

“Dr Meredith understands me - my colleagues don't!”

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These words were spoken by Janice, an African senior executive in a global development agency, at the end of a five day leadership program for senior women - developed by my wife Normala, which she and I ran together. Much of the workshop is concerned with awareness development of personal style particularly when leading others in a team. So of course we use Belbin profiles as the premier tool in this module. All had gone well during the Belbin module, where we used our normal games, self-reflection and detailed profiling explanation. We knew that Janice had enjoyed the session but she did not mention anything in particular.

It was only doing the final feedback where each individual speaks of their learning over the five days, that Janice said (with a tear in her eye) “Please say thank you to Dr Meredith, he understands me – my colleagues don't.” These were her words:

“When I first joined the agency I was full of ambition and drive to really do something about the quality of water in rural Africa. And I had lots of good ideas about how to do that. So it was no surprise to me that in my Belbin Self-Perception my top three roles were Shaper, Plant and Monitor Evaluator. However, I was disappointed to see that the top three from my observers were Teamworker, Implementer and Completer Finisher. I struggled to understand this and you (Normala and Phil) clarified things during the team module. But only on reflection do I realise how, over the years, I had begun to lose touch with my true self. Although, as I say, I was eager to do something about rural water quality, in order to get on in the organization (which is mostly male oriented) I slipped into a supportive role. When we had conferences I was the one who did all the detailed paperwork. I was the one who did the catering. When somebody needed a shoulder to cry on they turned to me.

By becoming the team's Completer Finisher, Implementer and Teamworker I began to lose sight of the original reason why I joined the organization and the dream I had about impacting the quality of rural water. By seeing the big gap between myself-perception score and the scores of my colleagues, I realize how

far I have come from my original dream. So please say thank you to Dr Meredith and let him know that when I go back to work on Monday, my colleagues will get to see more of the creative drive which I had when I first joined the organisation. Dr Meredith understands me – my colleagues don't”.