

Understanding and using CIPD Behaviours

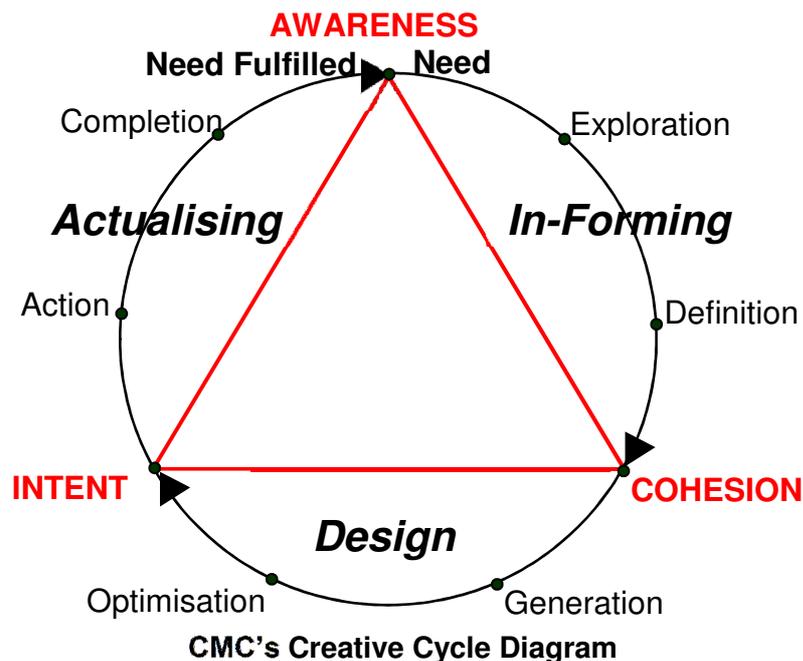
People have different talents in relation to how they manage processes. Before you can assess those talents it is useful to understand the structure of processes. Different schemas explore the roles and behaviours required to achieve successful outcomes. What insight can we gain by exploring the relationship between Belbin's Team Roles and CIPD's Professional Behaviours in the context of the processes they are supporting?

Processes

We are all involved in countless processes, many in parallel or overlapping. Everything we do involves a process of some sort – some very brief, others lasting years. Only occasionally do we have much awareness of processes or how we work in and through them. We rarely notice that we have different preferences and different capabilities in relation to the processes we use, although we are sometimes aware of repeating patterns. The process cycle helps make all this visible to those who are curious. Making processes more visible and conscious, can help us refine and improve the way we work.

Processes are series of actions taking place over time to bring about an outcome. They begin with a need. More particularly, they begin when our awareness of a need becomes sufficiently important or uncomfortable to prompt us towards action. Then relevant information can be scanned, accumulated and organised until the need can be matched by some design or envisioned outcome. Such a desired outcome remains a fantasy until we commit to it. Then it can be realised and the need is (hopefully) fulfilled. As, in some sense, the end is in the beginning, and to hint at the iteration that is usually involved, a process is often represented as a cycle. In ancient mythology this principle was shown as a snake consuming its own tail (known as an ouroboros)

An important feature of progress through time is the move from the concrete to the abstract and the return from the abstract to the concrete. The mid-point - the change of direction – is characterised by tension. DIVERGENCE then CONVERGENCE pulse through the process. Divergence, tension and uncertainty are hard to bear. Sustaining uncertainty and indecision until the 'creative spark' occurs is what brings about innovation. Release of tension, masquerading as decisiveness, may be no more than an escape, hastening people to premature action! The circle represents a progression in linear time (indicated by the arrow heads), whereas the triangle is 'out of time' – it represents what accumulates or grows as a result of the temporal struggle.



The Creative cycle explained

A process kicks off when we are sufficiently aware of a need. 'Sufficiently aware' means the awareness overcomes indifference, inertia, other priorities, shortage of resources, busyness etc. **Awareness** is thus a critical factor. Awareness is a state to be sustained, rather than something to be done.

The process moves into **Exploration** which brings together information, relevant to our issue. Without exploration we might have no idea what information is needed or where to begin to look. When someone is engaged in exploration, they poke around, they ask questions, they take trips, they rummage. Their friends wonder what is going on, as they are pre-occupied in an on-going search for anything that can help. All this is clearly divergent in nature. However, at some point, convergence is needed for the process to progress.

Convergence focuses the enquiry into a **Specification** of some kind. Its nature varies according to the circumstances but may typically take the form of a brief – a clear description of the problem to be solved.

To proceed we need to hold things together – without **Cohesion** we easily fall prey to procrastination, to lassitude or to dispute about the problem or some other dysfunction that causes us to go back to the beginning. Cohesion is a quality of being – the capacity to sustain relationships through thick and thin, usually involving countless acts of leadership.

Now we enter the design phase, the early part of which is characterised by **Generation** of a rich diversity of ideas – ideas on table napkins, on the backs of envelopes; ideas in the bath, ideas on the bus. Emerging ideas dance with each other, seeking a part in the solution. Even as the design is being finalised, new ideas typically pop up. This creative flow has to be constrained to enable the process to move towards realisation.

The second part of the design phase is thus convergent in nature, as it needs to achieve commitment of resources to complete the process. Our design solution will be the best we can produce from the ideas we have gathered within the constraints we have. If all goes well, we will experience a step of integration wherein the multiplicity of ideas gels into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. We will breathe life into it, a 'touch of magic'. **Optimisation** that will win us the resources needed to realise the design. Often this step takes the form of a presentation or pitch to a committee or a source of investment.

So we come to the point of commitment of resources - a matter of **Intent**. Until this point, everything has been represented virtually – in imagination, on paper, digitally or in the form of prototypes or models. Now we are going to make it real. It is very different from all that has gone before and will be the ultimate test of our process. If the commitment is not forthcoming or the intent is weak, we will, at best, be obliged to repeat earlier stages. Intent is not an action but a decision – an act of will.

And so the process will now enter the field of **Action** with all its hazards and uncertainties. Whatever we thought in the earlier stages is now being made real – it is no longer 'just' a design. Entry to the field of action invariably brings surprises – reality rarely exactly corresponds to what we anticipated. Even as we act, things change around us. We therefore need to be divergent in our thinking so that we respond to the reality, rather than adhering to our carefully laid out plans.

Eventually, the nature of our work changes once more to convergence, as we begin homing-in on our goal to bring about **completion**. We strive to close the gap between the state of play and the finished product our customers expect. This is often a case of testing and commissioning systems, removing defects, adding finishing touches and, not least, removing whatever tools and equipment we have needed in our work.

Finally, the client takes over; actually using our design for the purpose it was intended. The **need is fulfilled**. There have been transformations both of materials and of people. At this point the client will experience the delight of a need well met and we should experience the satisfaction of job well done. We can add also the joy of relationships built and personal challenges, achievements and transformations

Each of us has different talents and predispositions to focus on different aspects of this whole process and yet every aspect has to be well covered to ensure a successful outcome. This is not rocket science – the process might be as basic as selecting your clothes for the day or cooking a meal – or as complex as corporate change programmes or a major regeneration project. Every day we all engage in many processes, and thus in versions of this structure and the roles it calls for!

So now let us consider **Belbin's nine team roles**. Here are brief descriptors, quoted from the website:

Specialist: Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.

Resource Investigator: Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.

Teamworker: Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction.

Co-ordinator: Mature, confident. Clarifies goals. Brings other people together to promote team discussions

Plant: Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.

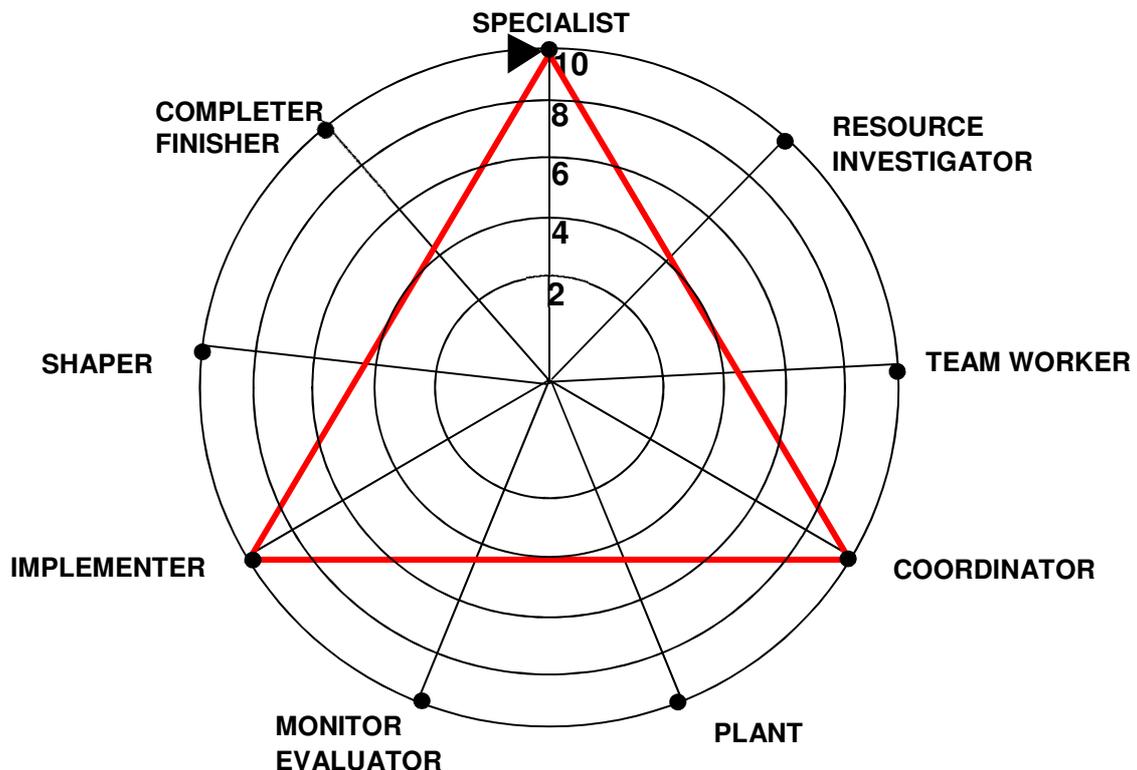
Monitor Evaluator: Serious minded, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.

Implementer Disciplined, reliable, conservative in habits. A capacity for directing practical steps towards action.

Shaper: Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Loves action. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.

Completer Finisher: Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.

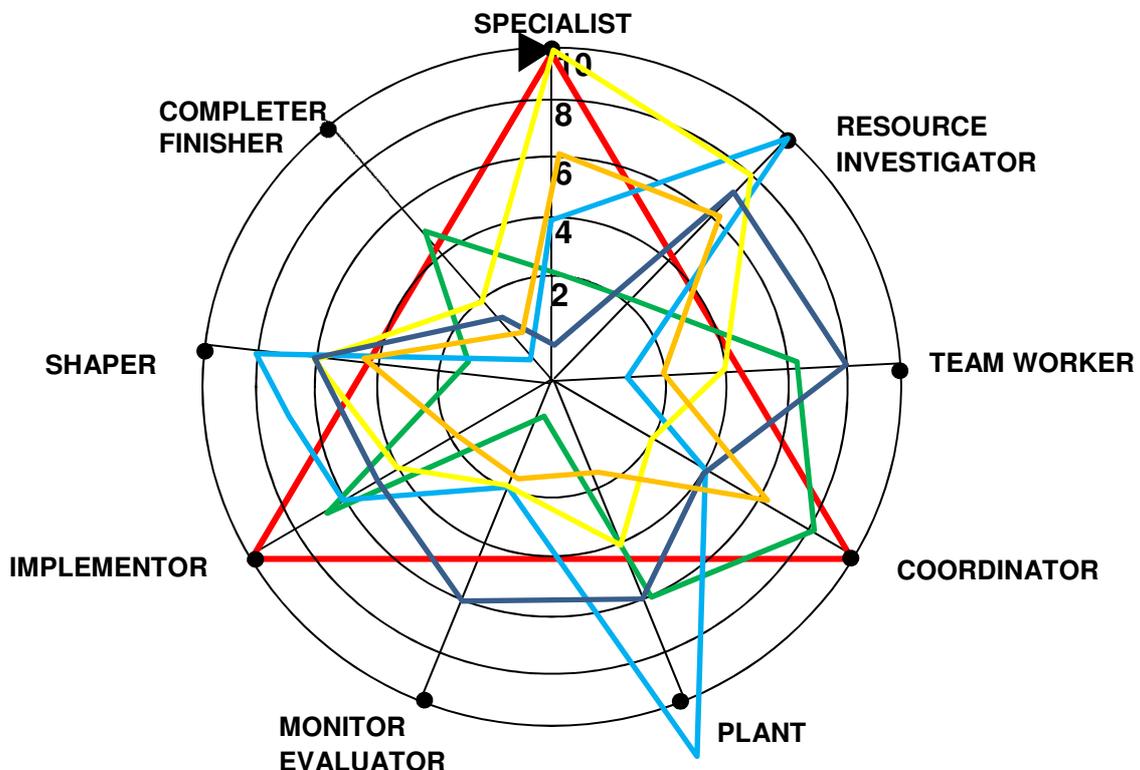
Sequenced and mapped onto the creative cycle, these give us the following 'radar' presentation, where the concentric circles represent Belbin scores.



Belbin team roles mapped onto creative cycle

CMC's 'creative cycle' was developed over many years, around the time of Dr Meredith Belbin's work at Henley on team roles, published in 1981. The correlation between the two seems quite apparent, especially since Dr Belbin has added a ninth role. The two approaches have been quite independent. The work at Henley was based on studying many management teams repeating an exercise. The creative cycle arose from studies of creative process originating from the work of J.G. Bennett.

The creative cycle has proved valuable for helping managers understand the characteristics of process stages and the different roles that need to be performed. A grasp of this structure has applications in the design of learning, problem-solving and creative processes. Dr. Belbin has not particularly related his team roles to process. His roles are not positioned in time or related to activity. Mapping Belbin's roles onto the process cycle illuminates their mutual importance and relationship. It clearly relates collective and individual capability to the process being addressed. Here is a radar plot of Belbin profiles of a senior team, plotted onto the creative cycle. Such a plot can be useful for recruiting additional capability, for targeting development needs or showing where extra care is needed. This is especially true when there is an understanding of why the different roles are necessary over time.



Belbin profiles for a team overlain

Note the overlaps and weaknesses in the above combined profile.

Next we will turn to the recent development of the CIPD's 'Professional Behaviours' which, though differently derived and presented, also relate to complete processes.

So how do the CIPD Behaviours relate to these previously existing schemas? Let's look at the descriptors from CIPD's website:

Curious: Shows an active interest in the internal and external environment and in the continuous development and improvement of self and others at both organisation and individual levels. Is open minded with a bias and willingness to learn and enquire.

Decisive Thinker: Demonstrates the ability to analyse and understand data and information quickly. Is able to use information, insights and knowledge in a structured way using judgement wisely to identify options and make robust and defensible decisions.

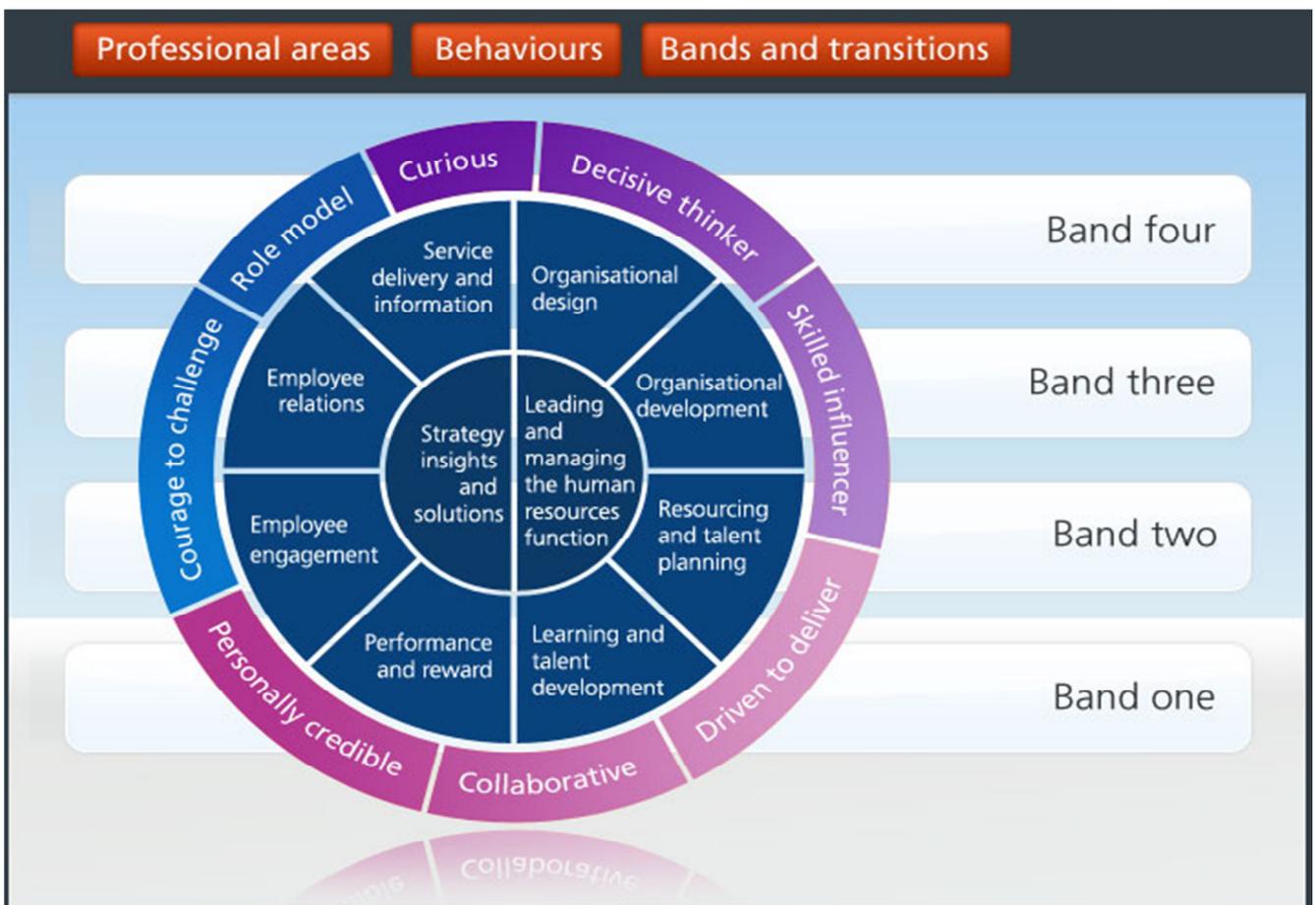
Collaborative: Works effectively and inclusively with colleagues, clients, stakeholders, customers, teams and individuals both within and outside of the organisation.

Courage to Challenge: Shows courage and confidence to speak up, challenges others even when confronted with resistance or unfamiliar circumstances.

Role Model: Consistently leads by example. Acts with integrity, impartiality and independence, applying sound personal judgment in all interactions

Driven to Deliver: Demonstrates a consistent and strong bias to action, taking accountability for delivery of results both personally and/or with others. Actively plans, priorities and monitors performance, holding others accountable for delivery.

Personally Credible: Builds a track record of reliable and valued delivery using relevant technical expertise and experience and does so with integrity and in an objective manner.

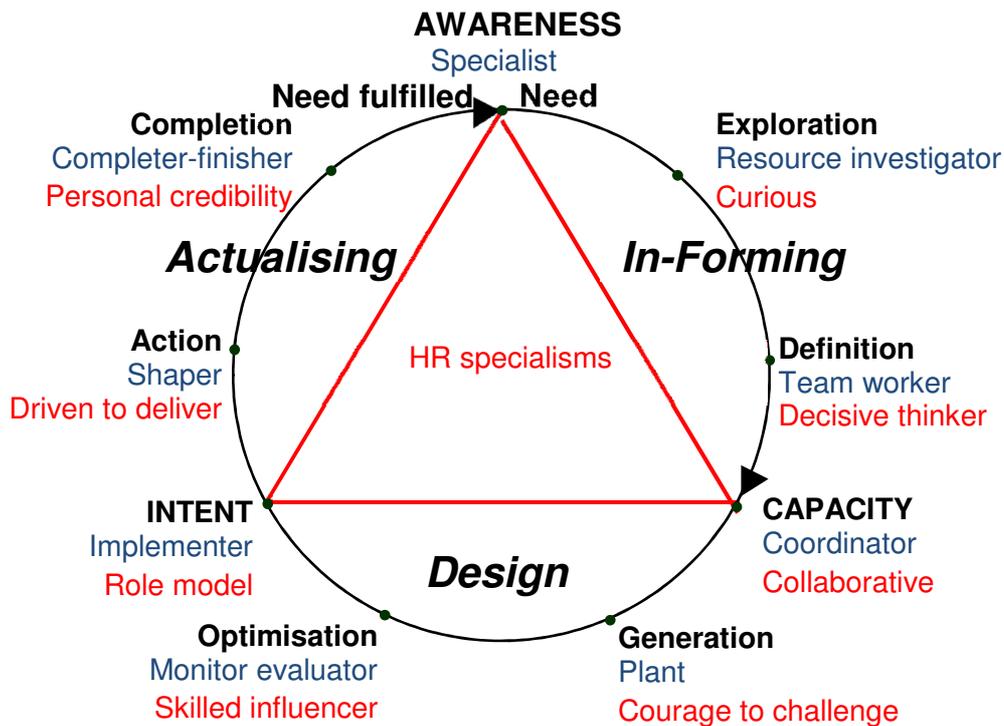


CIPD HR Behaviours Map

The Behaviours are the outer ring of the diagram, whereas the centre shows the specialist roles of the HR function. The Bands of the CIPD model indicate increasing levels of competence, experience or maturity.

Let us plot the behaviours and the Belbin roles onto the process diagram to see how they correspond.

Mapping in this way requires us to be able to bear ambiguity. All three schemas have adopted names for roles or behaviours that can be confusing or lacking in consistency. Because each set of ideas has been determined from a particular perspective, the cross mapping provokes an enrichment of each. You could say we get three views of the same whole. By embracing the stretch of imagination needed, one can arrive at a deeper understanding.



The three schemas overlaid

Mapping the schema onto one another suggests changes of nuance and meaning that, in turn, suggest that some changes of language might give more clarity. Some of Belbin's names have had historical significance at Henley but appear obscure to many. Some descriptors could be re-considered in the light of the roles as understood in the context of process. Overlay this with the CIPD behaviours, again arrived at from a different perspective, and we are prompted to clarify our thinking further. Seeing the roles from the process perspective sheds light on their purpose and relationship. The way roles are titled influences how you interpret them and is, in turn, coloured by how you want to use the information. Consistency of titling as abstract nouns distinguishes roles or behaviours from the persons performing them.

Being and Doing

The three major terms of the triangle, more than something to be done, indicate a state of maturity manifested by the individual or team. They are not 'in time' – that is, they exist irrespective of the temporal process they are sustaining. Has the team or individual the awareness, the cohesive capacity and the entrepreneurial intent to meet the challenge? Between these three, in the flow of time, progress is achieved as divergent thinking is followed by convergent thinking. These talents comprise skills, attitudes and competencies. They point to something to be done, one way or another, if the process is to reach fruition.

Let us examine them one at a time to see the role played by each talent and relate the different schema.

Roles to be played during any process (even if it is only you doing a simple job)

AWARENESS – Which might manage specialist knowledge, as opposed to Specialist (a person). **Specialist** is hardly a team role in itself, hence Belbin rejected it for so long and CIPD embeds specialism in the roles themselves. Some groups may be comprised only of technical specialists. If teamwork is required it will be important that specialists play strong team roles too. Technical know-how is often essential to a process, yet a specialist who is not a team player compromises team performance. At CMC we view specialism as a technical resource provided by team members or from outside, as and when required – different specialisms often apply at different stages of process.

EXPLORATION - encompasses both **Resource Investigator** and CIPD's curious descriptor, **Curious**. The finding out of what we don't know we don't know. The gathering of information, without which we cannot create, requires a talent for finding out more, looking outside the familiar territory for relevant information and making new connections.

DEFINITION - encompasses **Decisive Thinker** and is more precise than **Team Worker** (although it may be too different from the role Belbin identifies?). This is a vital role concerned with **definition** of the task in hand. The role does indeed require decisive thinking. Convergent thinking can appear dull in the context of creativity but nothing will be done without reflective decision making. Maintains the calm and reason that steadies those who would be swept away by enthusiasm.

COHESION - encompasses **Collaborative** and **Coordinator** and is a way of describing the holding together the whole by managing relationships. **Cohesive capacity** develops and holds the relationships required to succeed when many forces conspire to pull them all apart. Awareness of the whole process and the whole team helps overcome temporary setbacks and reminds people of their shared intent.

GENERATION - relates to multiplicity of ideas and is more general in application than **Courage to Challenge** or the rather odd **Plant**. Where one idea might do for others, this talent will keep generating more a rich variety of ideas. The downside of this talent is the difficulty a person may have in settling for any particular idea and actually progressing the job. This may exasperate colleagues.

OPTIMISATION - the championing of the most fitting solution in order to get buy-in, commitment and shared intent. It encompasses **Monitor-Evaluator**, which encapsulates the convergent thinking of this stage, and is complemented by **Skilled Influencer**. Together they amount to getting buy-in to the optimal solution. This role selects, integrates and presents the best of all the possibilities, anticipates the challenges of implementation and pitches the solution so as to get buy-in and commitment.

INTENT implies commitment - having the will focused on a specific outcome. More than a **role model, Implementer** provides the entrepreneurial spirit of the team. Weighs major factors and takes wise decisions in relation to a wider context. Takes account of the strategic picture, measures risk and then gains total commitment to realisation of the project.

ACTION signifies that something is happening as a result of all the cognitive processes that have gone before. **Shaper** (shapes events) or **Driven to deliver** (drives the process) is the talent to enter the field of action and get on with the job. Helps those involved to give of their best. Overcomes technical difficulties and delivers on the creative promise by determination and example.

COMPLETION Completer finisher; Homes in on the finish. Is **personally credibility** is earned by quality outcomes, because this role brings things to a successful conclusion. Makes sure the promise is fulfilled and that everything works. Commissions systems and tests things out. Wants to see order, quality and delight in the final result.

Conclusion

The different schema use different words and highlight slightly different aspects of the key roles. The challenge of over-laying the three maps stretches our interpretation and deepens our understanding of the subtle aspects of behaviour that help the temporal progression around the cycle. Belbin's team roles do correspond to some extent to CIPD's behaviours and both relate to processes of all kinds. The inter-relationship of the schema is mutually enriching.

A generic development framework

If the HR specific aspects of CIPD's behaviours are removed, the framework is generic and can be applied usefully to development in any profession by re-populating the centre with the appropriate skills for the profession concerned. In this case, it can become a tool that HR specialists, line managers and training and development consultants can use across the board.

The 'bands' of the CIPD model approximate to the scoring on the radar presentation of Belbin roles.

Innovative opportunity

It should be noted that Belbin does not relate his team roles to process. Neither does CIPD relate its behaviours either to process or to team roles. Relating them in this way is, in itself, an innovation which suggests an evolutionary step in team profiling.

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John Varney, Chief Executive of CMC, helps organisations with strategy innovation and cultural change. As facilitator and coach, his challenge, empathy and support lift the aspirations of individuals and teams.