In study groups, we assume roles – sometimes within our nature; at times, out of our comfort zone; and at other times, a combination of the two. The most important thing is that you are aware of how your behaviour impacts on the outcome of the group assignment.

You may already know of various ways we can be ‘labelled’ within ‘team’ work or in interacting in groups. There are numerous models: the 2 below are Kurt Lewin’s (1940s) model and Edward De Bono’s (1985) respectively.

**Kurt Lewin: Task-Maintenance Roles:**

Task roles: relate to the *rationale*

Maintenance roles: relate to the *emotional*.

**Positive Task Roles**

- Initiator – starts the process
- Information seeker – seeks clarification of facts
- Information giver – offers facts
- Opinion seeker – asks for clarification of values and reasons
- Opinion giver – states beliefs and focuses on values
- Recorder – maintains check on decisions
- Clarifier – clears up confusion
- Summariser – draws ideas together

**Positive Maintenance Roles**

- Morale booster – encourages
- Compromiser – concedes for group consensus
- Standard setter – expresses expectations and boundaries
- Tension easer – reduces conflict and attempts to reconcile differences
- Gate keeper – encourages everyone to participate.
Negative Roles

- Blocker – negativistic and resistant; focuses on personal concerns
- Aggressor – attacks group members, shows envy
- Self-confessor – talks too much about personal issues
- Dominator – wants to control and doesn’t openly listen to others
- Free loader – doesn’t do his/her share of the work load.

Edward De Bono: Six Thinking Hats:

- White Hat – Facts, figures and information (covers the facts)
- Red Hat – Intuition, feelings and emotions (expresses feelings)
- Black Hat – Judgement (not necessarily negative) (comments)
- Yellow Hat – Logical, positive, benefits (answers and gives reasons)
- Green Hat – Creativity, alternatives (is positive and gives ideas)
- Blue Hat – Process and control (does not actually take part in the analysis).
BELBIN TEAM INVENTORY

The Belbin Team Inventory is an assessment used to gain insight into an individual’s behavioural tendency in a team environment. It was developed by Dr. Meredith Belbin after studying numerous cases at Henley Management College.

An individual may and does exhibit strong tendencies towards multiple roles. Belbin himself asserts that the Team Roles are not equivalent to personality types.

Roles

Plant

Plants are creative, unorthodox and a generator of ideas. If an innovative solution to a problem is needed, a Plant is a good person to ask. A good Plant will be bright and free-thinking. Plants can tend to ignore incidentals and refrain from getting bogged down in detail. The Plant bears a strong resemblance to the popular caricature of the absent-minded professor-inventor, and often has a hard time communicating ideas to others.

Resource Investigator

The Resource Investigator gives a team a rush of enthusiasm at the start of the project by vigorously pursuing contacts and opportunities. He or she is focused outside the team, and has a finger firmly on the pulse of the outside world. Where a Plant creates new ideas, a Resource Investigator will quite happily steal them from others. A good Resource Investigator is a maker of possibilities and an excellent net worker, but has a tendency to lose momentum towards the end of a project.

Co-ordinator

A Co-ordinator often becomes the default chairperson of a team, stepping back to see the big picture. Co-ordinators are confident, stable and mature and because they recognise abilities in others, they are very good at delegating tasks to the right person for the job. The co-ordinator clarifies decisions, helping everyone else focus on their tasks. Co-ordinators are sometimes perceived to be manipulative, and will tend to delegate all work, leaving nothing but the delegating for themselves to do.

Shaper

The shaper is a task-focused leader who abounds in nervous energy, is highly motivated to achieve and for whom winning is the name of the game. The shaper is committed to achieving ends and will “shape” others into achieving the aims of the team. He/she will challenge, argue or disagree and will display aggression in the pursuit of goal achievement. Two or three shapers in a group, according to Belbin, can lead to conflict, aggravation and in-fighting.
Monitor Evaluator

Monitor Evaluators are fair and logical observers and judges of what is going on. Because they are good at detaching themselves from bias, they are often the ones to see all available options with the greatest clarity. They take everything into account, and by moving slowly and analytically, will almost always come to the right decision. However, they can become excessively cynical, damping enthusiasm for anything without logical grounds, and they have a hard time inspiring themselves or others to be passionate about their work.

Team Worker

Team workers are good listeners and are diplomatic. They are talented at smoothing over conflicts and helping parties understand each other without becoming confrontational. The beneficial effect of a team worker is often not noticed until they are absent, when the team begins to argue and small but important things cease to happen. Because of an unwillingness to take sides, a team worker may not be able to take decisive action when it is needed.

Implementer

The implementer takes what the other roles have suggested or asked, and turns their ideas into positive action. They are efficient and self-disciplined, and can always be relied on to deliver on time. They are motivated by their loyalty to the team or company, which means that they will often take on jobs everyone else avoids or dislikes. However, they may be seen as closed-minded and inflexible since they will often have difficulty deviating from their own well-thought-out plans.

Completer Finisher

The Completer Finisher is a perfectionist and will often go the extra mile to make sure that everything is just right, and the things they deliver can be trusted to have been double-checked and then checked again. The Completer Finisher has a strong inward sense of the need for accuracy, rarely needing any encouragement from others because their own high standards are what they try to live up to. They may frustrate their team mates by worrying excessively about minor details and refusing to delegate tasks that they do not trust anyone else to perform.