

BUILD AN EFFECTIVE TEAM

Balancing personalities is crucial to a good team dynamic, says Nicola Davies

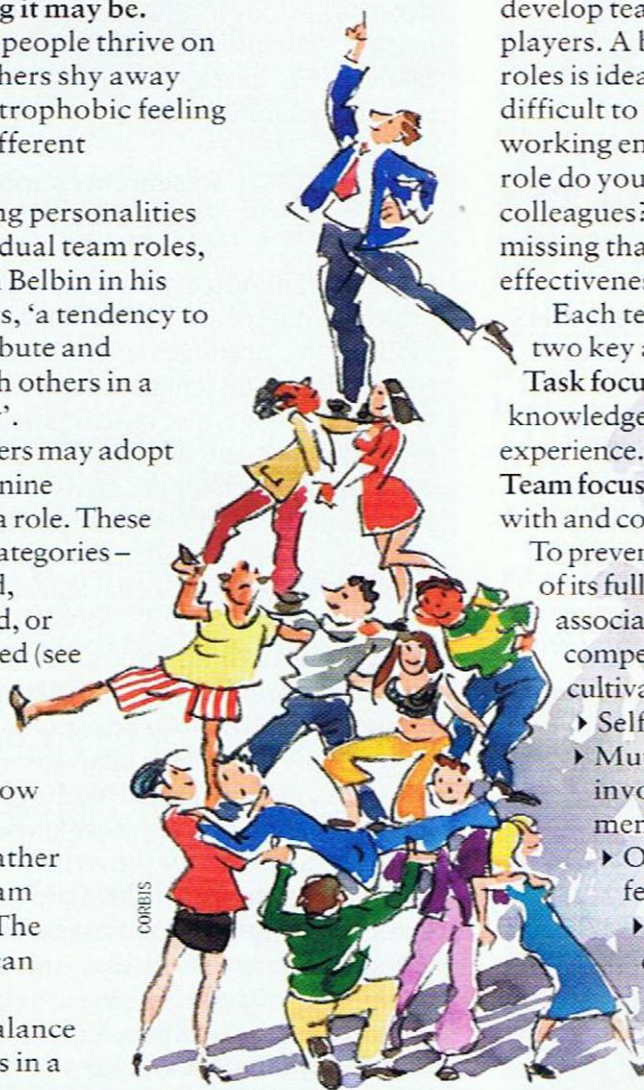
All nurses will work as part of a team at some point in their careers, however loosely or close-knit, well functioning or malfunctioning it may be.

While some people thrive on team work, others shy away from the claustrophobic feeling of a team of different personalities.

Such differing personalities result in individual team roles, or as Meredith Belbin in his classic text says, 'a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way'.

Team members may adopt one or more of nine approaches to a role. These fall into three categories – action-oriented, people-oriented, or thought-oriented (see box above).

These categories demonstrate how people can complement rather than hinder team effectiveness. The classification can also be used to consider the balance of personalities in a



team before a project starts, as well as to manage interpersonal differences in an existing team. Even better, it can be used to develop team members as team players. A balance of all nine roles is ideal, although very difficult to achieve in a busy working environment. Which role do you fall into? And your colleagues? Is there a role missing that could enhance the effectiveness of the team?

Each team member brings two key attributes:
Task focus Specialist knowledge, qualifications, experience.

Team focus The way they work with and contribute to the group. To prevent a team falling short of its full potential, factors associated with group competence need to be cultivated. These include:

- ▶ Self-awareness.
- ▶ Mutual goals and involvement by members.
- ▶ Open discussion of feelings and conflicts.
- ▶ Consensus on decisions.

By addressing these components and bringing the tips

Increasing team effectiveness

- ▶ Be friendly and responsive to other team members.
- ▶ Encourage and make it possible for all members to contribute to the team.
- ▶ Praise others for good ideas.
- ▶ Set standards the team can use in choosing or evaluating tasks and decisions.
- ▶ Thoughtfully accept the ideas of others.
- ▶ Contribute to team meetings.
- ▶ Be an attentive audience when others are talking.

in the box above into your teamwork, interactions between team members can be managed. Ineffective teams usually include several phenomena:

- ▶ Group think: everyone suppresses their real views to maintain group harmony.
- ▶ Star complexes: some people vie for the spotlight.
- ▶ Wallflowers: people who are non-contributors.

As a manager, your primary role in the team is to get the best out of each member.

Management style often falls into one of three types: authoritarian (seeks obedience); democratic (presents as equal with other members); and *laissez-faire* (leaves team to its own devices). Each offers benefits under the right circumstances, but sometimes it is simply a matter of trial and error when deciding the best style for the team **NS**

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Team roles

Role type	Personality	Role behaviour
Action-oriented	Shaper	Challenges the team to improve
	Implementer	Acts on ideas
	Completer	Ensures efficient completion
People-oriented	Co-ordinator	Acts as chair
	Team worker	Encourages co-operation
	Resource investigator	Explores outside opportunities
Thought-oriented	Plant	Presents new ideas
	Monitor-evaluator	Analyses options
	Specialist	Provides specialised skills

Source: Belbin RM (1993) Team Roles at Work. Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford