“To see yourself as others see you…”

In my semi-retirement, I am still asked pertinent questions which I duly try and answer, in between signing a stack of accreditation certificates which seem to land on my desk from all corners of the world, in ever increasing numbers. One relevant question I attempted to answer recently was:

“Since self-awareness seems to arise consistently as key to management and leadership, I am wondering whether Belbin research shows support for having a coherent profile when it comes to successful management and successful leadership?”

Coherence relates to seeing the self as others see you. It is a straightforward notion and I endorse it both for managers and leaders. To allow a gap to open up between the two perceptions is to mislead either the self or others. In relation to the latter, one might call it the “Madoff Effect”: something one can get away with for a time but not forever. But to mislead oneself creates another form of damage. It is to project an image that, however desirable in itself, is one the self cannot live up to. It is a way of building up stress in order to satisfy the immediate situation. At the same time, the inner self knows that the true self will eventually emerge.

Here at Belbin, we advocate that managers and leaders find out their salient characteristics, project what is real and try to develop themselves as role models of the type. That may be an ideal, but it is not always possible. Inevitably, individuals in responsible positions need to take on different roles when engaging with different people at different times. Such versatility is a mark of highly effective behaviour. There are two separate objectives here, each of which needs to be addressed. One should not detract from the other, and finding a middle way is not always easy, but then managers who are worth their salt should thrive on the need to address what is difficult.
A new online platform for e-interplace

For those of you who use our current e-interplace Team Role testing software, there is now a comprehensive online account, which you may wish to consider as an alternative. If you are comfortable with using your software and dongle, and often work away from any internet connection, then software remains the best option for you. However, if you predominantly use Belbin where you and your participants have full internet access, this platform may be an option for your future needs.

The online platform has a number of advantages:

- Your account is entirely online. There is no need for software installation or dongles and you won’t need to worry about importing data, or contacting your IT support for help.

- Data is processed and held on our secure server, so you can access your account from any computer, wherever you are, hassle-free.

- The system is accessible to a number of users at once: administrators within your organisation can share login details and access the same data.

- The system can produce automated individual reports that can be emailed to you or the participant, and can be made securely available online. Team reports can be generated in a similar way to the software. All reports can be viewed, e-mailed or printed online from Adobe PDF documents.

- For the first time, via the extranet, Job Reporting can now be completed online by those responsible for the job and potential assessors. These reports can be a valuable aid in the process of selection, recruitment and placement.

There are no cost implications in switching platforms, or difference in purchasing testing lives, and we can upload any previous software data and credit existing testing lives upon return of your dongle. If you are interested in switching or just want to find out more, please contact Peter at support@belbin.com or +44(0)1223 264975

New e-interplace languages

We are delighted to announce that there are two additional e-interplace Team Role reporting languages to add the existing portfolio. Greek is near completion, and Italian should be finished by the end of this year. Greek is being handled by BELBIN Greece (www.belbin.gr) and Italian by the “Italian arm” of our North American distributor, 3Circle Partners (www.improvingteams.com)
Interplace 7 and a new Self-Perception Inventory

The Belbin Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) has been in existence since 1980 and was modified in 1987 to incorporate the Specialist role. We now have the opportunity to address some issues which have arisen over the years and to produce a new, refined version of the inventory.

In revising the SPI, we have re-examined the definitions and characteristics of each Team Role, dividing each into four constituent contributions. Each Team Role is a cluster of characteristics which must be equally and consistently represented in the inventory.

Both the SPI and Observer Assessment were subject to statistical analysis, so that we could revise those items which did not fit these definitions or whose language was outmoded. By adding an eighth section to the SPI, we have been able to represent each constituent characteristic twice, thereby increasing the accuracy of feedback, without compromising the end-user’s experience of completing the inventory.

As a result, we now have a set of more robust and user-friendly inventories which will be subject to reliability and validity studies. We are pleased to announce that Stephen Swailes, of the University of Hull, will be conducting studies to analyse the data. New calculations and reports will follow in due course in 2010.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED – Vicky Brown needs volunteers to complete the new Self and Observer Assessment inventories. She needs 1000 new SPIs with observations to begin interpretation of the data. Unfortunately, as we cannot norm the data until we have the 1000, we will not be able to issue a report straight away. If you would like to help with this, please contact Vicky at research@belbin.com.

New date and venue for the CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition

17-19th November 2009

Having exhibited at Harrogate for more years than we care to mention, the CIPD is taking us to pastures new – Manchester Central! The exhibition is free to attend. If you would like to come along and visit our stand (418), we’d be delighted to see you.

Our product range will be on view, along with a demonstration of our new online Team Role profiling account (see below.) Further details for the exhibition and conference programme can be found at: www.cipd.co.uk/visitace
The Belbin Guide To Succeeding At Work

Belbin were pleased to launch ‘The Belbin Guide to Succeeding at Work’ at the stylish Lansdowne Club in Mayfair on 17th September. The event was well attended by clients and fans of the Belbin methodology. Dr. Meredith Belbin spoke of the interplay between individual success and productive teamwork, and also of the challenges facing managers and leaders in the current climate.

‘The Belbin Guide to Succeeding at Work’ is written for anyone who wants to gain a greater understanding of their own behaviour and that of those around them, in order to achieve professional success. The book contains tips on playing to one’s strengths, avoiding pitfalls and managing difficult behaviour.

A & C Black (the business section of Bloomsbury publishing) have taken on the distribution of the title, making it broadly available in Tesco, WHSmith and Borders. The book can also be purchased online: http://www.acblack.com/Catalogue/details.asp?sku=1426407&dept%5Fid=16 or from Amazon.

Staff news

Many of you know our Cambridge-based team. But just in case you are not so familiar:

We are pleased to announce that, on September 10th, Jo Keeler gave birth to a baby girl. Both mother and baby are doing fine after being rushed into hospital for an early delivery. On her return (hopefully at the end of March), Jo (jo@belbin.com) will come back to run the commercial and marketing department. Jill Cooper (jill@belbin.com) is responsible for all administration. Peter Lancaster (peter@belbin.com) is responsible for client and distributor support. David Bainbridge (dave@belbin.com) is in charge of all technical and IT matters, including the design of Interplace 7 (out next year). Vicky Brown (vicky@belbin.com) is responsible for our research and works with David on software development. Deborah McGovern (deborah@belbin.com) runs and is expanding our Training and Consultancy Department, and Barrie Watson (barrie@belbin.com) will be heading a new Belbin Consultancy to encourage clients using our tools to realise the full potential of their investment. We also welcome Deborah Stevens who is working for 6 months to help in Jo’s absence. She will be known as “Debs” (debs@belbin.com) to avoid any potential name confusion!

We are sad that Gytha Lodge left on 18th September. We wish her every success in her new career as a writer/director. She will undertake occasional work for Belbin on a freelance basis.