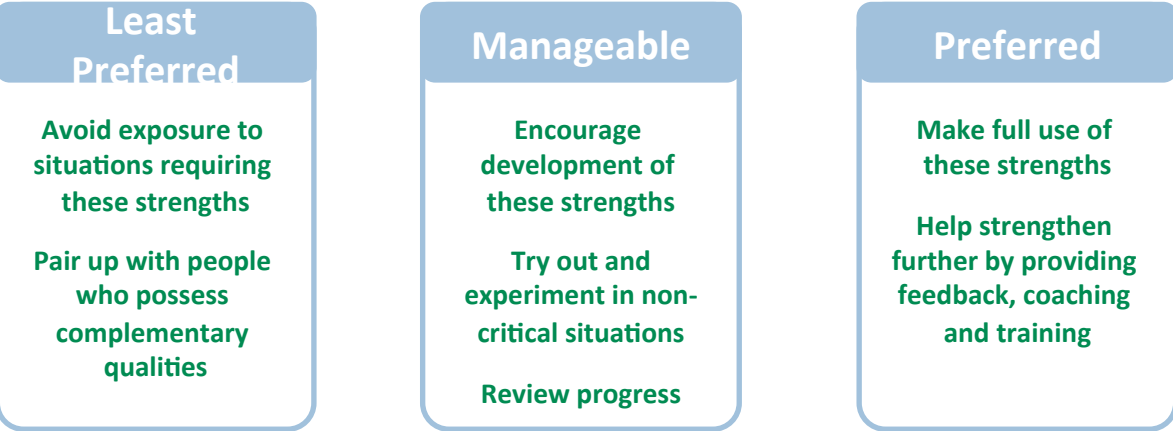
This can provide a useful starting-point to analyse strengths and decide which (if any) manageable roles might be further developed.

Remember: not all Manageable Roles can be (or should be) cultivated. Strategies should be put in place to ensure that individuals do not routinely have to work to their Least Preferred Roles (called "Team Role Sacrifice"), as this is likely to cause disengagement.

> " If you think a weakness can be turned into a strength, I hate to tell you this, but that's another weakness. "
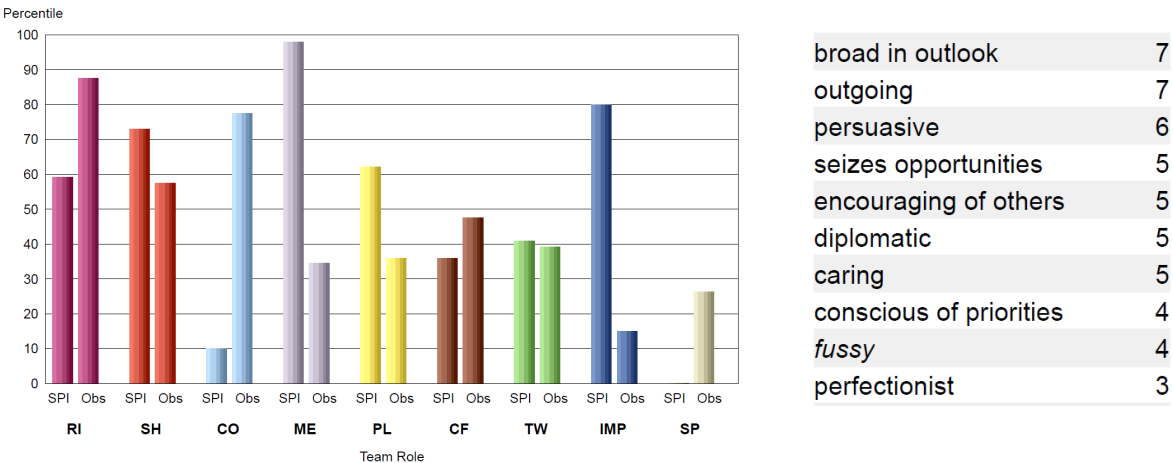> *Jack Handy, American writer and comedian*

The diagram below shows how each category of role might be handled:

Least Preferred	Manageable	Preferred
Avoid exposure to situations requiring these strengths **Pair up with people who possess complementary qualities**	**Encourage development of these strengths** **Try out and experiment in non-critical situations** **Review progress**	**Make full use of these strengths** **Help strengthen further by providing feedback, coaching and training**

5) Incorporate strengths into performance conversations and reviews, and help employees set goals based on their strengths (continued)

It is also important to look at the differences between self and observer views in more detail and to examine possible reasons for the discrepancies.

Comparing Self and Observer Perceptions can be used in conjunction with the **List of Observer Responses** to understand the behaviours that others see. In this example, the individual sees herself as an organiser of tasks (Implementer - IMP), whereas others see her as an organiser of people (Co-ordinator - CO). Further discussion might elicit identifiable examples of this behaviour.

broad in outlook	7
outgoing	7
persuasive	6
seizes opportunities	5
encouraging of others	5
diplomatic	5
caring	5
conscious of priorities	4
fussy	4
perfectionist	3

The individual may be surprised by the observer views. If she can see why observers have identified a certain Team Role, performance reviews can be used to ascertain whether she can cultivate this strength further and how this might be achieved. If she does not wish to play the role in question, it may be that she needs to announce her preferences more clearly, in order to do more of the work she enjoys.

The **Maximising your Potential** report offers some advice on how to do this. The statements are derived from the individual's own responses and tailored to bring out the specific behavioural characteristics which make up each Team Role. An example is shown below:

Understanding your Contribution (based on your self-perception)

Looking at the results solely from your self-perception (not taking any observer views into account), you have highlighted two possible contributions you can make. Below is some advice on how to play to your strengths further in these areas:

To play your Implementer role to better effect, take on the work that is required to establish and maintain a good name for your team or organisation. Foster an atmosphere where others are willing to pitch in, whatever the task.

To play your Monitor Evaluator role to better effect, make the most of your ability to use logic as a basis for decision-making. When others do not follow suit, tread carefully so as to ground their ideas in the real world without seeming to criticise too much.

6) Foster a culture which promotes strengths

In order to ensure lasting employee engagement, it is important to build a culture of strengths, which capitalises on the talents of each team member. Team Roles can provide a language to describe different kinds of work and to find the appropriate person to perform it.

By using Belbin *champions* to make the Team Role lexicon integral to the working environment, you can ensure that all contributions are valued and represented where necessary. Not only will this enhance employee engagement, but it will also help to avoid the development of certain Team Role cultures, where one contribution is valued above others.

In conclusion...

- Belbin Team Roles are all about promoting, and playing to our strengths.

- Using Team Roles, we can identify positive contributions and provide strategies to minimise the impact of associated weaknesses.

- We can better understand the strengths of those around us and manage relationships which might otherwise cause frustration.

   The result? A workforce of individuals more engaged with their work.

Notes:

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Team Role Summary Descriptions

Team Role	Contribution	Allowable Weaknesses
Plant	Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.
Resource Investigator	Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
Co-ordinator	Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work.
Shaper	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
Monitor Evaluator	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.
Teamworker	Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.
Implementer	Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
Completer Finisher	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
Specialist	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.