

# **Understanding Teamwork: Key Theories and Personal Reflections**

**Module: Effective Team Working and Communication**

**Code: BMSW4009**

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## Introduction

Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively towards a common goal. This includes understanding communication, collaboration, and coordination among team members. Effective teamwork makes it possible for the individual members to complement each other's different skills, views, and strengths towards increased performance and productivity. According to Belbin's Team Roles model, people tend to gravitate naturally in the direction of specific roles based on their strengths and working styles. In my personal experience, I have usually played the role of a "Coordinator", making sure that this change takes place in harmony amongst members of a group. This report seeks to document my work in a team, how various theories and models have guided me in my work, and what I have learned from these experiences.

## Findings

### Understanding Team Development

#### Tuckman's Stages of Group Development (1965)

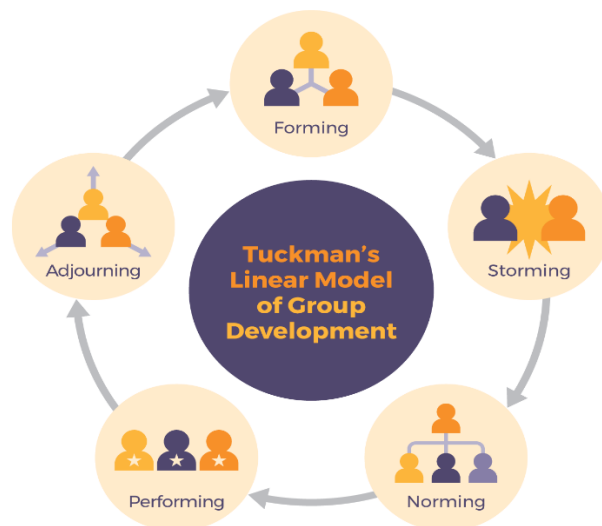


**Figure 1: Tuckman's Stages of Group Development**

(Source: Adam, 2024)

Tuckman's Model, including "Forming", "Storming", "Norming", "Performing", and "Adjourning", has been instrumental in understanding team dynamics (Adam, 2024). This helped me analyse my team experiences more critically.

In a group project, our team went through these stages. Initially, during the Forming stage, everyone was polite and hesitant to take charge. This aligns with Tuckman's

description of this stage as a period of orientation. However, the Storming stage was challenging, disagreements arose regarding workload distribution. Previously, I viewed conflict as negative, but understanding this stage helped me see that it was necessary for team growth. We eventually entered the Norming stage after openly discussing our concerns and clarifying expectations. Finally, in the Performing stage, we worked efficiently to complete our project. This model has helped me understand that team development is not always linear, and setbacks can occur.

### **Belbin's Team Roles Theory (1981)**



**Figure 2: Belbin's Team Roles Theory**

(Source: Belbin, 2010)

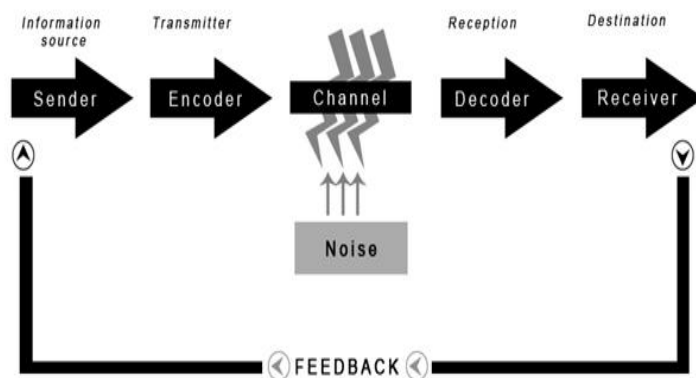
Belbin's Team Roles Theory suggests that individuals naturally assume specific roles within a team. The nine Belbin Team Roles are "Resource Investigator", "Team worker", "Co-ordinator", "Plant", "Monitor Evaluator", "Specialist", "Shaper", "Implementer", and "Completer/Finisher" (Belbin, 2010). Understanding these roles helps teams balance strengths and weaknesses, ensuring that all necessary skills are present. In my experience, I naturally take on the coordinator role, organising and ensuring clarity in teamwork. However, I have learned that relying heavily on one role can limit effectiveness. Recognising and embracing different roles within a team has helped me delegate better and improve collaboration, leading to more successful outcomes.

In one project, I was assigned to manage a team tasked with planning an event. Initially, I took charge of every task, and at times, I would forget to consult my team members. I felt frustrated when the team operated differently than I had expected. This

experience led me to reflect on Belbin's Team Roles. I realised that it is very important to have a Coordinator who keeps the focus of the group and recognises individuals' strengths when delegating. By observing the model, I learned to be more mindful of others' contributions and allow for more autonomy, which resulted in a much more effective collaboration.

## Communication and Active Listening

### Shannon-Weaver's Communication Model (1949)



SHANNON-WEAVER'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

### Figure 3: Shannon-Weaver's Communication Model

(Source: Quintanilla and Wahl, 2019)

Effective communication is one of the most vital elements for teamwork to function effectively (Quintanilla and Wahl, 2019). The "Shannon-Weaver Communication Model" helps to acknowledge the utmost importance of ensuring message transmission comprehensibility and facilitating response to avoid miscommunication (Kusumalatha, 2023). During a team presentation, miscommunication regarding who would present which sections led to confusion and missed deadlines.

I saw that the communication breakdown occurred because we lacked clear instructions and regular check-ins. There was also a lack of active listening, each member assumed the other had completed each of their sections. Based on the Shannon-Weaver model, I realised that we needed to improve upon our feedback loops and be in the loop as soon as possible within the process. After adopting this approach in future projects, our communication became much more effective, leading to smoother collaboration. This experience proved the importance of open, consistent communication and the need to address any breakdowns in communication quickly.

# Conflict Resolution and Emotional Intelligence

## a. Thomas-Kilmann's Conflict Resolution Model (1974)

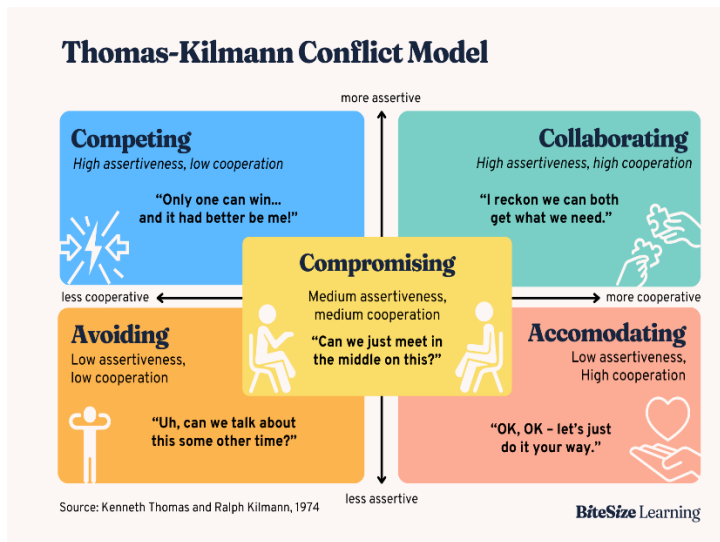


**Figure 4: Thomas-Kilmann's Conflict Resolution Model**

(Source: Benke, 2023)

Conflict resolution involves addressing disagreements constructively, promoting open communication, and understanding different perspectives (Stadler, 2019). The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolution Model, which outlines five conflict styles including "Competing", "Collaborating", "Compromising", "Avoiding", and "Accommodating", was particularly insightful in understanding how conflict affects team dynamics (Benke, 2023). In a project where two members disagreed over the final approach, my natural response was to avoid conflict (Avoiding style). However, this only led to unresolved tension and worsened the situation. After studying the conflict resolution model, I realised that avoiding conflict only delayed the inevitable and potentially undermined team morale. Applying the Collaborating style in a later situation, I facilitated a conversation where everyone's opinions were heard, and we arrived at a compromise that everyone agreed on.

## b. Daniel Goleman's Theory (1995)



**Figure 5: Daniel Goleman's Theory**

(Source: Williams, 2021)

Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence played a crucial role in managing conflicts effectively (Williams, 2021). Goleman's model emphasises "self-awareness", "self-regulation", "motivation", "empathy", and "social skills". I struggled with self-regulation when disagreements arose, leading to emotional reactions. However, through Goleman's framework, I became more mindful of my emotions and their impact on the group. Practising empathy and social skills helped me understand others' viewpoints and respond thoughtfully, thereby facilitating effective resolutions of conflict.

### **Situational Leadership and Adaptability (1977)**

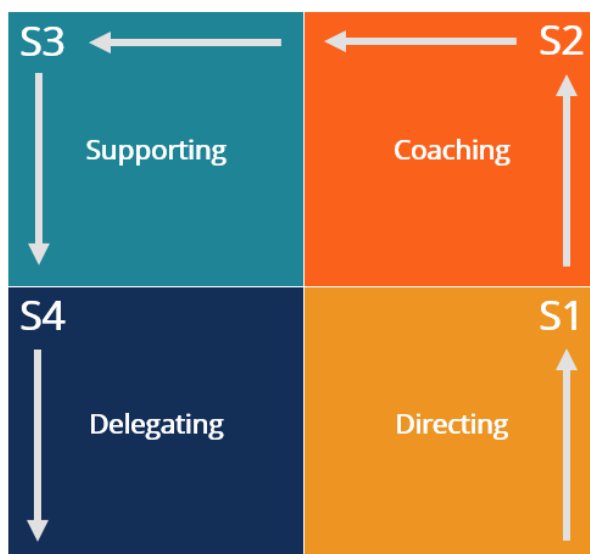


**Figure 6: Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model**

(Source: Bashir *et al.*, 2022)

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model highlights that competent leaders vary their leadership style by the level of maturity and competence of their teams (Bashir *et al.*, 2022). I began an assignment in groups with a "Directive leadership" style of offering explicit directions. I changed to a "Delegative leadership style" slowly as the team grew more confident, giving the members more latitude in decision-making. This change helped the team to feel more encouraged and driven in their job. I recognised the value of being adaptable and adjusted my leadership style to align with the maturity and skills of my team.

## **Conclusion**

This module analysed key theories and models that enhance the understanding of teams and my role within them. I have learned of the importance and necessity of recognising stages of group development, balancing different roles, communicating clearly, and dealing constructively with conflict. In future, I will work on my delegation skills and avoid micromanaging team members. I will focus much more on active listening to build communication. I will bring a more collaborative approach to conflict resolution and make use of emotional intelligence to respond with empathy. I will also modify my style of leadership depending on how the team is adjusting. These strategies will assist me to become a more flexible, supportive, and efficient team player in my future projects through continuous practice.

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