

## Teams

# Our team lost a fortune because we forgot this one simple rule...

by The Belbin Team | Victoria Bird, 21 Aug 2018

Recently, I was part of a team with a fatal flaw. We had a sound strategy, a host of good intentions... We even knew our Achilles' heel. But it didn't help. We went bankrupt within the hour. Here's what happened. And what we should have done.

We were taking part in a teambuilding game in which each team was engineered to lack balance in terms of Belbin Team Roles – ways of behaving, contributing and interrelating in teams. We all began with the advantage of knowing our Team Roles and understanding that our team was unbalanced.

In reality, we don't always have the luxury of building teams from scratch, or shifting things around. Sometimes we have to work with what we have. So, what happens when the team isn't balanced and you can't pick and choose team members?

### **Discover your strengths – and weaknesses.**

Our team had an abundance of Implementer behaviour – we were likely to be organised, practical and systematic, good at formulating a plan and carrying it out. On the negative side, we needed to watch out for a tendency to reject new ideas, persist with the *status quo* and resist change.

### **If your first roles are the same, look at the second and third roles...**

Each person has more than one Team Role contribution to make. In fact, we have a range of preferred and manageable roles we can call upon. When we studied our profiles, we discovered other tendencies amongst our team members – someone who could play a Shaper role (providing overall direction and keeping things on track), two high-scoring Completer Finishers (to balance the books) and someone with Resource Investigator tendencies (to negotiate for us). So far, so good.

### **Know what you're missing and fill those gaps where you can.**

We knew we didn't have an overabundance of thinking roles, so we spent a lot of our reconnaissance time planning our strategy. We realised we had a tendency to begin planning before we had fully considered whether an idea would work, so whenever we found ourselves doing this, we dragged ourselves back to the bigger picture before spending time on the practicalities. We weren't going to be great at thinking on our feet, so we made a checklist to which we could refer once the game was underway. We were using our strengths to mitigate our weaknesses. So far, still so good.

### **Don't try to be something you're not.**

We got off to a flying start – we were practical and organised and we took an early lead. The checklist was working. But we had this nagging feeling. We knew we were expected to be the team who played it safe. So we threw caution to the wind – bid high, kept speculating to accumulate. Over-borrowed and came a cropper.

We tried to be clever, and we overlooked a simple rule. You still need to play to your strengths regardless of the situation.

### **We neglected our strengths and tried to adopt behaviours that didn't come naturally. It worked for a while, but then the wheels came off.**

And it isn't all that uncommon in the real world. Here at Belbin, we often see teams coming up against the same problems time and again, because they don't understand their strengths, or try to make everyone fit the same mould.

All four teams taking part were unbalanced. We were pitted against a flap of Resource Investigators, a shove of Shapers and a moribund of Monitor Evaluators.

### **So, who won?**

It wasn't one team – it was two. By forging alliances with one another, two teams redressed their Team Role balance (as far as they could) and shared the spoils. As in business, collaboration turned out to be the name of the game.