

Using Belbin for Your CV and Interview

9 sections 1 worked example 15 min read

Your Belbin report describes your behavioural style and how you work with other people. That is often what a CV leaves out and what an interviewer wants to know. This guide helps you take a Belbin report and use it to improve your CV and interview answers in a practical way.

SECTION ONE

What Makes a CV Work

Your CV is not just a summary of your experience and qualifications. It is your chance to sell yourself and secure an interview.

It is often the first impression a prospective employer ever has of you, and during that initial review they may decide whether or not to keep you in the selection process. If you do not make it to interview, nothing else you can offer gets a hearing.

Your CV could be holding you back if it:

- ✗ Fails to grab attention.
- ✗ Is poorly designed or formatted.
- ✗ Focuses on listing tasks and responsibilities like you would find in a job description.
- ✗ Overlooks key achievements or fails to highlight measurable successes.
- ✗ Neglects to convey your personality, behavioural strengths, and what you bring to a team.

The last of those is the one most candidates never address, and it is the one a Belbin report is built for. Your report describes your behaviour at work: what you contribute to a team, how you go about it, and what you are like when the pressure is on. Put that into your CV and the employer gets a person rather than a job history.

The way to think of it is a good CV may not be good enough. To succeed, your CV may need to be great.

SECTION TWO

How to Enhance Your CV

Before the report comes into it, these are the things that separate a CV that gets read from one that does not.

Sell yourself, don't be modest

Invest time building a CV that demonstrates your strengths, achievements, and what makes you unique as a candidate.

Customise for each role

Tailor your CV to the job description. If you align your skills and experience with what the employer is looking for, you can more readily demonstrate you are the ideal fit.

Grammar and spelling

Spelling or grammar mistakes can be a dealbreaker. Employers often eliminate candidates for CV errors, so proofread carefully before applying.

Highlight achievements

Don't just list responsibilities. Focus on accomplishments and results, and structure your achievements using the C.A.R. formula set out in Section Six.

Let your behavioural skills shine

Your CV should also reflect your behavioural strengths and show how you'll fit into the team and company culture.

Keep it clear and concise

Two to three pages (typically), an easy-to-read structure and design, with no jargon. Someone scanning quickly should be able to find your strongest contributions, not hunt for them.

Quick tip: the AI tool Grammarly can help with grammar and spelling, and it has a free version. It will check your writing for mistakes before an employer does.

SECTION THREE

What Your Belbin Report Gives You

Everything quoted in this guide comes from one real report, the sample Individual Report on this site. Jo's top Team Roles are Shaper and Co-ordinator.

YOUR TEAM ROLE PREFERENCES

"Jo, from your own perspective, Shaper and Co-ordinator are your top contributions." And in one line: "You like to manage others and lead from the front. You have a need to achieve and drive things forward."

TEAM ROLE FEEDBACK

"You appear to have a firm grasp of objectives: an ability to drive both yourself and others, and a readiness to maximise the resources of a team."

"The calm, unflappable style, tolerant and consultative, never losing sight of priorities and with a talent for establishing a consensus."

PLACEMENT SUGGESTIONS

"You'll tend to be most comfortable in adopting a leading position where you can exercise personal responsibility."

Then, under "announce your strengths": "be dynamic and entrepreneurial: a developer of new ventures", and "be a forthright and determined individual, with the energy and drive to overcome obstacles".

SUGGESTED WORK STYLES

Four pairings of Jo's top roles, each with a sentence attached: Controlling, "I like to take charge to ensure collective goals are met"; Exploiting Opportunities, "I like to be given responsibility for grasping opportunities and driving things forward"; Pushing for Change; and Facilitating, "networking and enabling people to interact more effectively are what I do best".

Four pages, and every one of them written in language you could lift almost unchanged and drop into a CV or application form. What requires more thought is deciding which parts are worth saying, amending them to suit each role and providing any supporting evidence to back this up.

SECTION FOUR

Finding the Right Kind of Role

Before you write your CV, it is worth asking what you should be applying for. The work styles page helps give some ideas: it takes your top Team Roles in pairs and says what each pairing is particularly good for.

Read together, those point at Jo being suited to a role that provides scope to lead, chase opportunities and build relationships outside the team. Jo is most comfortable adopting a leading position with scope to exercise personal responsibility. Roles like business development or sales management may suit well. A role with little latitude and too much detail may not.

Knowing what you are best suited to, and targeting the right type of roles, can increase your chance of success and reduce the time spent applying for roles you are less well suited to.

A role you may be less suited to is worth knowing about before you spend a week writing a CV to apply for it. Jo's least preferred role is Monitor Evaluator, and the report is clear on what that may suggest: *"your judgements may be too swayed by emotion rather than by dispassionate reasoning"*.

A job that requires a high degree of careful analysis may be more of a challenge.

SECTION FIVE

Writing Your CV Profile

Many CV profiles describe the job held rather than the person in it. The Belbin report provides language to describe required behaviours. Here is Jo's profile, before and after.

BEFORE

"Operations Manager with 20 years' experience across commercial and operational teams. Works well with people at all levels. Used to working to tight timescales in a fast-paced work environment with a wide range of clients and suppliers. Good team player."

True, but it could describe hundreds of candidates.

AFTER

"Operations Manager with 20 years' experience across commercial and operational teams. A natural leader who leads from the front, with an open and consultative management style and a talent for establishing consensus. Has a thorough grasp of key business objectives and focuses on maximising the resources within a team to drive and motivate them towards a high level of performance. Highly experienced in working to tight timescales in a fast-paced environment, maintaining a calm and unflappable approach. Adept at helping the team develop external links, building strong and lasting relationships with a wide range of clients and suppliers. Brings a specific skill set to the team."

Nothing in the second version is invented. It comes directly from the report: "leads from the front", "a talent for establishing a consensus", "maximising the resources of a team" and "calm and unflappable" are all the report's own words, and "helping the team develop external links" is its line about Jo and the world outside the organisation. Exactly the kind of behavioural skills employers may be seeking.

The report helps provide the language. You can supply supporting evidence.

Two warnings. Keep it to the strengths that matter for the job you are applying for, because a profile that claims everything persuades nobody. And be ready to be asked about any of it: everything in your profile could be asked about at interview.

SECTION SIX

Achievements: The C.A.R. Formula

Most CVs list responsibilities. Achievements are what can separate two candidates who held the exact same job. Think about what you are proudest of delivering, or what you have been thanked for. Achievements can be personal or work-based, your own or a team's.

The C.A.R. formula helps keep an achievement statement focused, honest and short:

- **Challenge** - what was the task, problem or issue you faced?
- **Action** - what did you do about it?
- **Result** - what changed, in numbers if you have them?

An example, with the three parts marked:

*"Responsible for achieving a £300k per annum sales target. **(Challenge)** After only three months in the role, proactively secured the opportunity to bid for work with a large multi-national company. Successfully tendered for and won a 12-month contract for a training and development programme covering over 200 personnel. **(Action)** In year one the programme achieved a customer satisfaction rating of 97% and was extended by a further two years, taking the total contract value to £1.2m over three years." **(Result)***

Notice how little of that is a list of duties?

The challenge helps define the issue, the action shows what Jo actually did, and the result is what was achieved. The results part is what makes all the difference and what employers will be much more interested in.

Three or four key achievement statements like this, well placed nearer the beginning of the CV for greatest impact, may do more for you than listing another page of responsibilities.

SECTION SEVEN

Preparing for Interview

An interview is the employer's chance to meet the person behind the CV. These are some of the mistakes we see more often.

- ✗ Arriving late or at the wrong location.
- ✗ Failing to read the job description thoroughly.
- ✗ Forgetting what is on your CV.
- ✗ Doing insufficient research about the company.
- ✗ "Winging it" instead of preparing for likely job interview questions.
- ✗ Repeating the same example for several answers.
- ✗ Not preparing high quality questions you want to ask at the end of the interview.
- ✗ Planning answers in outline, but never out loud.

Your Interview Checklist

Most of those are fixed by preparation rather than talent. Work through this checklist before attending on the day.

- ☐ Interview details confirmed: who with, where, and what time.
- ☐ Job description read closely, with the key requirements noted.
- ☐ Your own CV re-read, so nothing on it surprises you.
- ☐ Research done on the organisation, its work and its culture.
- ☐ Your Belbin report re-read, and the phrases you want to use marked up.
- ☐ A strong answer prepared for any likely questions you may be asked.
- ☐ Several different examples ready, so one example does not have to cover everything.



Two or three good questions of your own, worth asking and worth answering.

SECTION EIGHT

Three Example Questions to Help You Prepare

You cannot predict what you will be asked in an interview, but you can have a fair guess as to the more likely questions you may be asked. Do that well and you can start to prepare effective answers.

Here are three common interview questions as worked examples, which can be supported by your Belbin report.

1

"What are your strengths?"

Most people give their first, unprepared answer, something like this: *"I'm good at working in a team, I get on well with people and I think I have good communication skills."* Pleasant, forgettable, and true of almost every candidate in the CV pile.

The same person using their Belbin report effectively: *"My core behavioural strengths lie in three areas. I'm a natural team leader and I work at my best where I can use strong influencing skills to manage and motivate a team towards a high level of performance. I thrive in a fast-paced environment where I can use entrepreneurial instincts to help grow the business. And I'm results focused: I have the drive and energy to overcome obstacles and make sure what was promised gets delivered."*

Much better.

Three strengths, each one taken from a line in the report, giving specific rather than generic behavioural skills which the interviewer may be looking for. Any follow-up questions should allow you to give examples to back up your claims, so have practical examples ready for each area.

2

"What do you bring to a team?"

This is the question Belbin was built to answer, and most candidates answer it with a personality trait instead of a team contribution.

"I excel in building collaboration in a team by encouraging open dialogue and guiding team members to reach a consensus. I'm comfortable taking a more directive approach when needed, to ensure progress is made. My balance of collaboration and decisive action enables me to lead teams effectively, even when under pressure or faced with challenging circumstances."

Notice that the second half is as useful as the first. Describing when you change gear says more than claiming you are always collaborative.

"What are your weaknesses?"

The dreaded one, and the one preparation helps most. Jo's report gives the raw material: an allowable weakness, *"risk alienating others as a result of your drive to get things done."* Said too boldly and it can become a poor answer: *"I regularly upset people at work because I don't consider others' feelings."* While that may be honest, it is seldom helpful.

Here is the same answer broken down one step at a time.

Reduce it. *"I recognise that I can occasionally upset certain people a little bit..."*

Turn it towards the positive. *"...because I can become so involved in delivering the task I'm focused on that I may occasionally overlook the impact it has on other people."*

Show how you manage it. *"I'm much more self-aware of this now, and tend to realise as soon as I start doing it. That allows me to pause and think about the bigger picture, and I make a point of checking in with people if I think I may have been pushing hard on delivering the task and not taking into account the impact on people."*

End on the strength. *"Over the last few months, I've worked hard at improving this, so the issue arises far less often. I still have the same level of drive to get things done but can now see I can get even better results when I listen to, involve and bring people with me."*

Joining each of the steps end to end delivers an answer that should leave the interviewer thinking you know your weakness and are proactively working at it. Choosing a real weakness and demonstrating how you are tackling it not only makes this credible, but what they ultimately hear is that you are self-aware and proactively working at improving.

This guide is adapted from *How to improve your CV and interview technique using your Belbin Team Role Report*, developed by **White Cube Consulting**.

SECTION NINE

Answering with STAR

The STAR method is a powerful tool for structuring responses clearly and effectively when answering behavioural or competency-based questions. Employers often ask questions designed to assess how you've handled situations in the past, as these can help predict future performance.

S

Situation

Start by describing the context or challenge you faced.

"In my previous role, our team faced declining customer satisfaction scores."

T

Task

Explain your specific responsibility in addressing the challenge.

"It was my task to identify the issues and implement changes to improve client satisfaction."

A

Action

Detail your steps to resolve the situation, focusing on your contribution.

"I developed and conducted customer surveys, analysed the feedback, and collaborated with the team to develop a new customer service strategy."

R

Result

Conclude with the outcome, highlighting measurable achievements.

"As a result, customer satisfaction scores increased by 25% over the next three months."

Using the STAR method can help develop answers that are concise, relevant, demonstrate problem-solving abilities and a results-based focus.

Pairing this with insights from your Belbin Team Roles report can further enhance your responses, showcasing how your behavioural strengths also contributed to the success.