

The Head Teacher is a Team Member

'Two heads are better than one.'

English proverb

As a leader, at any level in a primary school, we will find ourselves a member of a team. So it makes sense to have some appreciation of team dynamics – what makes them tick.

In his work Belbin identifies nine roles needed for a team to be firing on all cylinders. As I describe them now, can you identify with one or more of them?

- The co-ordinator, who oversees the workings of the team. They will be experienced and secure in themselves. Might delegate rather too much;
- The implementer, who can realise the goals of the team;
- The shaper, who motivates others – demands a great deal and may not suffer fools;
- The plant, who is creative but not necessarily good with people;
- The resource investigator, who can track down items that the team needs;
- The monitor/evaluator, who will drill down and be efficient but who may be a glass half-empty person;
- The completer/ finisher, who will get the job done;
- The team worker – good with people, does the work on the ground – puts the hours in;
- The specialist, who brings important skills but who may not buy into the team's goals.

Belbin's work is inevitably a list of stereotypes that may not always apply to the people with whom we have all worked in the primary school, but it has some uses as a discussion point in our sector.

Now, let's consider you. You are, essentially, the point of this book.

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Activity Three

Try to identify yourself within Belbin's group of stereotypes. Where do you fit? List yourself in rank order on a sliding scale of 1–9: 1 being the role that best describes you (in your opinion), and 9 being the role that sums you up least well.

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Activity Four

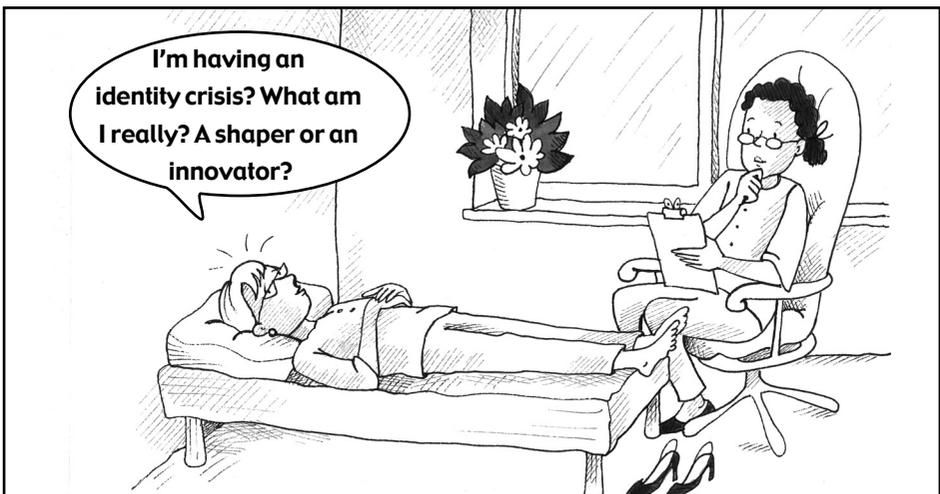
Now let's try to decide which characteristics are the most important to have as a head teacher in a primary school. Rank the nine roles again, where 1 is the most important within the context of leadership and management of the head's role in school, 9 the least important.

Was the task easy?

I guess you struggled. I know I did.

But why, in any case, am I getting you to distinguish your own strengths as an individual in terms of the different roles, when Belbin tells us that a 'group' of people, not one individual, will be needed to represent all nine roles in an effective team? Well, you will need to be able to make the strongest contribution in your leadership team because you, as head teacher, will need to be able to make up for the team's shortfalls in terms of Belbin's list. It's a good idea to know your strengths so you can work on your weaknesses – you will need to be an all-rounder – nothing less will do.

In addition, to be an effective head teacher in a primary school, you will need bits of all nine because at times you may be needed to steer a particular project from conception to completion – alone. Others, who may already be stretched in other directions, will want their say but they will expect you to be in the driving seat – making the pace, setting the momentum and completing the task.



This leads us nicely on to an examination of the differences between leaders and managers. For again, you will need to be both.