Stay healthy, use Belbin Team Roles!
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Increase long-term employability by maximising Team Roles

Sick employees cost organisations a lot of time and money. One estimate is that a sick employee costs between €200 and €400 Euros a day. The most commonly mentioned tips on the prevention of sick leave use words such as 'integrated approach', 'policy' and 'clear communication'. These are all valuable tips. What struck me is that little attention is paid to *the causes* of absenteeism. A look at sick leave through the eyes of diversity and Team Roles provides three interesting tips about preventing sick leave absences.

Match (team) tasks and team roles

How often does it happen that team members carry out tasks that do not really suit their natural behaviours? Personally (PL/ME/CF) I worked in a senior role for a large training company for a number of years. This was an interesting, but highly demanding job in terms of being both Co-ordinator and Implementer. After three years in this role I left, leaving behind a happy team, but being almost totally burnt out myself.

Manage the group dynamics, deal with dominant roles

Team Role arrogance: a familiar phenomenon. Put a group of Implementers together and the group culture will reflect being action-oriented, practical and hands on. You could say that Team Role majority determines group culture. Wisdom of the minority is therefore lost. Even worse, that one Plant in a team of Implementers is at risk of isolation. In many organisations, there is a strong tendency of employing the same types of personalities. This makes sense because these behaviours will match the prevailing culture in a comfortable way. However, this clashes with concurrent needs for diversity. In a large retail organisation where I often work, the dominant and prevailing culture a mix of Teamworker, Implementer and Co-ordinator. Practical and social people, always

looking for connection. This is nice for customers and for mutual cohesion, but not so good for the organisation's ambitions. Many times I have witnessed the demise of 'strangers' in the fry due to a mismatch in Team Roles. Prevent disconnection or sick leave among the important Team Role minority, and really create the space in which they can prove their added value.

Acknowledge individual role conflicts promptly

Denise is a Teamworker/Shaper. She works in external sales for a very ambitious organisation. On the surface this is a perfect Team Role combination for this role: relationship orientation towards customers together with a healthy dose of ambition. But Denise has already had a few weeks of sick leave at home. She was not able to deal with her internal conflict: to hold back or to go full throttle; to really focus on the customer or to score results. I regularly coach people who experience such internal team role conflict. It often helps to 'prioritise' their Team Roles. First things first, followed by the next, one at a time.

Attention to Team Roles within teams is not a luxury, or just something for a team activity. Attention to Team Roles increases sustained employability of employees and leads to healthy employees and lower costs!