



BELBIN[®]

Management

A Belbin Team Role Guide to Managing your Team when no-one is in the office

There is a distinct possibility that 'a work from home' policy may come into force sometime soon.

As a manager, are you ready?

You may have the right IT setup in place and phones on divert, but managing virtual working is much more than this. Is your management ready to go virtual? Are you heading for a team of virtuosos or a virtual nightmare reality?

When your team aren't in the office, what can you do to motivate them? How should you communicate and how frequently? Should you wait for your team to get in touch, or should you be chasing them for updates and issuing

deadline reminders? And how do you handle the strain virtual working can place on communication and keep the human touch?

Whilst our Team Role behaviours may not change when we are working separately, altering the lines of communication can throw obstacles in the team's path, and some are likely to adapt more readily to remote working than others. So, extra care is needed in managing those behaviours and ensuring that everyone can still give of their best.

Managing each Belbin Team Role behaviour remotely – your rough guide

Of course, we've simplified things a bit. Each of us has more than one Team Role strength, and the way our preferred roles interact present nuances in our working styles. But here's a starting-point when considering the benefits and potential pitfalls of each role in a virtual scenario.



Completer Finisher Team Role behaviour

When managing a virtual Completer Finisher, providing clarity around priorities and deadlines is key. Since they aren't the most effective delegators or time-managers, it would be wise to check in on a regular basis. In addition, Completer Finishers tend to experience high anxiety levels. Why not ask the Teamworker to keep an eye on them?

There may be a tendency for the rest of the team to overload the Completer Finisher with work. ("Could you just check this through for me?") This could cause problems, so ensure that everyone is aware of the ground rules in this regard



Resource Investigator Team Role behaviour

They're not in the office much anyway, so you should be quite used to managing them from a distance. However, with events and meetings cancelled, there's a risk they might find themselves at a loose end or go completely off the radar. Encourage regular check-ins, but don't press for too much detail.

They're likely to prefer a phone or Skype call, but ensure that you're in control. Resource Investigators are often over-talkative and may not let the rest of the team get a word in. Without the social cues on which we rely when we share the same space, you'll need to be firm.



Co-ordinator Team Role behaviour

Co-ordinators are wonderful at engaging others and ensuring that everyone has their say. However, ensure they do not take advantage and delegate more than their fair share. Regular contact via email and phone is required. Give them the role of chair in any virtual meetings and make sure they address the challenges of remote teamworking explicitly, to allow any arising difficulties to be aired and resolved.

Their calm and confident manner can also help to quell any rising panic that may occur. Ask them to insert a sense of perspective if things start spiralling.



Plant Team Role behaviour

Plants prefer to work alone – they come up with the ideas for the team to take forward. So, leave them to it... up to a point. Give them questions and problems to solve, and plenty of encouragement. But check in gently, to see if they are still on-track – their attention may have wandered if a new idea has piqued their interest. And don't expect an immediate response to email if they are engrossed in problem-solving. A phone call may be preferable.

Remember, a Plant can be sensitive to criticism of their ideas, so if you are a high Shaper, Implementer or Monitor Evaluator, try and adopt a less task-focused or critical approach. Allow them space to communicate.



Teamworker Team Role behaviour

Teamworkers are proficient communicators. They are diplomatic, perceptive, and are probably going to struggle if they feel cut off from others.

Give them a role that enables them to keep in touch with the rest of the team. Maybe they could send a daily (or twice-daily) email 'checker' to find out how everyone is doing? Perhaps they could instigate a short social chat online? Whilst you might be tempted to skip this part when the pressure is on, remember that it is key to maintaining trust in unusual circumstances.

Keep in touch by phone and remember: they will be the first ones to tell you when someone else has a problem.



Shaper Team Role behaviour

This could be tricky as Shapers like to be the loudest in the room. When they are by themselves, who will stop and listen? They may start making demands by all available means – phone calls and emails – to ensure that no-one is slacking or taking their eye off the ball.

They could alienate the rest of the team – their email style is likely to be blunt and to-the-point. Normally, the team wouldn't take this too personally (an effective Shaper is good-humoured enough to get everyone back onside) but without the social interaction, relationships could be tense.

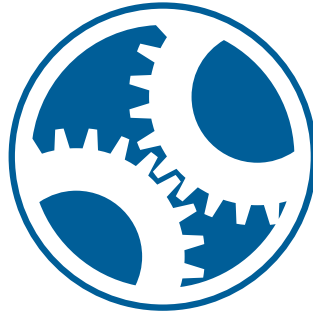
Make sure that you keep your promises and respond in a timely fashion. The Resource Investigator is the best to deal with the Shaper behaviour in this situation – why not give them a joint project?



Monitor Evaluator Team Role behaviour

They much prefer to work by themselves – at last, they will have time to sit back and reflect on the best course of action without the rest of the team constantly at their door. To that extent, Monitor Evaluators are fairly easy to manage remotely. However, they do tend to over-analyse. There is a risk that this tendency could go unchecked and slow progress to a standstill.

Keep in touch, ask for updates. Do not ignore. Remember, although Monitor Evaluators may not give you the answers you want, they are usually the answers you need.



Implementer Team Role behaviour

The Implementer is the one you can rely on to carry on as normal. Reliable and hardworking to the core, the Implementer will take a different working environment in their stride. However, processes will have to be adapted or changed, so ensure they are aware of this.

They will appreciate being given responsibility for organising new processes – or anything that will appeal to their practical proclivities. Keep in touch via email. Put together a spreadsheet you can talk through.



Specialist Team Role behaviour

Like the Plant, Specialists thrive when they are by themselves. Ensure that you have given them an area of research they can delve into, but don't forget to check in – you'll want to disseminate any salient findings to the rest of the team.

Communication via email is probably best, but ensure that you ask very specific questions to minimise the probability of receiving information overload in return.

The ties that bind

Of course, it isn't all down to you as manager. In order to operate effectively in challenging and rapidly-changing environments, your team members need to be aware of their own – and each other's – strengths, so they know who to call on, and where and how to make allowances for one another.

At Belbin, we believe in empowering teams with an accessible language to articulate and explore their behaviours, as well as practical, applicable advice on how the team works. Armed with this knowledge, teams can gain confidence in their individual and collective abilities, and build the kind of trust that holds strong even when they're apart.

Good luck! We're here to help – maybe now is a good opportunity to 'Belbin' your team? Get in touch today.