# 4. Roles and role expectations

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#### Objectives

At the end of the session, you will

* have familiarised yourself with the key functional roles in virtual intercultural teams as well as the expectations linked to these roles
* be able to explain the competencies required to fulfil these roles

## 4.1 Introduction

Working in a team necessarily means managing differences among individual team members, regardless of how diverse the team is. We saw in session 3 how complex the process of transforming a group of individuals into a well-functioning team can be. This, however, can only work when we take individuals' differences into consideration.

### Task: Diversity factors

In the first session, "Virtual teamwork in my work environment", we discussed a case study which focussed on Thiago and his team of IT / sales people in Brazil. One of the subsequent questions referred to the level of diversity. This led to the observation that even though the whole team came from the same region and spoke the same language, there can still be a high level of diversity in the team. Can you remember some of the variables we mentioned there? Try to remember three diversity factors we have already discussed here – without looking them up – and write them down in your learning journal.

###### Sample answer

**1. A difference of goals**

Even though Thiago's entire team had the obvious common goal of developing a new customer management software, some people within the team might have the goal to make it work with as little latency and hardware requirements as possible, whereas others in the team might focus on having the new system out as soon as possible, and iron the little bugs in the system afterward. To ensure that the team works well, it is important to ensure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to setting the goals and milestones for the project.

**2. Personal priorities**

There can also be differences in personal priorities: some people in the team might view this project as an important milestone for their career, and are willing to spend many overtime hours on it. Others on the other hand might not be as motivated by it, and see their work-life-balance as far more important, for example when they have children at home to take care of, or see their job solely as a means to pay the bills. When these differences are not discussed, it can lead to frustration when some are doing more for the project's success, while others might have other priorities.

**3. Knowledge and skills**

In addition to the points mentioned in session 1, the team leader will also need to consider whether the team members have the individual skills or the knowledge to get the job done. What skills and know-how did the team members start with, and what do they individually need to get their jobs done? It is important here to devise individual learning and development plans to ensure those are in place.

All of these factors need to be considered when working within a team, and the respective managers would be well advised to address these issues either in periodical face-to-face discussions, team meetings, or anonymous team surveys.

For this session, however, we will focus on a different, but crucial dimension of individual diversity: the individual (informal) roles of the team members. While some of us are great at coming up with ideas, others might be good organisers. In this context, we will discuss the possible strengths and weaknesses of the individual team members and how to deal with these.

#### Download: Learning journal for session 4

[Learning journal (.docx)](https://edubox.consilia-cct.com/documents/Learning-Journal-VIT-04.docx) [Learning journal (.odt)](https://edubox.consilia-cct.com/documents/Learning-Journal-VIT-04.odt) [Learning journal (.rtf)](https://edubox.consilia-cct.com/documents/Learning-Journal-VIT-04.rtf)

## 4.2 Introducing roles as a factor for diversity

We all play many different roles every day, with different responsibilities. The fact that we maintain relationships with many different people, and our attention is divided between a whole range of disparate but important tasks in our lives means that we sometimes need to adapt our behaviour in order to fulfil these roles. However, we might feel differently in our roles as friends than we do as daughters or sons. We might enjoy the role of being a volunteer for an important cause more than being a company employee, or one of many students at a university. We are likely to behave differently in each of these roles, and even our voice and body posture might change, for example when we talk on the phone to our bosses, parents or friends. This might lead us to wonder who 'we' are. The fact is, we are all complex beings, capable of taking on many different roles at the same time. Some of our roles, of course, will be more natural to us than others.

Take for example Ghazal. She is a single mom who raises a teenage son. Ghazal works as a software developer in a large cooperation located in the centre of town and is currently in the process of building a home for herself, her son and her father. In addition, she has friends who she has known since her days at university.

Look at the picture below and consider some of the different roles she has. The roles she enjoys most are marked in red.

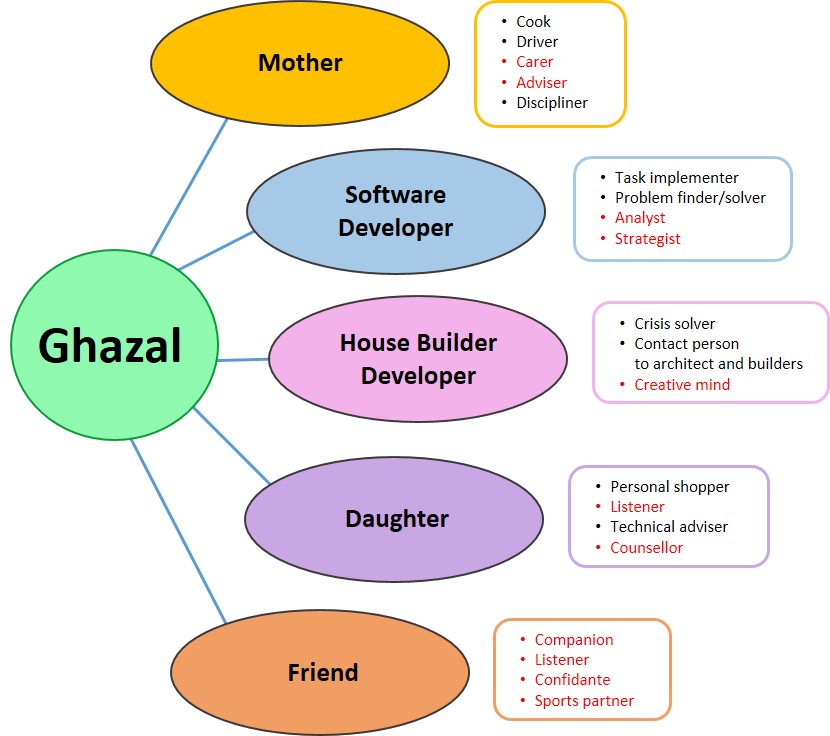


Figure developed by Thu Phong Vuong for this course

### Task: A variety of roles

1. Refer to the map in the learning journal and fill it out for yourself. In order to do this, take some time now to consider three to four roles you play in your life. Mark your most enjoyable roles in one particular colour, and the ones you find more challenging or taxing in another colour.
2. If you find some roles easier than others, then ask yourself: What might be the reasons for this? What could be important factors that influence how easy or enjoyable a role is in comparison to others? Note down these reflections in your learning journal.

We can see that all of us play a wide range of roles every day. So why is it that we find fulfilling some roles easier than others? We might find taking on roles in a student organisation, for example, or as a volunteer, or even as a friend, easier because these are usually roles that we pick ourselves. They play into our strengths and interests and may also be more in line with our self-image.

## 4.3 The function of team roles in work teams

The idea of team roles was developed by Meredith Belbin. Just as we saw in the previous exercise that we inherit and take up different roles in our lives, we also do this in work teams. And just as we often feel better about roles that play to our strengths and interests away from work, the same is true in teams.

Belbin carried out a number of studies to determine the success or failure of teams in the late 60s. In these tests, teams were put together to observe the process and results of their performance. Psychometric tests were conducted with the individual team members, and the teams assembled according to those test results. The general expectation was that the teams with the intellectually highest test results would do best in these team tests. However, this proved not to be the case. On the contrary, in most instances, these teams regularly received the lowest test results. Intrigued by this repetitive result, he observed that apparently, those (...) team members had spent a large part of their time engaged in abortive debate, trying to persuade the other members of the team to adopt their own particular, well-stated point of view. No one seemed to convert another or be converted." (Belbin, p. 15). According to Belbin, this result can be explained by the educational system and a culture that exerts pressure on intelligent people, as they would be constantly judged by their scholastic pre-eminence, not to come in second. "In other words, overconcentration on coming top of the class provides an unconscious training in anti-teamwork."

If intelligence and creativity are not the decisive factors that determine a team's success, then what is it? Before we answer this question, let us go through our next exercise.

### Task: Team diversity – a risk or an asset?

Imagine we take 10 random teams and rate them according to the level of their cultural diversity (according to our open culture concept from session 2). On the left of the scale, we have very homogeneous teams with little diversity, meaning for example that the team members are a similar age, come from the same region, speak the same language and have experienced similar socialisation paths. On the right, we have teams with a higher level of cultural diversity.

Please answer the following questions in your learning journal:

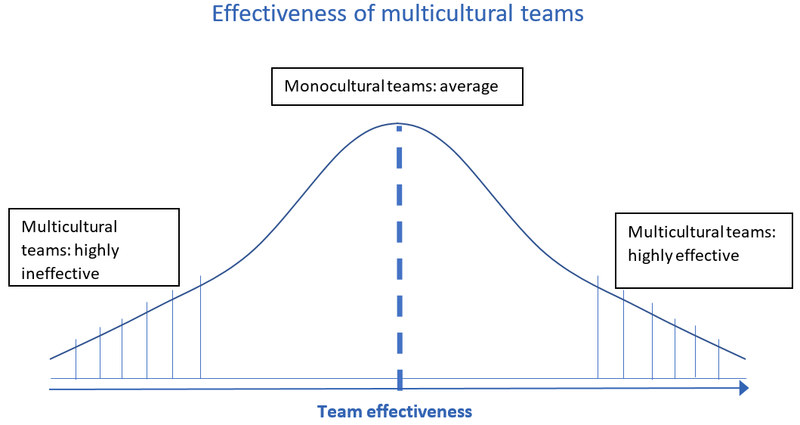
1. If we assume ceteris paribus (all things being equal) for this theoretical thought experiment, which teams will be more successful in reaching their goal? Or put in another way, would you assume that a high level of diversity is an asset for a team, or more a risk factor?  
   Please elaborate on your answer.
2. Depending on your answer to question 1:

If you answered that highly diverse in teams is more of a risk, then ask yourself: What would have to happen to turn it into an asset?

If you answered that a high level of diversity is rather an asset, then consider: Under which circumstances could this asset turn into a risk?

###### Sample answer

The right answer to this question – as is true for so many questions – is "it depends". According to research from Dr. Carol Kovach and Nancy Adler, we can assume the following distribution when comparing the performances of differently diverse teams:



Source: Based on the research of Dr. Carol Kovach and Nancy J. Adler (1991). International dimensions of organizational behavior, 2nd edition, Boston: PWS-Kent Publishing

As we can see, what the researchers found out is that compared to rather monocultural teams, some multicultural teams tended to be more effective while others tended to be less effective. They are on both sides of the extremes, compared to the average monocultural teams. Without going deeper into the research methods and acquired data, one lesson we can take is that diversity has the potential to be a high asset for every team. However, if high diversity teams are not able to tap into diversity as a resource, it might turn out to be a risk factor.

Thus, returning to our initial question of what makes out highly successful teams, one answer we can give is: teams that tap into their diversity as a resource.

Now let us return to the research conducted by Meredith Belbin. According to Belbin, the diversity within a team is not only limited to differences in gender, age or national backgrounds. Rather, he focuses on a variety of traits and capabilities within every team member. According to his study, we all have different traits when working within a team. Depending on the situation, each of these traits can become either a strength or a liability. He initially suggested eight, and later nine roles which should be present in every team in order to perform well. Not all of these roles have to be taken up by different individuals. Just as we often take on different roles in our lives, it is also quite possible to assume a variety of roles in a team.

### Task: Team roles test

1. For an initial introduction to team roles, please click on the link below to go to the 'Team roles test' website. In this test you will be presented with a series of word pairs referring to different activities or qualities (e.g. 'Practical' / 'Critical', 'Orderly' / Communicative' etc.). You will be asked to choose the one closest to you. Based on your answers, you will then be presented with an example of a possible team role that might be close to you.

<https://www.123test.com/team-roles-test/>

1. Your results will be shown in the form of a pie-chart, with your scores in the nine different team roles. Read through the description of the two roles in which you scored the highest, and answer the following questions: Which of the statements describing these roles would you confirm? Which ones would you refute?

Also, read through the two roles in which you achieved the lowest score. Would you agree that these roles indeed do not describe you very well?

Please note down the answers to these questions in your learning journal.

The idea of these exercises was to give you a first impression of what these team roles might look like, and how they might relate to you. The nine roles that Belbin suggested are slightly different, but nevertheless quite close to the ones you saw in your test.

## 4.4 Understanding team roles

The table below describes the strengths, allowable weaknesses and possible function of every role. In the leftmost column you can find the role that best corresponds with the one suggested to you by the team role test that you took in the previous section.

Click on the image (if necessary, hold down the Ctrl key while clicking on it) to enlarge the table or [click here to download the table as a pdf document](https://edubox.consilia-cct.com/documents/vit-4-4-table-team-roles.pdf).

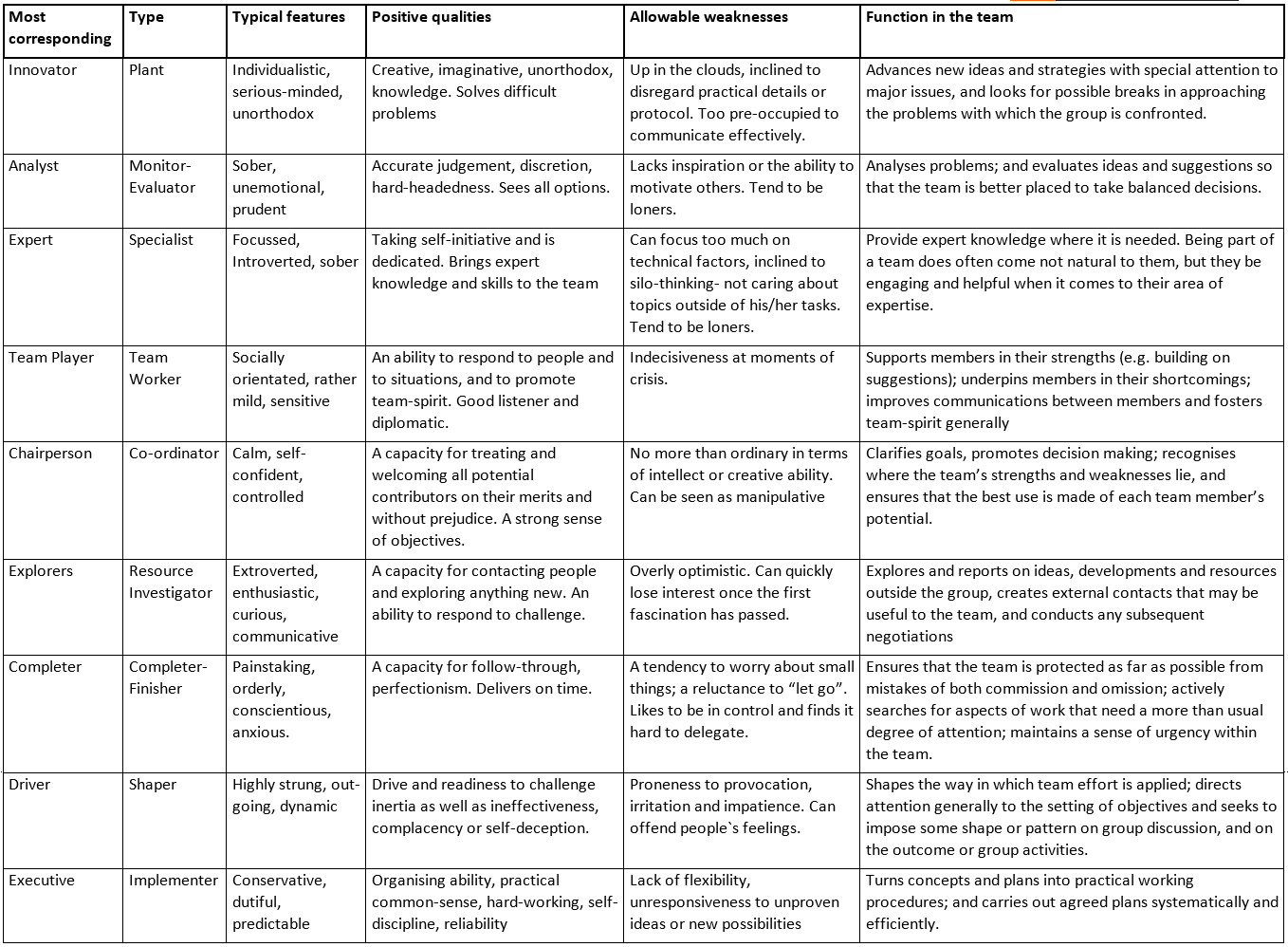
[](https://edubox.consilia-cct.com/pictures/images/vit-4-4-table-team-roles.jpg)

Table developed by Thu Phong Vuong for this course

### Task: Three areas of team roles

The nine roles that we have seen can be categorised into three areas:

The first category of roles focuses on **action**: These roles are about making sure the team stays motivated and that things get done.

The next group of roles has a **people**-orientation: These roles make sure that people inside and outside of the team feel connected and are in the right place.

The third group has a **thought**-orientation: These members of the team make sure that there are enough ideas and knowledge in the team in order to come up with good solutions and to avoid mistakes.

Which team role would you place in which area? You should come up with three roles for each. Please move the groups of team roles into the correct area.

You can access this interactive exercise on the Glocal Campus course,

URL: <https://glocal-campus.org/mod/page/view.php?id=1524#task-areas-of-team-roles>

Figure developed by Thu Phong Vuong for this course

### Task: Case "Creative ideas – not appreciated"

Erastus works as a Human Resource manager of a small start-up company. He loves coming up with new ideas and working with his HR team to set them in motion. However, he feels differently at board meetings when he is with his fellow managers. Often when he suggests new ideas for a process, his colleagues roll their eyes or change the topic. Sometimes he feels like his natural creativity here is not valued. A further source of frustration for him is that the team often loses itself in technicalities, rather than asking themselves the big questions, and embarking on new paths.

At a team-building workshop, his team undergoes the Belbin assessment tests, and he learns that he scores high on the "Plant" scale. He finds this interesting but is not sure how this helps him in finding a better way to deal with this team.

Please help Erastus here and answer the following questions in your learning journal:

1. Why does Erastus feel frustrated at the board meetings as a "plant"?
2. What should his team understand about him? What are the dangers for the whole team when Erastus cannot live out his team role?
3. What could the team leader do to ensure that she / he implements Erastus’ strengths in the team, and deal with the weaknesses he might have?

###### Sample answer

**1. Why does Erastus feel frustrated at the board meetings as a plant?**

Team members who identify as "Plants" according to the Belbin team roles, often enjoy coming up with new and creative ideas. They do not necessarily want to see all of the ideas implemented but feel validated if their ideas are appreciated and at least discussed. Erastus might feel taxed because his team seems to be rather irritated by his constant influx of ideas.

**2. What should his team understand about him? What are the dangers for the whole team when Erastus cannot live out his role in it?**

His team would need to understand that Erastus does not need to see all ideas fulfilled, but still needs a space to develop. We could see that while Erastus is a creative mind who loves to come up with new ideas, his team might feel taxed when they feel they don’t get anything done, with Erastus constantly pitching in new suggestions instead of following up on current thoughts. Erastus' weakness then is that he might lose interest quickly in a day-to-day business discussion and that he feels offended when people do not appreciate his creativity.

Often, the team mates we have the largest conflicts with are the people that are most different to us in terms of competencies and interests. In this case, Erastus does not understand how his colleagues could not be excited to try out new ways, but instead cling to the old processes. He is frustrated as he does not see the use that can sometimes come from not constantly "reinventing the wheel". His colleagues, on the other hand, might feel taxed by Erastus because they feel he takes up too much time and energy in trying to change proven tracks. They do not see the value in coming up with more innovative ways. The fact is: we often feel most frustrated by the people that would also complement our weakness the most. If the team should lose someone like Erastus, as they do not appreciate his innovative drive enough, they might miss his ideas when the markets change or the pressure for innovation becomes stronger. Conflicts amongst very different roles within a team will most likely rise when the team is pressured to perform, or in the storming period, when the team is being formed as discussed in session 3.

**3. What could the team leader do to ensure she / he implements Erastus' strengths in the team and to deal with the weaknesses he has?**

One possibility of dealing with this is to give Erastus some place to develop his ideas where it does not disturb the working flow of the team. She / He could mention in a team meeting: "Thank you Erastus for your suggestions here. I am sorry that we do not have the time today to discuss these new ideas, as our task today is more focussed on the consolidation of the process so far. It would be great if you could send me a list of suggestions these next days. We could then go over them together, and make some suggestions together at the next board meeting."

## 4.5 Applying the team roles for our self-awareness

In this section we would like to take our conception of team roles one step further and see how we can apply it to gain a better understanding of ourselves and our behaviour in teams.

### Task: Strengths and allowable weaknesses in your team roles

Look at the two corresponding roles from the 'team roles test' in section 4.3 where you scored highest. Also, look at the two roles where you scored lowest. Read the additional descriptions and write down in your learning journal which roles can be ascribed to you according to Belbin's table of roles. From these 4 descriptions, write down 3 strengths you believe you have in a team, and 2 allowable weaknesses. You are of course also free to read through the other descriptions and take some strengths and weaknesses from there that you believe might describe you better.

Here is one example to clarify the task. Let us say you scored highest as *team player* and *co-ordinator*, and lowest in *completer-finisher* and *resource-investigator*. Some of the strengths and weaknesses you take from the roles could be:

3 strengths:

1. I am a good listener and can bring people together
2. I am good at judging people´s strengths
3. I usually stay calm and self-controlled in stressful situations

2 possible weaknesses:

1. I sometimes tend to be indecisive
2. I am not the most creative person

Please note: Do not feel boxed-in or categorized after the assessments from the tasks "Team roles test" and "3 areas of team roles". The goal is not that you now identify yourself solely as a "Coordinator" or "Specialist". What is important to keep in mind is that we all have traits and behaviours that come naturally to us. All of those can be strengths in some situations, and challenges in others. One of the main purposes of discussing team roles is to give you a basis for self-reflection, i.e. what are your traits and natural behaviours, and therefore which strengths or risks can we deduce from these in a team context?

### Task: Your own experiences with strengths and weaknesses in teamwork

Reflect on the teams you have worked in so far. These could be project teams at school, university, during internships, or at your workplace. Sports teams are only suitable when you believe the roles discussed in this module are relevant.

Please note down your answers to the questions below in your learning journal.

1. Look at your list of strengths and weaknesses that you noted down in the previous task "Strengths and allowable weaknesses in your team roles". If you connect them to the teams you have part of so far, which examples can you find where these strengths and weaknesses might have been apparent? Try to come up with at least two examples of a strength, and one example of a weakness. Describe the situations, considering: Who was involved? How did you act or behave? What were the consequences when you were able to display a strength of yours? What were the consequences when you encountered a possible personal weakness in a team role?

2. What can you do to ensure that you increasingly act in a way that maximises your strengths? How can you deal with situations when your traits become a challenge?

## 4.6 Applying team roles in work teams

#### Using team roles to put teams together

Why is it important to factor in team roles when designing teams? According to Belbin (Belbin, 2010 p. 26), today's organizations tend to suffer from a so-called “cloning culture”. Managers tend to recruit or advance staff who are similar to them. Even entire organisations can have a certain culture or reputation that draws a certain kind of personality to them. The danger here is that it might become increasingly difficult to create diverse teams where the team members actually supplement each other's strengths and weaknesses. In session two we discussed the fact that multicultural teams don´t necessarily have to be diverse, but it can be strongly beneficial to team performance. In research from consulting firm Boston Consulting Group, we learn one possible reason for this, especially in leadership teams.

*Increasing the diversity of leadership teams leads to more and better innovation and improved financial performance. In both developing and developed economies, companies with above-average diversity on their leadership teams report a greater payoff from innovation and higher EBIT margins.*

*[...]  
For company leaders, this is a clear path to creating a more innovative organization. People with different backgrounds and experiences often see the same problem in different ways and come up with different solutions, increasing the odds that one of those solutions will be a hit. In a fast-changing business environment, such responsiveness leaves companies better positioned to adapt.*

*[...]*

*We surveyed employees at more than 1,700 companies in eight countries (Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Switzerland, and the US) across a variety of industries and company sizes. (…) We looked at perceptions of diversity at the management level across six dimensions—gender, age, nation of origin (meaning employees born in a country other than the one in which the company is headquartered), career path, industry background, and education (meaning employees’ focus of study in college or graduate school). To gauge a company’s level of innovation, we looked at the percentage of total revenue from new products and services launched over the past three years.*

*[...]*

*The biggest takeaway we found is a strong and statistically significant correlation between the diversity of management teams and overall innovation. Companies that reported above-average diversity on their management teams also reported innovation revenue that was 19 percentage points higher than that of companies with below-average leadership diversity—45% of total revenue versus just 26%.*

*[...]*

*Not surprisingly, these organizations also reported better overall financial performance: EBIT margins that were 9 percentage points higher than those of companies with below-average diversity on their management team*

Source: Lorenzo et al., 2018. How diverse leadership teams boost innovation.

https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation (accessed on 10.11.2020)

As we can see, putting teams together based on their diversity is a good idea, but unfortunately it often does not come naturally to us. Let us take a look at good practices regarding the composition of teams based on the team roles we discussed.

### Task: Essential team roles

Take another look at the Belbin team roles table and answer the following question: If you had a small team of three people and, hypothetically, these three people took on exactly three roles – which three roles do you believe are the most essential for almost all tasks?

###### Sample answer

While many different combinations of roles, and thus important competencies in a team, can be argued, one example would be that it is good to have someone in the team with the qualities of the "Co-ordinator". This person would be responsible in assigning the different roles of the team members, and allocating the needed resources. While the Co-ordinator is good at connecting to people and having a general overview, this person sometime would lack a the creativity and analytical skills. If the assigned task for this team should have a constant need for innovation, e.g. because it is in a constantly changing market, a "Plant" could play an important role here. Should it be more important to implement expert knowledge into a project, this slot should rather go to a "Specialist". Thus, if we have someone with the competency to motivate and allocate the team's resources, plus someone to bring in the needed know-how or innovation, then what else could be needed would be someone with the drive to set everything into action. This role could go to a possible "Shaper" for example, when there is a high urgency for the task. If less urgency is required, but more accuracy for the task, an "Implementer" could be advised.

Obviously, every team role comes with its own competency and thus important merits to the team. All of them can be needed at times. To have at least one each of all of the three areas of "People-orientation", "Action-orientation" and "Thought-orientation" though would cover many needed competencies of a typical working team task.

In most cases, organisations describe certain functional roles to their staff. Each of these functional roles also come with certain requisite competencies. A general manager might need different competencies than a finance officer or a Human Resource specialist. As you have probably already noticed, the team roles we discussed are mostly defined by the competencies they inherently bring to the team. It would therefore make sense to consider which of the team role competencies would fit the expectations we have for certain functional roles. The next task will shed some light on this and provide some examples.

### Task: Case "Two job advertisements"

A large global company opens a new factory in Vietnam in order to produce screws that are needed by their customers in Asia. The headquarters in Japan puts together a new team for this factory. Two of the functions are still missing. Please read the job advertisement – we have reduced it to the job description as well as the required competencies for each position. When you look at the team roles table again, which competencies described there would correspond with the ones that are required for the two open positions? Could one Belbin team role cover all of the expectations, or is the company looking for someone who has their strengths spread over several team roles? Please write your solutions in the learning journal and elaborate on your suggestion.

**1. Job description General Manager**

* Communicate between the headquarters in Japan and the local staff in Vietnam
* Efficiently allocate and motivate the workforce in the factory
* Formulate milestones for factory development together with the management team and ensure that these plans are implemented

**Required competencies:**

* Good communication skills
* Ability to remain calm under pressure
* Strong interpersonal skills

**2. Job Description Sales Manager**

* Network with our existing and potential customers in the Asian region, and to explore new sales regions for our products
* Create job descriptions for the new sales team, and allocate them for the most effective sales process. Motivate this team to reach the agreed sales targets
* Present and communicate the benefits of our premium product to potential customers

**Required competencies:**

* Analytical skills
* Strong networking and communication skills
* Strong internal drive

###### Sample answer

Again, several solutions are possible. One possibility for the general manager could be someone with the team role as a "Co-ordinator", who should bring the competencies of allocating the workforce and planning the milestones with the team and should keep the big picture, even under pressure. It should be ensured that this management team would also have someone with a strong implementation drive, like a "Shaper" or "Implementer".

As to the sales manager, this job description could call out for an "Resource Investigator", who would be good in connecting with people outside the organization. As this person could lose his/her drive quickly once the first excitement of opening a new factory has passed, someone with the role of the "Shaper" could also be useful here, in the long run, to keep the motivation going.

## 4.7 Summary

Just as we all play different roles in our everyday lives, we similarly inhabit a variety of roles as a member of a work team. There is a natural diversity in every work team, since individuals bring their own interests and traits with them, and these can be either strengths or weaknesses. In order to tap into diversity as a resource, it is important to be aware of this in every team, and to reflect on how we can deal with these different competencies. Since we usually enjoy roles more when they play into our natural strengths and interests, we should also choose our tasks in a team according to this principle, wherever possible. For this reason it was important in this unit to gain an insight into our own profiles, and discover which competencies we bring to a team. Knowing our strengths and weaknesses also brings self-awareness, and encourages us to consider how we might deal with these attributes within ourselves. This process is also likely to promote more patience with regard to ourselves but also with respect to others, and prompt us to realise that nobody is perfect.

We also learned that we can use the concept of team roles to identify which competency we need for each functional role in our organisation. Instead of hiring people purely on the basis of experience and expertise, knowledge of team processes also helps us to recognise which competencies and roles are still missing in our teams.

However, it is also important to realise that diversity brings potential for conflict. We learned that the team members whom we find most irritating are often the ones that have strengths which actually complement our own weaknesses. It is therefore of crucial importance that we realise the need for people that are different from us in order to enhance team performance. A team that consists only of our own 'clones', so to speak, is unlikely to work as well as one in which we include people who complement us.

## 4.8 Learning review

For a final assessment of your understanding in this course, please read through following case study:

### Task: Case "A team assignment"

Richard was taking a marketing class at his university. At the end of the semester, the course participants were asked to divide into teams of three students with the goal of assessing the attractiveness of a specific fictional product (a car accessory) devised by the professor. In order to conduct this market research, Richard was to work together with Gaoya, who was an international student from Singapore, and Mohammed, who had a British background like himself. They were given four days to complete their project and were then to present their results to the class the following week.

The team quickly came to the conclusion that the best way to finish this assignment was to go out and ask people about their feelings towards the new product. The first task they set for themselves was to establish which questions to ask. At the beginning there was a lot of disagreement. Gaoya seemed to be excellent at coming up with ideas, but in Richard´s opinion did not adequately think through whether these questions would actually deliver the results required in the limited time available. Richard took on the task of proofreading the survey questions, making sure that the language and vocabulary employed were unbiased and likely to elicit an open answer. Mohammed did not come up with many ideas of his own, but made sure the team was focussed and did not waste their time on endless discussion of details.

The next task was to find people they could interview. There was little time, and since they thought they needed at least 20 interviews in order to have representative results, Gaoya suggested that they should simply go to any busy shopping mall and start asking people until they had enough results. A 'lively discussion' erupted, as Richard thought that his would just waste their time. His approach would have been to sit down with a plan and consider which people they might want to interview, and where they could best find these people. After all, not all of the people in the shopping mall would even own a car. After a heated discussion between Richard and Gaoya, Mohammed tried to refocus the discussion on the task at hand. The resulting decision ended up being a mixture of both approaches, as they decided to go to the local cinema in the evening, where films for mature audiences were playing, to make sure that they would find as many people as possible of driving age. At the cinema Gaoya found it easiest to simply approach people, whereas Richard was more hesitant.

The third part of the project was to prepare and conduct the presentation. Richard made sure the presentation style and data was in great shape, but he seemed to be nervous about the presentation itself. Mohammed, who observed this, suggested that Gaoya should take on the largest part of the talking as she really seemed to enjoy it and was also good at it. Richard and Mohammed presented the visual results and numbers.

Even though the team went through some heated discussions, the final result earned them a great mark which left all three of them very happy.

In your learning journal, answer following questions for each of the three team members:

1. What were the strengths of Richard, Gaoya and Mohammed? What were their weaknesses?
2. What do you believe was their respective Belbin team role?
3. What could have been the consequences for the team if Richard's competencies had not been there to support the effort? How about Mohammed's, or Gaoya's competencies?

###### Sample answer

**1. What were the strengths and the weaknesses of Richard, Gaoya and Mohammed?**

Richard's strength could have been the ability to be detail-oriented. He was good at coming up with structures and plans, and looking for mistakes in written documents, like the presentation or the surveys. His weaknesses might have been to deal with spontaneous suggestions or to move on with a feeling of uncertainty. He also was not very people oriented, having more challenges with doing presentations or approaching strangers for the survey.

Gaoya's strength could have been her creativity and spontaneity, as well as her ability to quickly connect to people. Her weakness then might have been to work meticulously on details in written work or a general plan.

Mohammed's strength might have been to quickly see the strengths in people and allocate their skills with the right tasks. He also might have been good at ensuring the focus in discussions. His weakness could have been a lack of creativity within the team.

**2. What was their respective Belbin team role?**

Richard's described strengths and weaknesses sound much like the competencies of a Monitor Evaluators. If we got to know him a bit better, he might also be placed somewhere else, like e.g. as a Completer-Finisher. Gaoya's role might have been the one of the Resource Investigator, and Mohammed's role fits the description of a "Co-ordinator".

As we mentioned above, however, the goal of these exercises is not to be able to "put people into categories". First and foremost, the three are individuals. It is important to see though that each of them did bring some strengths to the table which complemented each other.

**3. What could have been the consequences to the team if Richard's competencies had not been there to support it? How about Mohammed's, or Gaoya's competencies?**

If Richard's competencies had not been available, the team might have gotten many ideas, but an overall strategy might have been missing. The quality of the data and the result might have also not been the same. If Gaoya's competence had not been available to the team, there might have been much longer planning and analysis on how to proceed, instead of "getting their feet wet" and making some important experiences first. The presentation might also not have been as good. Mohammed's competencies made sure that the team did not lose focus in the discussion and that the other team members did not feel unhappy about their tasks within the project.

## 4.9 Sources, further reading and web links

#### Sources

* Belbin, R. M. (2010). Management teams. Why they succeed or fail (3rd edition). Amsterdam, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Publishing House.
* Kovach, C., & Adler, N. J. (1991). International dimensions of organizational behavior (2nd edition). Boston: PWS – Kent Publishing.
* Lorenzo, R., Voigt, N., Tsusaka, M., Krentz, M., & Abouzahr, K. (2018). How diverse leadership teams boost innovation. BCG Henderson Institute, <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation> (accessed on 10.11.2020)
* 123test.com. Team roles test. <https://www.123test.com/team-roles-test/> (accessed on 10.11.2020)