# Tool A: Team roles

Quality improvement depends on a team approach.

Dr RM Belbin investigated the different roles people need to play within a team.[[1]](#footnote-1) Sometimes people need to play another role to make the team more effective.

A team needs a mix of the team roles, Belbin says:

*A team is not a bunch of people with job titles, but a congregation of individuals, each of whom has a role which is understood by other members. Members of a team seek out certain roles and they perform most effectively in the ones that are most natural to them.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Belbin describes nine team roles:

**The plant**

Strengths: Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.

Allowable weaknesses: Ignores incidentals. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.

**Resource investigator**

Strengths: Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.

Allowable weaknesses: Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.

**Coordinator**

Strengths: Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.

Allowable weaknesses: Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of work.

**Shaper**

Strengths: Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.

Allowable weaknesses: Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.

**Monitor evaluator**

Strengths: Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.

Allowable weaknesses: Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.

**Teamworker**

Strengths: Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.

Allowable weaknesses: Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.

**Implementer**

Strengths: Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.

Allowable weaknesses: Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.

**Completer finisher**

Strengths: Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.

Allowable weaknesses: Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.

**Specialist**

Strengths: Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.

Allowable weaknesses: Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

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1. <http://www.belbin.com> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)