

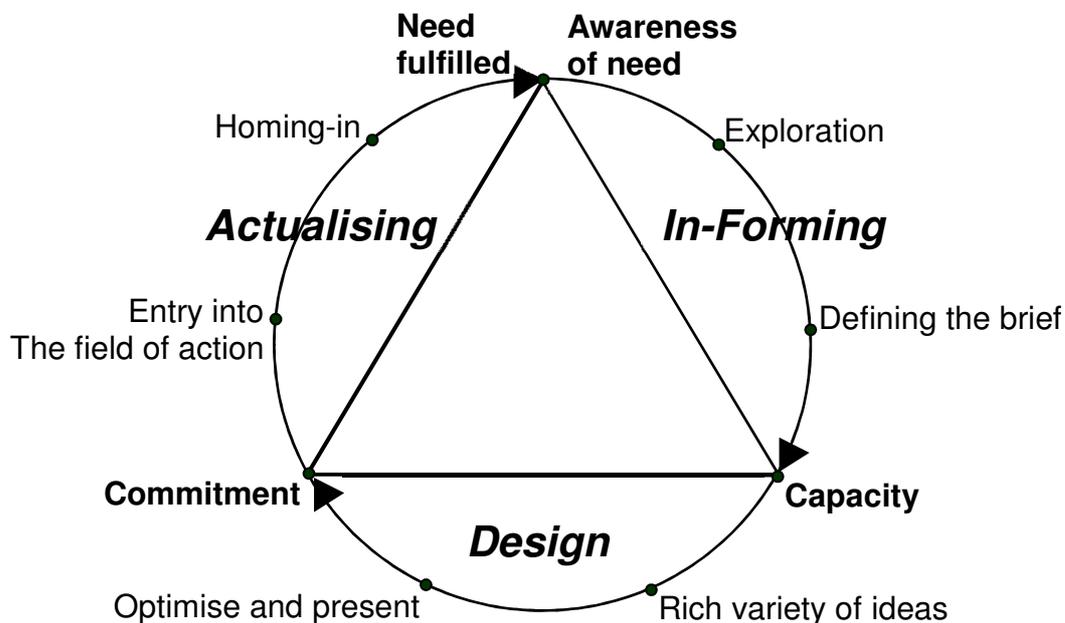
## Comparative study – Belbin, CIPD and Process Roles

***Is there a relationship between different schema that address roles and behaviours that achieve successful outcomes? For instance, has Belbin's team roles any relationship with CIPD professional behaviours? Can we gain insight by viewing roles and behaviours from the perspective of the process they are supporting?***

We are all involved in countless parallel processes. 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 them 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, below, helps make all this visible to those who are curious. By making our processes more visible and conscious, we can refine and improve the way we work.

Processes begin with a need. More particularly, they begin when our awareness of a need becomes important or uncomfortable enough. Then relevant information is scanned, accumulated and organised until the need can be matched by some envisioned outcome. This vision, once committed to, can be realised and the need will be fulfilled. As, in some sense, the end is in the beginning, and to hint at the iteration that is sometimes required, a process is often represented as a cycle. In mythology this is sometimes shown as a snake consuming it's own tail.

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. Release of tension, masquerading as decisiveness, may be no more than escape! Sustaining uncertainty and indecision until the 'creative spark' occurs is what brings about innovation. 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.



**CMC's Creative Cycle Diagram**

## The Creative cycle explained

A process kicks off when a need rises on our agenda. 'Sufficiently aware' means the awareness overcomes indifference, inertia, other priorities, shortage of resources etc. **Awareness** is thus a critical factor. Awareness is a state 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 ongoing search for anything that can help. All this is clearly divergent in nature. 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 take the form of a brief – a clear description of the problem to be solved.

To proceed we need to hold together – without **cohesion** we easily fall prey to procrastination, to lassitude or to bickering 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, through countless acts of leadership.

Now we enter the design phase, the early part of which is characterised by **diversity of ideas** – ideas on table napkins, on the backs of envelopes; ideas in the bath, ideas on the bus; ideas dancing with each other, seeking a part in the solution. Even as the design is being finalised new ideas typically flow forth. It 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 with the constraints we have. If it goes well, we will experience a step of integration wherein the multiplicity of ideas gells into a whole – a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. We will breath life into it, a 'touch of magic' 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. 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 we will, at best, be obliged to repeat earlier stages. Commitment 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 – the field 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 carefullt laid out plans.

Eventually, the nature of our work changes once more to convergence as we are **homing-in** on our goal, We strive to close the gap between our 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 plant and equipment we have needed in our work.

Finally, we are done and **need is fulfilled**. The client takes over, actually using our design for the purpose it was intended. At this point we should experience the euphoria of achievement and the client should experience the delight of a need well met. There have been transformations both of materials and of people.

Each of us has different talents and predispositions to focus on different aspects of the whole process and yet every aspect has to be well covered to ensure a successful outcome.

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

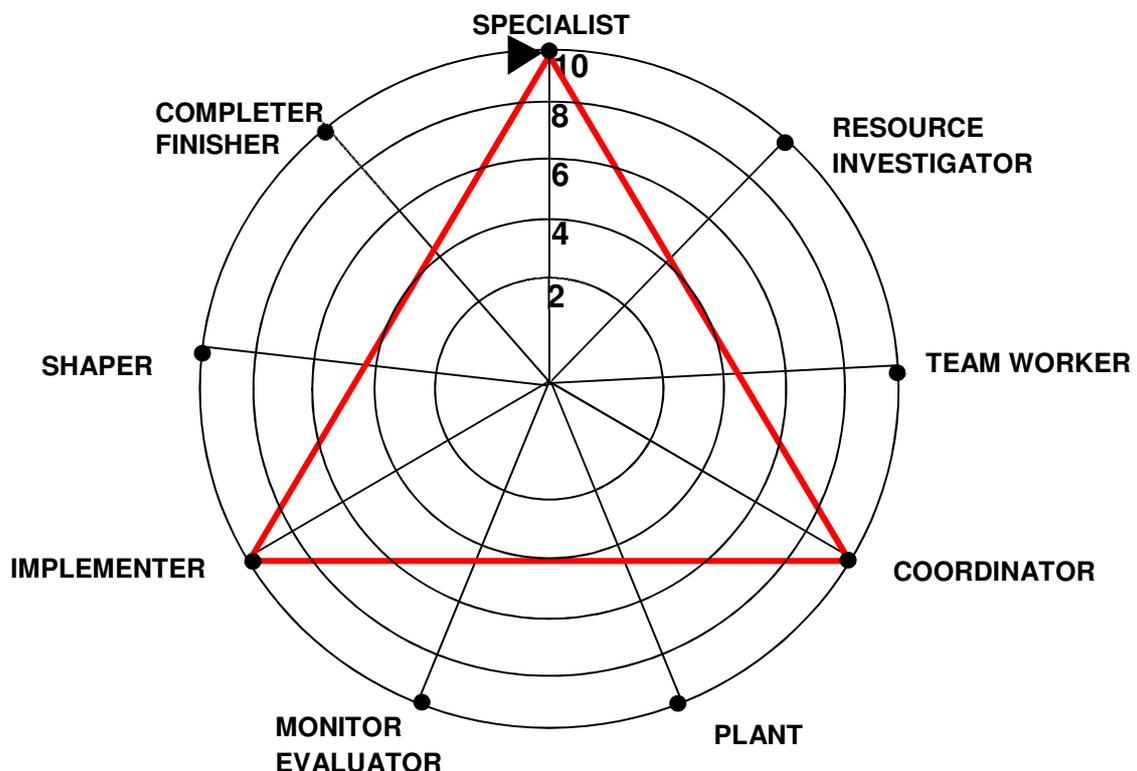
**Monitor Evaluator:** Serious minded, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.

**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.

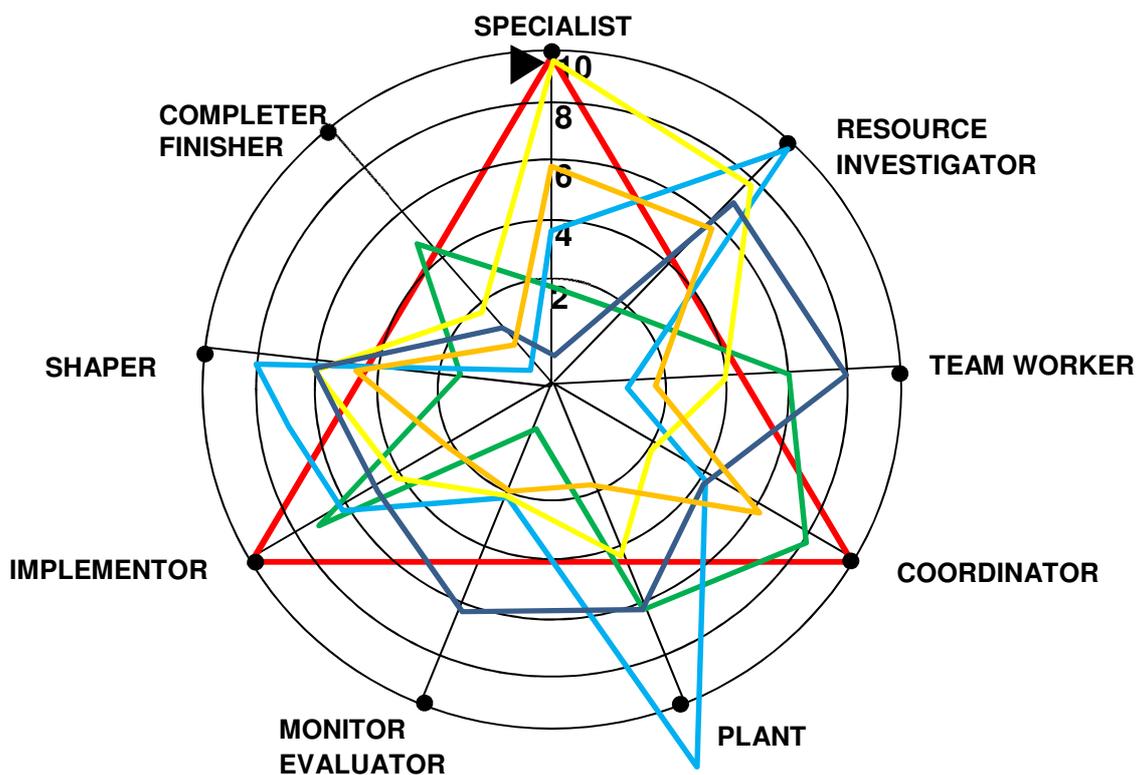


**Belbin team roles mapped onto creative cycle**

Dr. Belbin has not particularly related his team roles to process. However, mapping Belbin's roles onto the process cycle illuminates their mutual importance and relationship. 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. Of course, the two approaches have been quite independent and that is why we suggest it is useful to compare them. The work at Henley was based on psychometric tests in the context of a management team exercise. The creative cycle arose from studies of creative process originating from the work of J.G. Bennett and the enneagram as taught by Gurdjieff (as a process framework not a type indicator for which it has gained recent popularity).

A simplification of the enneagram, 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.

The main value of mapping Belbin in this way is that it clearly relates collective and individual capability to the process the team is addressing. Here is a radar plot of Belbin profiles of a senior team, plotted onto the creative cycle. Such a plot can be useful for either recruiting additional capability or for targeting development needs. This is especially true when there is an understanding of why the different roles are necessary over time.



**Belbin profiles for a team overlain**

Next we will turn to the recent development of the CIPD's 'professional behaviours' which, though differently derived and presented, also relate to a complete process.

**Here are 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.

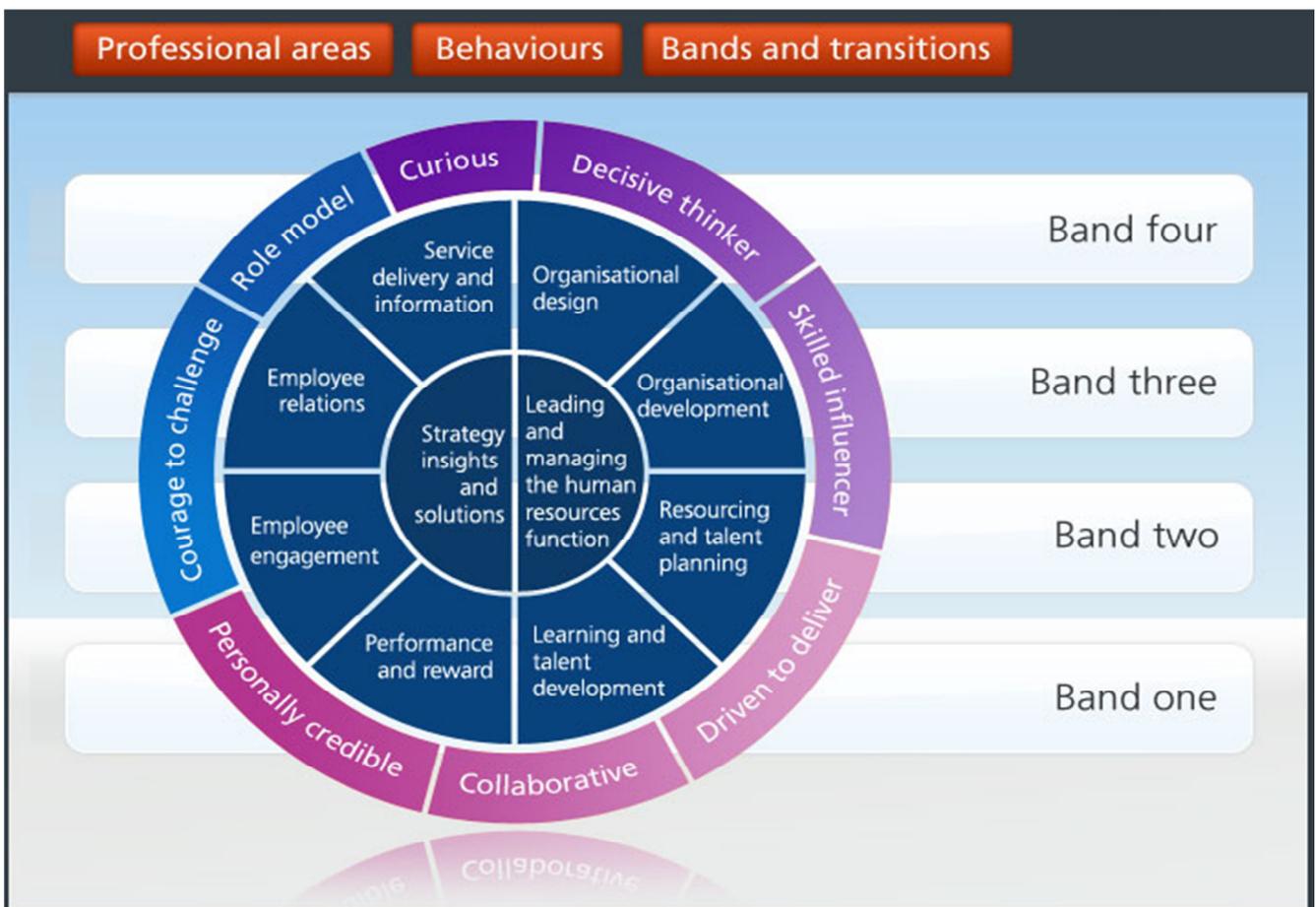
**Collaborative:** Works effectively and inclusively with colleagues, clients, stakeholders, customers, teams and individuals both within and outside of the organisation.

**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.

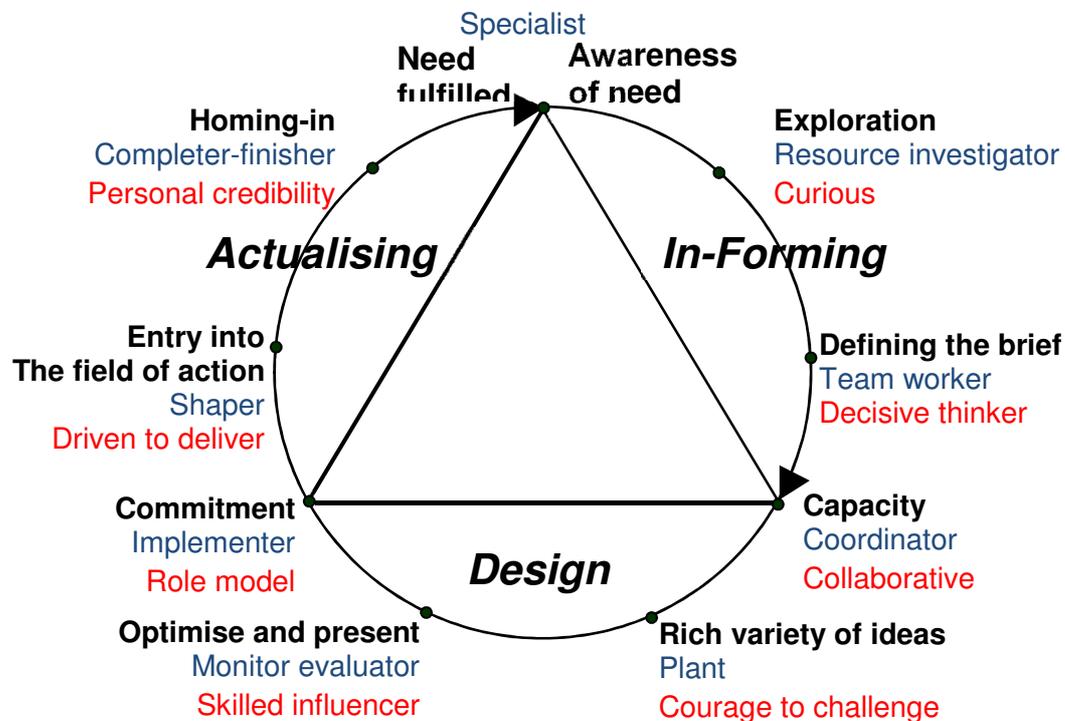
**Personally Credible:** Builds a track record of reliable and valued delivery using relevant technical expertise and experience and does so with integrity and in an objective manner.



**CIPD HR Behaviours Map**

Let us relate the three schema by plotting each set of ideas onto the same diagram. All three have adopted names for roles or behaviours that are can be confusing and lack consistency.

Mapping in this way requires a capacity to bear ambiguity. 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 schema overlaid (existing titles)

Mapping the schema onto one another suggests that some changes of language might give more clarity. Some of Belbin's names that have had historical significance at Henley might be obscure to many. Some of the 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. The way roles are titled influences how you interpret them and is, in turn, coloured by how you want to use the information. From a team process perspective the re-titling seems helpful. Consistency of titling as abstract nouns distinguishes roles or behaviours from the persons performing them. Seeing the roles from the process perspective sheds light on their purpose and relationship.

Let us examine them one at a time **and conclude with a preferred title for each talent;**

**Specialist** – brings specific technical knowledge to bear. Hardly a team role in itself, hence Belbin rejected it for so long and CIPD embedded it in the roles. Technical know-how is often essential to a process, yet a specialist who is not a team player is hard to bear. Some teams may be comprised only of technical specialists, yet it will be important that they play other strong team roles.

Thus our newtitle is:

**SPECIALISM** - denotes a skill and knowledge set, as opposed to specialist (a person).

**Resource investigator** – the one who finds out what we don't know we don't know. Our word here has been '**explorer**' and CIPD use '**curious**'. The gathering of information without which we cannot create. It requires a talent for finding out more, looking outside the familiar territory for relevant information and making new connections.

**EXPLORATION** - encompasses both **Resource Investigator** and **Curious**

**Team worker** – a vital role that is concerned with **definition** of the task in hand. The role does indeed require a **decisive thinker**. Convergent thinking can appear dull in the context of creativity but nothing will be done without rational decision making. Maintains the calm and reason that steadies those who would be swept away by enthusiasm.

**DEFINITION** - encompasses **Decisive Thinker** and is more precise than **Team Worker** (although it may be too different from the role Belbin identifies?).

**Co-ordinator, collaborative** – **cohesive capacity** that 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.

**COHESION** - encompasses **Collaborative** and **Coordinator** and is a way of describing holding together the whole by managing relationships

**Plant** – **Courage to challenge** and generation rich **variety of ideas**. Where one idea might do for others this talent will keep generating more. The downside is the difficulty in settling for any particular idea and actually progressing the job. This may exasperate colleagues.

**GENERATION** - relates to multiplicity of ideas and is more general in application than **Courage To Challenge** or the rather odd **Plant**

**Monitor evaluator** encapsulates the convergence of this stage and is complemented by **Skilled influencer**. Together they amount to **selling the optimal solution**. This role is 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.

**OPTIMISATION** - the championing of the best solution in order to get buy-in and commitment. It encompasses **Monitor-Evaluator** as well as **Skilled Influencer**.

**Implementer** – the **entrepreneurial spirit** of the team. The **role model**. Weighs major factors and takes wise decisions in relation to a wider context. Takes account of the strategic picture, measures risk and then commits totally to realise the project.

**INTENT** - implies commitment - having the will focused on a specific outcome. More than a **role model**, **Implementer** could be managing director.

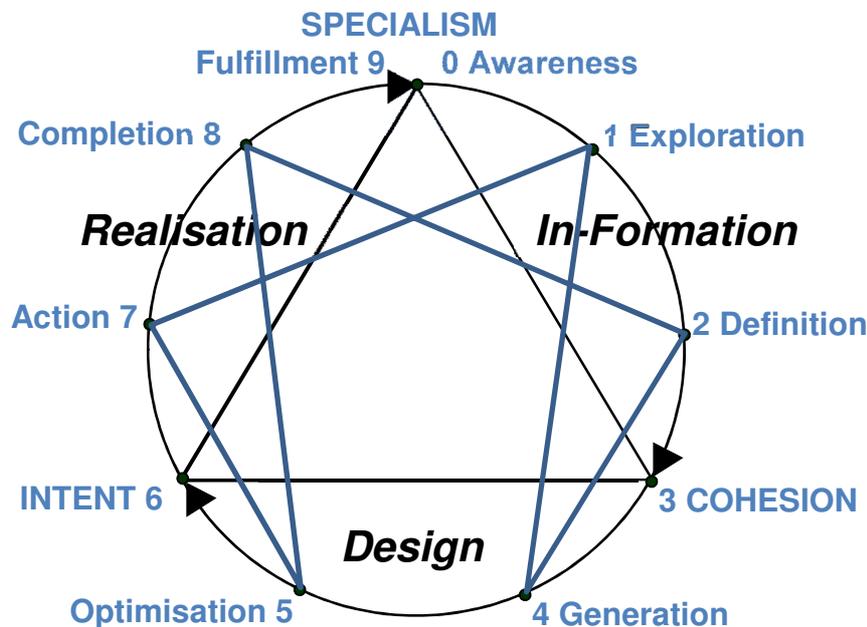
**Shaper** (shapes events) or **Driven to deliver** (drives the process) is the one who enters **the field of action** and gets on with the job. Helps those on the ground to give of their best. Overcomes technical difficulties and delivers on the creative promise by determination and example.

**ACTION** signifies that something is happening as a result of all the cognitive processes that have gone before. Drive would be a good alternative but action indicates manifest activity

**Completer finisher; Homes in** on the finish. **Personally credible** 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.

**COMPLETION** implies **Homing-In** as well as finishing. **Personal Credibility** may be on the line but is earned by quality outcomes

Now we can plot the new titles onto the old creative cycle (with the inner lines of enneagram added)



**Revised titles on creative cycle**

The three major terms of the triangle, as much as something actually 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 specialist knowledge, 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.

The different schema use different words and highlight slightly different aspects of the key roles. The challenge of over-laying the three maps stretches interpretation and deepens understanding of the subtle aspects of behaviour that help progress the temporal progression around the cycle.

To refer briefly to the inner lines, they follow the sequence 142857 (recurring). In truth, the temporal sequence represented by the outer circle is a simple view and iteration more likely follows the inner lines. For instance, exploration is influenced by anticipation of the variety of solutions. They in turn influence the definition of the challenge. Such definition anticipates completion which, in turn, influences the optimisation. Action draws upon what exploration has revealed to realise the optimal solution.

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

**John Varney**  
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