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How to…

Use Belbin Team Reports

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Whatever our functional job role, very few of us work entirely in isolation. Individual Belbin reports can help individuals understand their Team Role contributions, but the next step is to situate this contribution within the context of the team, by producing a set of Team reports.

The Team reports have been designed to provide as complete a view of the team as possible. No one report tells you everything you need to know; rather, each provides a different part of the picture. In the facilitation process, you can decide what to use and how much to share, depending on what is appropriate to the team.

According to the team's purpose, history, potential problems and the nature of feedback, you may decide to present some pages to the team and to keep others back for reflection or to use as discussion starters at a later stage. This guide offers advice on how to manage the process to best effect, including an in-depth analysis of each report page.

When producing a Team report, there are a number of key factors to take into account.

Getting it right

Size

Think about who you want to include in a team report. Meredith Belbin suggests that the ideal size for a team is 4-6 people. If there are too many people in a team, essentially it becomes a group, with roles and behaviours overlapping and causing problems. A smaller team ensures that each voice and contribution is heard and valued.

From a practical standpoint, two of the Team report pages (**Potential Contributions** and **Team Role Circle**) can only be produced for 3-15 people, for the reasons outlined above. If a department is subdivided into working teams, consider creating a Team report for each team, not for the department (or "group") as a whole. If you want to look at the culture of a larger group, this can be achieved using a select few of the Team reports. This is discussed in further detail on the next few pages.

For pairings, Belbin Working Relationship reports should be used.

Trust

Belbin is most valuable when individuals are willing to share with one another. Team reports combine data from a number of individual reports (albeit in a restricted way), so it is important to obtain consent to use and share people's Team Role information in this way.

To manage expectations, you can show the sample Team report available at www.belbin.com to give an idea of how data are combined to show each person's contribution.

In situations where trust has broken down and conflicts have arisen, the trust to embark on a joint exercise of this nature is more difficult to come by, but it is also where the common language of Team Roles is most needed – to begin constructing a new way of working together.

Consensus

As a behavioural tool, Belbin is dependent on observations (the behaviour that an individual's colleagues and managers see) in order to be accurate and insightful.

If you want the team to "buy in" to the Belbin process, it is important that each person has their say about the Team Role behaviours they witness in their colleagues at work. Self-perception merely reflects our own view of ourselves, which may be affected by limited self-awareness or aspirations.

For example, if a team has one member who aspires to the role of Co-ordinator but exhibits the behaviours of an Implementer, the observations of the rest of the team will reveal the discrepancy.

However, if the Team report relies solely on Self-perception, that person would be identified as a Co-ordinator. The team's opportunity to recognise the Implementer contribution (and perhaps to find a more suitable Co-ordinator within the team) is lost.

There is one notable exception. If a team is newly-formed, individuals are unlikely to know one another sufficiently well to comment. In this case, it may be prudent to revisit the Belbin process after a few months or so, incorporating Observer Assessments at this time.

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Purpose

When analysing Team reports and preparing for discussions with the team, keep in mind both the purpose of the team and the desired outcome of the feedback. For example, feedback sessions designed to reduce conflict or to improve morale following redundancies are likely to require very different approaches. A workshop intended to form a new team will be different again.

A team should be put together for a specific purpose. Each team member should be chosen to ensure that the correct balance of skill and behaviour is achieved. This does not necessarily mean that all Team Roles are required in every team, so long as the omission of certain roles is deliberate and considered.

Preparation

Owing to the sensitivities which may arise, it is important to read and understand the Team report fully before deciding how the information should be presented to the team. To help formulate your feedback, look carefully at each report page and how best to use it.

Percentiles: a note

The Belbin reports use percentiles to measure and express the strength of an individual's Team Role propensity relative to that of others (the rest of a given "population").

Percentiles are important for measuring individuals in relation to one another. Person A may have Completer Finisher as a top Team Role and be in the 65th percentile for this role. Person B may have Completer Finisher as a second role, but be in the 80th percentile, for example. Of the two, we would expect Person B to be a stronger example of a Completer Finisher than Person A, regardless of the role rankings.

These comparisons are important considerations in how we select people for inclusion in certain parts of the Team report.

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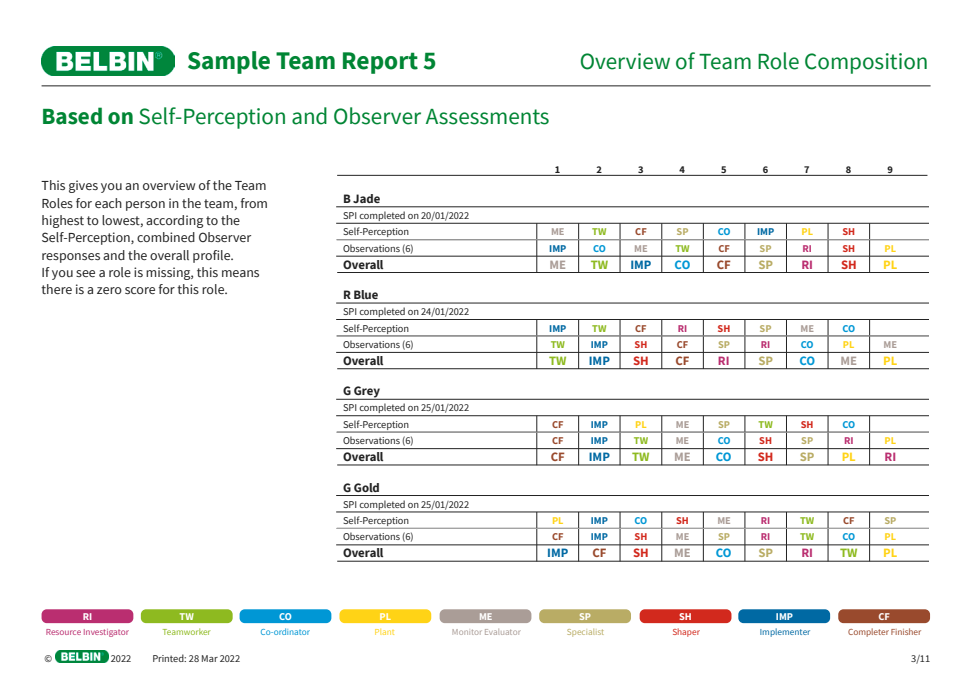
The Summary

The **Overview of Team Role Composition** page (for 3 or more people) provides a summary of each team member's Team Roles in order from highest to lowest, allowing you to see at a glance which Team Roles are prominent and which may be missing from the team.

For each person, the report shows the Self-Perception ranking, the combined views of Observers, and the overall combination of the two (in larger print), so you can see which team members have a good level of agreement between self and observers, as well as those cases where there are discrepancies.

As some of the other reports focus primarily on top Team Roles, this page can be useful to begin identifying patterns amongst manageable and lower roles.

In this example, the team's top Team Roles tend towards Teamworker, Implementer and Completer Finisher. Plant features frequently at the lower end of rankings, which may indicate a lack of these Team Roles within the team, or a dependency on one individual to fulfil these roles. Other report pages will provide more information on this subject.



BELBIN® **Sample Team Report 5** Overview of Team Role Composition

Based on Self-Perception and Observer Assessments

This gives you an overview of the Team Roles for each person in the team, from highest to lowest, according to the Self-Perception, combined Observer responses and the overall profile. If you see a role is missing, this means there is a zero score for this role.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
B Jade									
SPI completed on 20/01/2022									
Self-Perception	ME	TW	CF	SP	CO	IMP	PL	SH	
Observations (6)	IMP	CO	ME	TW	CF	SP	RI	SH	PL
Overall	ME	TW	IMP	CO	CF	SP	RI	SH	PL
R Blue									
SPI completed on 24/01/2022									
Self-Perception	IMP	TW	CF	RI	SH	SP	ME	CO	
Observations (6)	TW	IMP	SH	CF	SP	RI	CO	PL	ME
Overall	TW	IMP	SH	CF	RI	SP	CO	ME	PL
G Grey									
SPI completed on 25/01/2022									
Self-Perception	CF	IMP	PL	ME	SP	TW	SH	CO	
Observations (6)	CF	IMP	TW	ME	CO	SH	SP	RI	PL
Overall	CF	IMP	TW	ME	CO	SH	SP	PL	RI
G Gold									
SPI completed on 25/01/2022									
Self-Perception	PL	IMP	CO	SH	ME	RI	TW	CF	SP
Observations (6)	CF	IMP	SH	ME	SP	RI	TW	CO	PL
Overall	IMP	CF	SH	ME	CO	SP	RI	TW	PL

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

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Be aware… This report does not give you an indication of the relative strength of roles. For example, it does not tell us who is the stronger Implementer or Completer Finisher. Neither does it indicate the "distance" between Team Roles. Some individuals may have only a few percentile points separating their top three or four Team Roles, whereas others may have one strongest role which dominates.

Who should do what within the team?

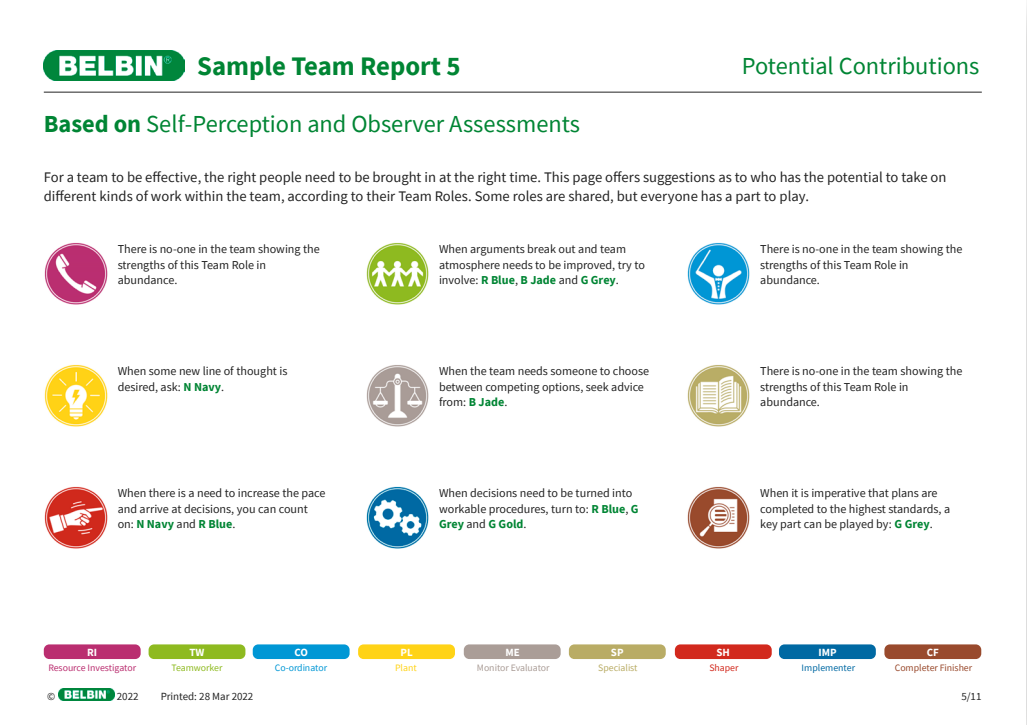
The **Potential Contributions** page (for 3-15 people) indicates how each person's Team Role contribution can best be used to make the team work most effectively.

For each Team Role, the strongest person in that role is named first. Each team member is given a role to play, with some roles shared by several people.

If the team does not include someone who can play a particular role to good effect, this is stated – in this example, the Resource Investigator, Co-ordinator and Specialist roles.

Depending on the purpose of the team, some Team Role contributions may not be required, so the absence of a particular role is not necessarily a cause for concern. For example, if a team has been given an idea for a new product idea which needs to be manufactured, it could be counter-productive to include a Plant in the team, who wants to create something new altogether and is unlikely to excel in routine work.

If the team identifies that a missing role is required, it is worth considering how that gap can be filled – can someone in the team make a "Team Role sacrifice" or should someone else be brought in from outside the team to provide a specific contribution? In this example, if the team in question was a project team, team members might decide to consult a subject expert for the relevant parts of the project. In other cases, an existing team member might be called upon to make a "Team Role sacrifice", cultivating one of their manageable roles to fill the gap. If there are no likely candidates, external recruitment might be another option.



BELBIN Sample Team Report 5 — Potential Contributions

Based on Self-Perception and Observer Assessments

For a team to be effective, the right people need to be brought in at the right time. This page offers suggestions as to who has the potential to take on different kinds of work within the team, according to their Team Roles. Some roles are shared, but everyone has a part to play.

There is no-one in the team showing the strengths of this Team Role in abundance.

When arguments break out and team atmosphere needs to be improved, try to involve: **R Blue**, **B Jade** and **G Grey**.

There is no-one in the team showing the strengths of this Team Role in abundance.

When some new line of thought is desired, ask: **N Navy**.

When the team needs someone to choose between competing options, seek advice from: **B Jade**.

There is no-one in the team showing the strengths of this Team Role in abundance.

When there is a need to increase the pace and arrive at decisions, you can count on: **N Navy** and **R Blue**.

When decisions need to be turned into workable procedures, turn to: **R Blue**, **G Grey** and **G Gold**.

When it is imperative that plans are completed to the highest standards, a key part can be played by: **G Grey**.

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

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Be aware… Although each person will be mentioned at least once in the report, some may feature more prominently than others, depending on the strength of individual Team Roles. If the allocation or balance looks set to create diplomatic difficulties, keep the report to one side. Using the Team Role statements, ask the team to discuss who should play each Team Role. For example, "Who do we need to maintain high standards?" Where there are differences between the report and the team's view, investigate how the team arrived at their decision.

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Gaps and overlaps

The **Team Role Circle** (for 3-15 people) provides a visual representation of the distribution of Team Roles in the team, showing at a glance where there may be gaps and overlaps in Team Role contribution.

You can produce this report using the **Top Two Team Roles** of each team member, or using only **Strong Examples of Team Roles**.

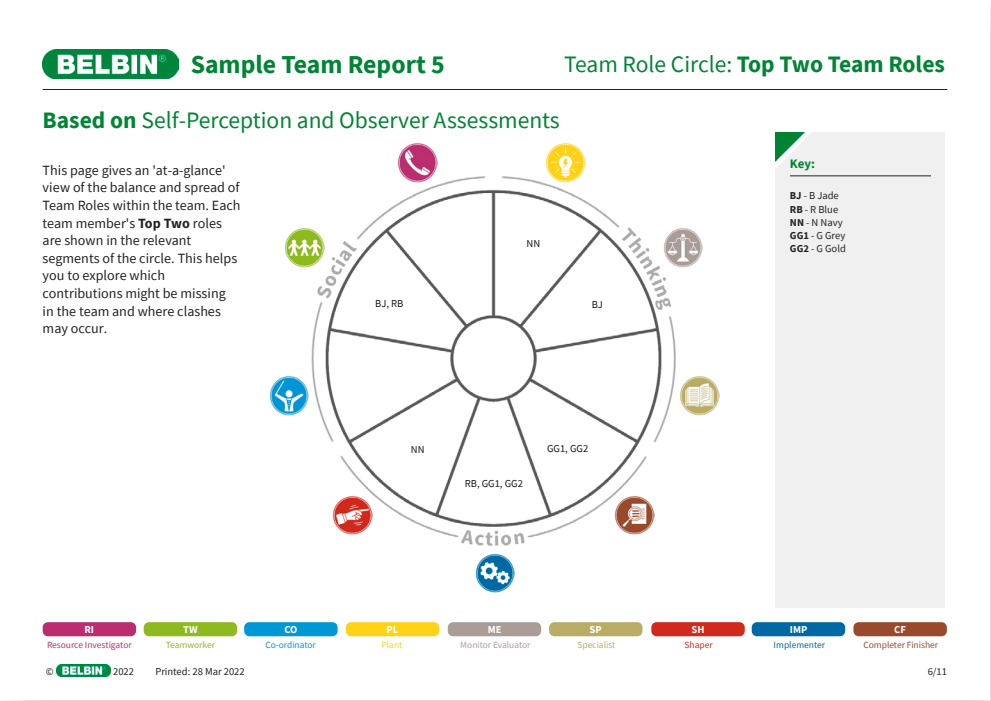
If you choose the first option, everyone in the team is represented, with their initials shown in the segments corresponding to their first and second Team Roles.

Team Roles are grouped into Thinking, Social and Action roles. Generally speaking, all three areas should be well represented, but when discussing the balance of roles, it is important to consider whether a particular role is actually required in this team, given its purpose and work.

In this team, there is a predominance of action roles and fewer social roles. (More detail on this balance is provided later in the report set.) There is no right or wrong, but it is up to the team and facilitator to investigate any potential impact this may have on the team.

Also, bear in mind that some Team Roles are better in smaller doses. A large number of Plants in a team will see too many ideas competing for airtime, and too many Shapers can lead to aggressive behaviour. Too many Specialists may become territorial, whilst an over-supply of Completer Finishers may tread on each other's toes, with each looking for the final "sign-off" on a piece of work.

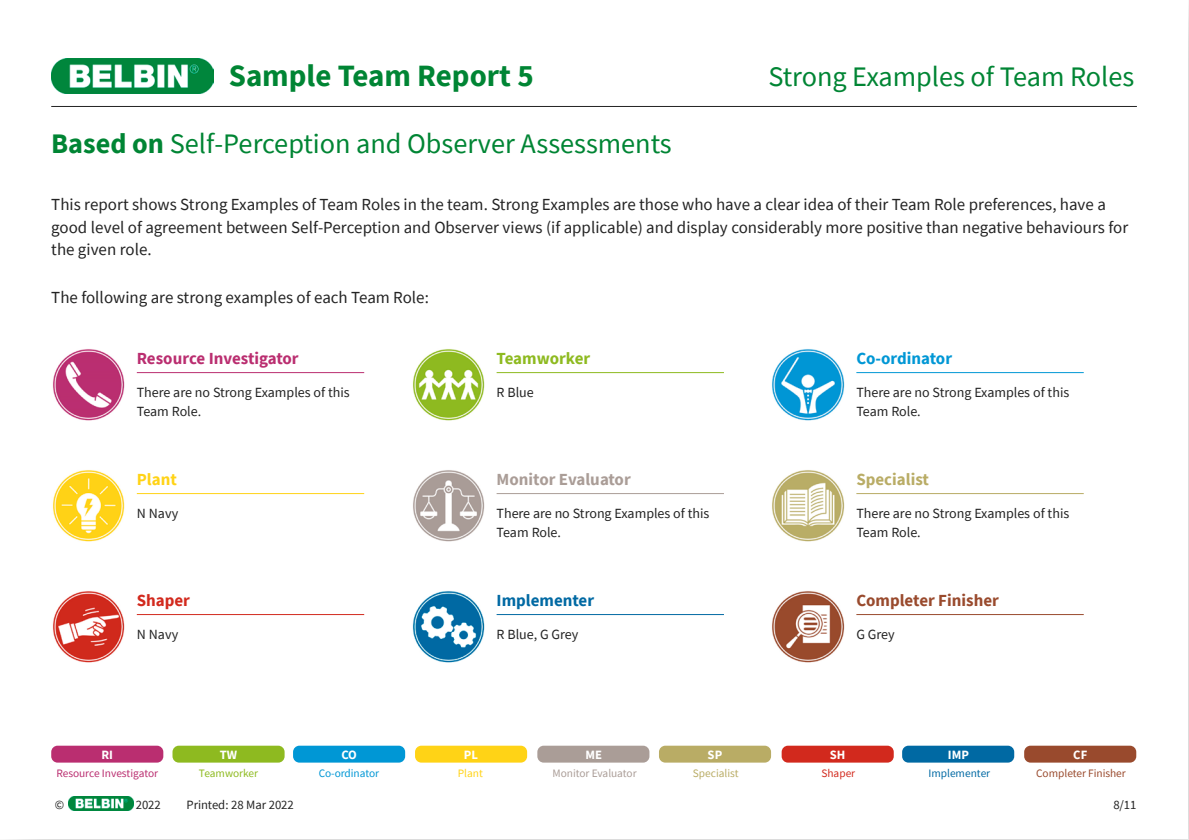
If relevant, you can also indicate each person's their lowest role, by adding their initials outside the relevant segment.



The second option is to produce this report page using **Strong Examples** of Team Roles. A strong example is someone who is able to play a particular Team Role to especially good effect. To qualify as a strong example, someone must: have a clear idea of their own Team Role preferences; announce and fulfil these preferences clearly so that Observers are in agreement, and display more positive than negative behaviours for that role.

This is important information, since you may have a team with four individuals with Implementer as their first or second role. However, perhaps only one is a strong example. In this case, he or she is the best choice to play the role for the team.

Be aware… By definition, a Strong Example is someone who is considerably stronger than average in that Team Role behaviour, so it is likely that only certain individuals in the team will feature as Strong Examples. In this case, BJ does not feature on the strong examples version of the report. As a result, you may consider it politic to keep this page for reference, rather than share it with the team.



BELBIN® **Sample Team Report 5** Strong Examples of Team Roles

Based on Self-Perception and Observer Assessments

This report shows Strong Examples of Team Roles in the team. Strong Examples are those who have a clear idea of their Team Role preferences, have a good level of agreement between Self-Perception and Observer views (if applicable) and display considerably more positive than negative behaviours for the given role.

The following are strong examples of each Team Role:

Resource Investigator
There are no Strong Examples of this Team Role.

Teamworker
R Blue

Co-ordinator
There are no Strong Examples of this Team Role.

Plant
N Navy

Monitor Evaluator
There are no Strong Examples of this Team Role.

Specialist
There are no Strong Examples of this Team Role.

Shaper
N Navy

Implementer
R Blue, G Grey

Completer Finisher
G Grey

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

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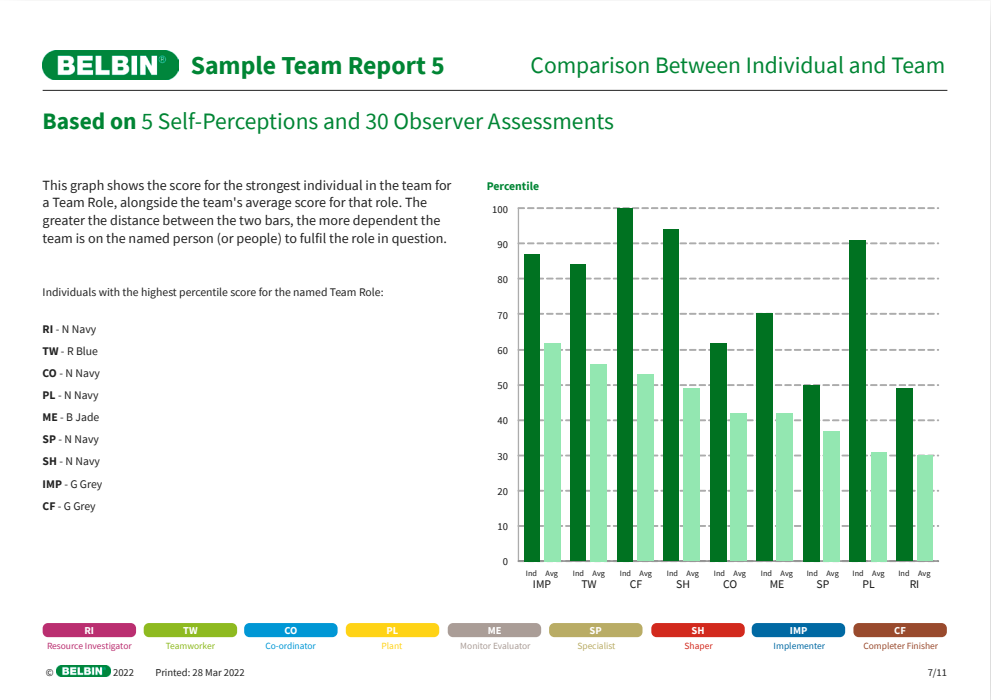
Team Role sacrifice and succession planning

The **Comparison Between Individual and Team** report page (for 3 or more people) shows, for each Team Role, the individual with the highest percentile score (the dark green bar) and the team average for that Team Role (the light green bar). The section to the left of the graph identifies the highest-scoring individual for each role – the individual whose percentile score is shown on the dark green bar.

Look at Team Roles for which the dark green bar is considerably longer than the light green bar. This indicates that the team is reliant on perhaps one individual to carry the team for a given role – in this example, N Navy in the Plant role.

If N Navy were to leave the team, Plant would be under-represented.

There may also be examples (as above) where the team is reliant on one person (N Navy) to play lots of roles, even when their percentile scores for some of the roles are not particularly high. In this case, it is worth exploring whether N Navy is being called on to make a Team Role sacrifice. If so, investigate whether this is done willingly and whether N Navy feels able to fulfil the role adequately. If no one else in the team is able to take on these roles, does the team need to recruit someone from elsewhere? Some succession planning may be required.



Be aware… This report indicates only the highest-scoring individual for each role, so some individuals in the team may not be included. This is worth bearing in mind if sharing this report page with the team.

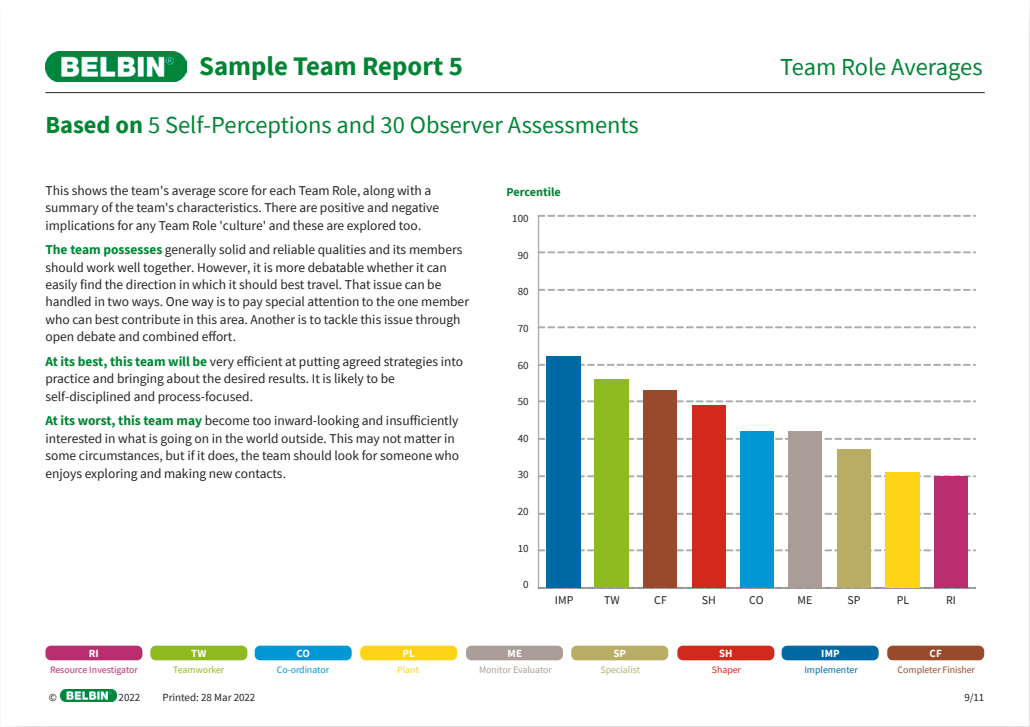
Exploring Team Culture

The **Team Role Averages** report page (for 3 or more people) gives an overview of Team Roles for a team, group or even organisation. It is usual for the percentiles for a team or group to be considerably lower than for an individual, since they are averages, incorporating all individual scores for a given Team Role.

The purpose of this page is to help the team to understand the prevailing culture and to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of it. In this example, Implementer and Teamworker are the most prominent roles. The first paragraph of the report describes a typical Implementer/ Teamworker culture.

The texts underneath the graph provide a “best case” and “worst case” scenario, based on the highest- and lowest-scoring Team Roles for the team or group. In this case, the team is likely to be reliable and systematic, but may be inward-looking and risk missing out on opportunities outside the team.

When looking at the roles in the middle of the graph, bear in mind that there may be a large number of people in the team with some propensity, or the team may be being “carried” by one or two people. To find out, please cross-reference with the **Comparison Between Individual and Team** report page. There is no absolute “cut-off point” which signifies that a Team Role is over- or under-represented. With a sufficient understanding of what is lacking, the role can be represented if necessary, whether by Team Role sacrifice or recruiting someone from outside the team.



BELBIN® **Sample Team Report 5** Team Role Averages

Based on 5 Self-Perceptions and 30 Observer Assessments

This shows the team's average score for each Team Role, along with a summary of the team's characteristics. There are positive and negative implications for any Team Role 'culture' and these are explored too.

The team possesses generally solid and reliable qualities and its members should work well together. However, it is more debatable whether it can easily find the direction in which it should best travel. That issue can be handled in two ways. One way is to pay special attention to the one member who can best contribute in this area. Another is to tackle this issue through open debate and combined effort.

At its best, this team will be very efficient at putting agreed strategies into practice and bringing about the desired results. It is likely to be self-disciplined and process-focused.

At its worst, this team may become too inward-looking and insufficiently interested in what is going on in the world outside. This may not matter in some circumstances, but if it does, the team should look for someone who enjoys exploring and making new contacts.

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

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Your team's brand

When looking at Team Role culture, the **Overall Observer Responses** report is also useful. This report combines scores for observer words for all members of the team or group. Words and phrases from List A of the Observer Assessment are shown in normal type; words and phrases from List B, in italics.

The words which emerge at the top characterise the team or group as a whole and could be used to begin a discussion about values and mission.

If there is a predominance of words and phrases in italics at the top of the list, the list can make a useful discussion starter for the team around managing associated weaknesses and creating a more positive team or group culture.

BELBIN® **Sample Team Report 5** Overall Observer Responses

Based on 30 Observer Assessments

This list comprises the words and phrases Observers ticked when completing team members' Observer Assessments, in descending order, with words for associated weaknesses shown in italics.

helpful	30	outgoing	16	free-thinking	9	*uninvolved with specifics*	3
caring	29	realistic	15	inquisitive	9	*inflexible*	3
encouraging of others	28	disciplined	15	willing to adapt	9	*pushy*	3
accurate	26	efficient	15	*fussy*	8	*territorial*	3
outspoken	25	broad in outlook	14	*impulsive*	8	*over-delegating*	2
conscious of priorities	25	consultative	13	original	8	*inconsistent*	2
methodical	24	hard-driving	12	diplomatic	8	*reluctant to allocate work*	2
reliable	24	perceptive	12	inventive	7	*impatient*	2
practical	22	confident and relaxed	12	persuasive	7	*frightened of failure*	2
dedicated to subject	22	*confrontational*	11	*over-talkative*	6	*fearful of conflict*	2
analytical	22	competitive	11	*engrossed in own area*	6	studious	2
meticulous	21	self-reliant	11	*restricted in outlook*	5	*oblivious*	1
logical	19	shrewd	10	*over-sensitive*	5	*eccentric*	1
challenging	18	enterprising	10	seizes opportunities	5	*procrastinating*	1
persevering	18	motivated by learning	10	creative	5	*unenthusiastic*	0
perfectionist	16	*resistant to change*	9	*unadventurous*	4	*manipulative*	0
keen to impart expertise	16	*sceptical*	9	imaginative	4	*absent-minded*	0
corrects errors	16	tough	9	impartial	4	*indecisive*	0

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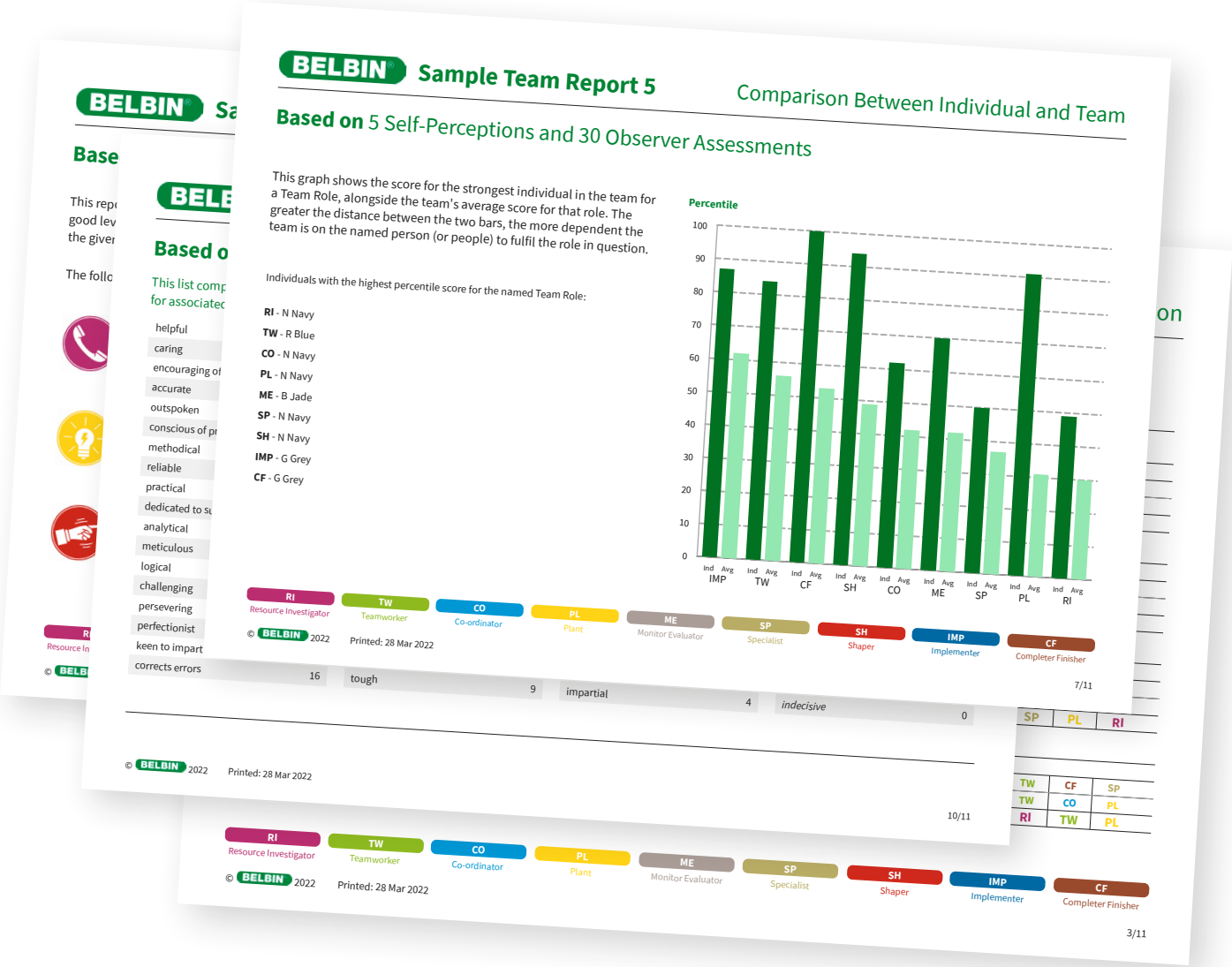
Handle with care

Team reports can be powerful tools to explore potential problems and help the team to work more effectively, using the language of Team Roles. However, they are intended to provide suggestions, not to be prescriptive. A team is dynamic and changes as individuals gain greater self-awareness and adapt to arising needs. In order to have greatest impact, the Team report should be used as a starting point for discussions – a working document which develops in consultation with the team itself.

Each report page can be useful for showing the team or group in a different light. When reviewing each page, have a clear vision as to how to use it for the benefit of the team. In some cases, there may be a risk that the information may do more harm than good – for example, if individuals are likely to feel threatened or excluded. In this situation, it may be more appropriate to keep the relevant report pages for your own reference and encourage the team to arrive at the information through exercises and discussion, rather than sharing the report with the team in its entirety.



The only sanctioned way of finding out your Belbin® Team Role strengths and weaknesses is by completing the official Belbin® Self-Perception Inventory online, and receiving a Belbin® Individual report.

Over 3 million Belbin® reports have been generated worldwide for individuals, managers, teams and organisations.
We can help you every step of the way.

Contact us at belbin.com to start your Belbin® journey.

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