

Building Capable Teams: Do Pharmacy Professionals Provide Sufficient Diversity in Behaviour?

Russell Hill, Chris Giles, Pharmacy Practice Unit, Icon Group Pharmacy Services, Brisbane, QLD.

Background

"A true team is a living, constantly changing, dynamic force in which a number of people come together to work".¹

A successful team is more than just a collection of individuals: it has synergy. The achievement of the team is greater than what the individual members of the team could produce on their own.²

The Icon Group Pharmacy Practice Unit consists of 12 individuals tasked with best practice and quality use of medicines obligations within a national pharmacy organisation. The team welcomed the opportunity to undertake an exercise to gain a better understanding of the role of each team member in terms of behaviours within the team. The Belbin Team Model is a validated tool (validity and reliability) designed to determine how individuals behave in a team.³

Description

The Belbin Team Inventory measures an individual's preference for one of nine team behaviours.

Team members undertake a self-assessment. A 360-degree feedback from four fellow team members (nominated by the individual) is also included in the assessment. The test contrasts how individuals see their behaviour with how their fellow team members do.

Psychometric tests rely on self-perception. The Belbin Team Inventory differs from psychometric tests as it contrasts the individual's perception against the views of other team members thereby using multiple sources of evidence to draw a conclusion. The assessment takes into account the degree of consensus on observed behaviours.

The nine team roles can be grouped into a three clusters of behaviours which are classified as: Thinking (people who think creatively, analytically or contribute ideas); Action (people who take responsibility for tasks); and People (people who relate well to other people).

Team Role	Contribution
Plant	Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.
Resource Investigator	Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.
Co-ordinator	Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.
Shaper	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.
Monitor Evaluation	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.
Teamworker	Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.
Implementer	Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.
Completer Finisher	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.
Specialist	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.

Figure 1. Belbin Team Behaviours

Evaluation

Twelve Pharmacy Practice Unit team members completed the Belbin Team Inventory assessment.

Figure 3 illustrates the team behaviours of the members of the Pharmacy Practice Unit.

Results showed a predominance towards Completer-Finisher, Monitor-Evaluator, and Implementer type behaviours. The least exhibited behaviours were Plant, Shaper, and Co-ordinator.

According to the Belbin Assessment and mix of team behaviours –

"The team strength is likely to be evident in the longer term rather than the shorter term. The team is focussed collectively on doing the right thing and is on guard against letting anyone down. This team will make a thorough job of any work taken on and be keen to ensure standards are maintained. This team will strive for perfection and aim to achieve a reputation of accuracy and attention to detail. There were no strong examples of the plant and specialist team behaviours which indicates the team may lack people to come up with entirely new ideas and strategies".

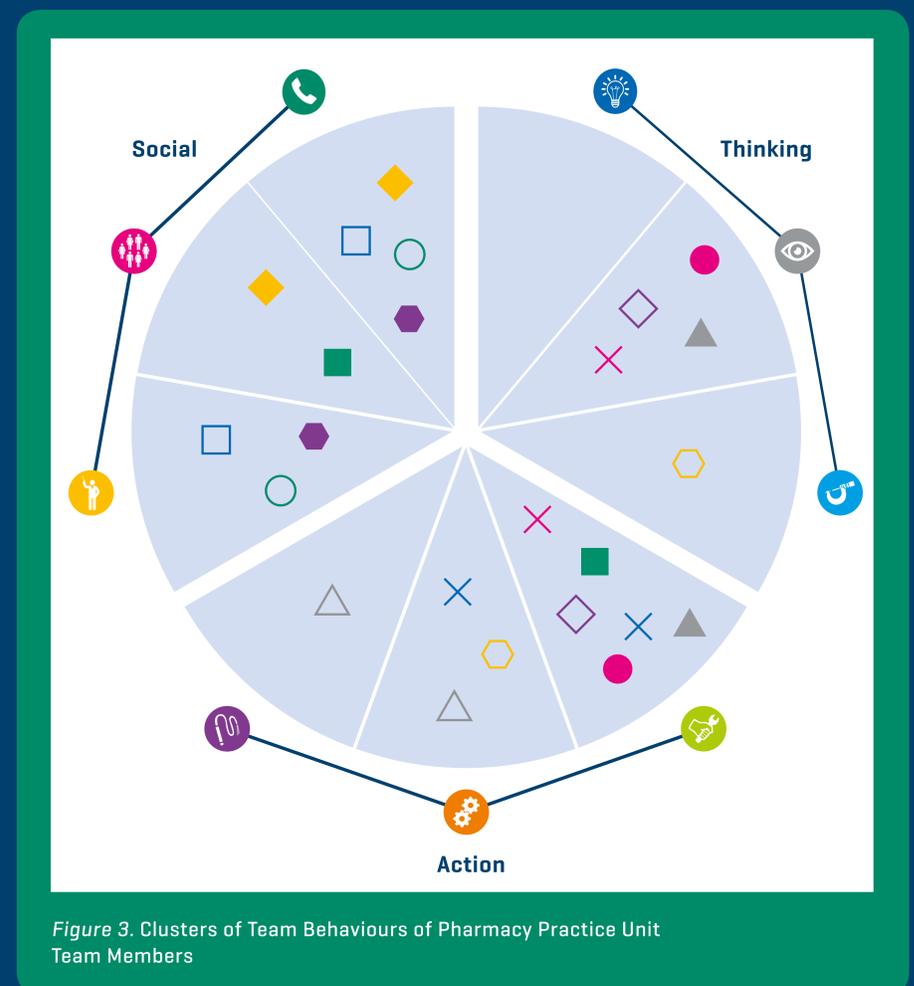


Figure 3. Clusters of Team Behaviours of Pharmacy Practice Unit Team Members

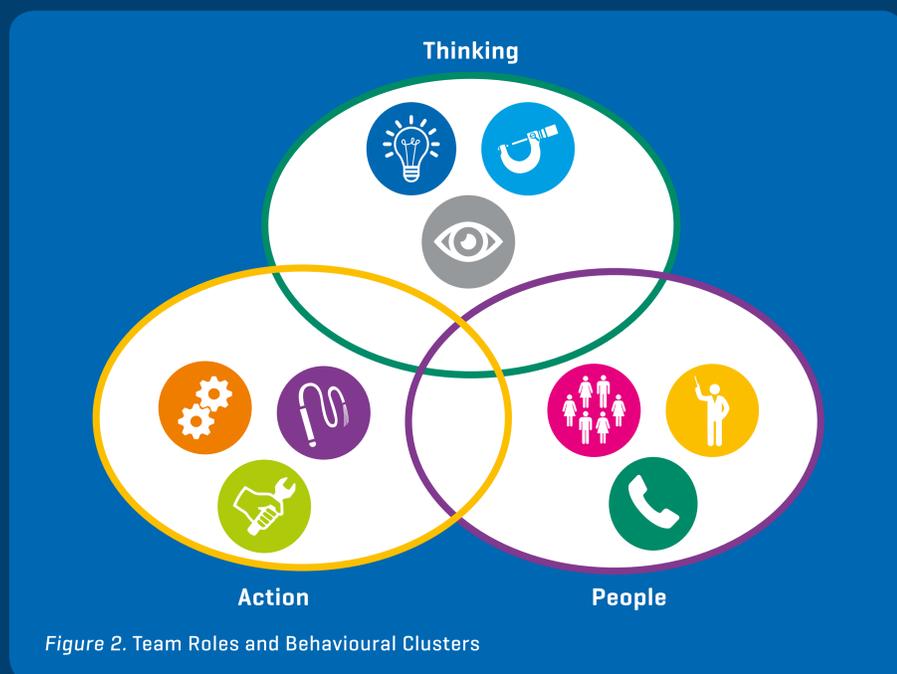


Figure 2. Team Roles and Behavioural Clusters

Implications

Results of the Belbin Team Assessment revealed a cluster of Completer-Finisher, Monitor-Evaluator, and Implementer type behaviours indicating the team has significant capability with attention to detail, thoroughness, and analysis which represents a highly valuable skills set for clinical governance and quality management services. In contrast the least exhibited behaviours were Plant, Shaper, and Co-ordinator. The least exhibited behaviours are associated with individuals who are Imaginative and creative (may think 'outside the box'), dynamic, and bold.

Are these team behavioural traits associated with the pharmacy sector given pharmacists are trained in scientific and rational thinking drawing upon the law, and their own codes, rules and standard operating procedures and policy guidelines.

Do staff working within the pharmacy sector as a collective exhibit Groupthink in team environments? Is there a risk that the behaviours that make a 'good pharmacist' (such as completer-finisher and monitor-evaluator) could limit innovation, service development and collaboration?

Assessment tools such as the Belbin Team Inventory highlight both capability and limitations within teams and create the opportunity to introduce diversity.

Within the Pharmacy Practice Unit, team members shared their respective team behaviours. This has enabled greater understanding and appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of each other. The identification of team behaviours also resulted in a greater understanding and appreciation of why team members act in specific ways.

Leaders should be cognisant of the strengths and weaknesses that could be inherent in pharmacy teams and take steps to avoid creating teams with a narrow cluster of team behaviours and take subsequent steps to introduce diversity.

Conclusion

Belbin Team Roles Theory promotes awareness and diversity in team behaviours. A team with variety of complementary roles improves overall team effectiveness. Diversity allows a team to solve difficult tasks efficiently and adapt to new changes.

The theory also helps to enhance self-awareness and effectiveness and enables leaders to be aware of the behavioural tendency of each team member. Individuals have a greater self-understanding of their strengths, which leads to more effective communication between colleagues and managers.²

Awareness of team limitations can assist with diagnosis of causes of underperforming teams. Identification of gaps in behaviours can then be managed.

Understanding team member behaviours is crucial in understanding team behaviour and risk of pharmacy Groupthink should be considered and mitigated where possible.

References

- Heller R. Managing Teams. London: Dorling Kindersley. 1988
- McGuire R. How to build a successful team. The Pharmaceutical Journal, 269; 2002
- Aritzeta A, Swales S. Belbin's team role model: development, validity, and applications for team building. Journal Management Studies. 44(1); 2007.



Icon Group – Australia's largest dedicated provider of cancer care.