

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies (FDB)

Anthony O'Hara is an Organisational Development Business Partner at FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies (FDB). His role requires him to be the organisation's critical friend – he works to help the business improve through utilising the people within it for best performance. With Specialist as one of his top three Team Roles, there's little wonder that he thrives on collecting data and looking for triggers – he loves learning.

His goals relate to continuous improvement - and he has been doing quite a bit of work over the last couple of years on team development projects. He also works closely with HR in supporting the collaboratively designed People Strategy.

What's the best bit of your work?

Without a doubt, it's the different people I work with. Having the opportunity to see them flourish means no two days are the same – I'm known here at FDB for saying that 'Every day is a school day' – we never stop learning...

What frustrates you?

That's easy – not being able to do everything I want to in my work. Sometimes people need support or input quickly and my diary is becoming so full that I can't always respond as quickly as I'd like to.

You know Belbin is working when...

We definitely know that Belbin is making a difference in how people work together at FDB because just today, I heard people talking about a development day I hosted last year – they were referring to their own Team Roles and how they want to look for someone with other roles to join a Project Team that is on the horizon. It was a real lightbulb moment for me – the learning sticks.

What are your top Team Roles?

I'm a Specialist, Resource Investigator and Co-ordinator. I used to be more of a Plant but that's not as high now that colleagues see and value other behaviours much more in my work. I last did my Belbin Individual Report in June 2018 when I became a Belbin Accredited Practitioner - it is so me - I like to start things off and get things going but am not a Completer Finisher, that's not my bag, but that's the value of working with others in a team!

How do you use Belbin?

I use Belbin Individual Reports and Team Reports as part of team development days and follow up activities. Usually hosted on site, teams complete their Belbin reports ahead of the day itself and we go through them and the model together. The main focus of that day is agreeing actions at each stage for the entire team – and we have a six month, and 12 month follow up with the team to see how those actions are progressing.

We also look at social styles and learning styles. Teams are fascinated to learn about themselves – and these tools are all there to help us facilitate individuals understanding themselves and others a little more. That learning enables us to be more productive and who wouldn't want that?

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From there, I run individual coaching sessions for members of the teams. We use the Belbin Individual Reports to take a really close look at each person – and this is where the real value starts to come through. There’s so much uptake for this because it is an opportunity to really think about our behaviours and how we – and others – are interacting.

We look at how we can influence others in our team and how we can work more closely together. We even talk about how we can say “These are my strengths, can we look for opportunities to use them?” because that’s just not something that people usually mention in conversation!

This individual coaching session is also perfect as a reference point when someone is ready to look for their next challenge. We want it to be within the business – their Individual Report gives them ways to look for roles and projects which are most suited to their preferences, and also enables recruiting managers to consider how the person could potentially fit within their existing team, increasing the likelihood that it would have a positive outcome for everyone in the longer term.

When I coach managers, we talk about how they can use their own Individual Report – but we also talk about their responsibility to use the Reports to support each individuals developments within the team. How will they look for work which really suits their preferred Team Roles? How will they help each person to work to their strengths? We teach managers that the goal is not to try and develop weaknesses but to develop those strengths so people can be a great example of their preferred roles in action.

What’s next?

I’ve been with FDB for just over four years now and the organisation and my manager have been fantastic in supporting me with my on-going education and development. In my time here at FDB I’ve completed my MBTI Steps I and II as well as gaining accreditation in using the EQi-2.0 and Belbin tools.

I’ve also started my Level 7 in organisational development and design. I have a Level 5 in coaching and mentoring and I’m going to start my Level 7 coaching and mentoring qualification in October. It’s been a busy four years to say the least but I’ve loved every minute here. It’s a very progressive company and I’m proud to be part of it.

At the moment, it’s just me delivering Belbin. It would be good for someone else to be able to deliver within the team – for the development days and the one to one coaching afterwards. We’ve already established mentoring within the business – next up, we need more coaches so that we can broaden the repertoire of people and help them to help staff as much as possible.

Of course I get a lot out of helping people. But for the staff, it’s by understanding ourselves that little bit more that helps them with the first steps on their journey that can take them anywhere their ambitions want.

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What made you choose Belbin?

I've known of Belbin for a long time and experienced it throughout my career. It's a great tool – people are familiar with it. I knew I'd need to be trained and learn to use it correctly – but it wasn't just learning for learning's sake – I now credibly deliver a product that helps the business – it helps the individuals themselves, it helps teams work together more effectively which in turn drives the organisation forward to meet its goals.

Any tool that can help us do this – and Belbin is an excellent tool to do this – to help us identify our strengths and weaknesses – and work more effectively to help the business face challenges together is a good thing. We are not going to achieve much on our own.

If we can start developing our teams to work to that common purpose and understand each other better, that will only strengthen the team – using each person's unique talents, strengths and knowledge to contribute to the team's success.

Would you recommend Belbin?

Of course. That's why I volunteered for this conversation - it's been very good for me, the organisation and the teams and individuals within it. I am always learning through my use of Belbin – and now that I know that we have more and more people wanting to use it, there's a real cumulative effect starting. We're also seeing the interest in the follow up for long term development – this demonstrates that Belbin will be at the heart of our offering for years to come.

Belbin is sticking around within FDB. In fact, I would say that's it's only going to grow now that Belbin is finally on people's horizons for recruitment.

Even though Belbin is enabling so much already, I mustn't forget that we know we've got more to do with it – the next objective is to consistently use Belbin when establishing project teams.

How will you use Belbin with project teams?

We see Belbin as providing a huge competitive advantage in forming project teams. As an example if we don't have a Plant in those initial stages, then we're going to struggle. We know that we need people with specific Team Roles to make projects happen – so why wouldn't we want to know who those people are and make use of them?

On Belbin and communication within a team.

I supported a team recently. Someone who is not known for speaking their mind said "That is exactly me...Just tell me what needs to be done and I will do it." They're an Implementer and this was a huge moment for them all. Everything stopped and the team really got to grips with this. It was great to see that honest feedback. That moment of disclosure.

This is what I want to see more of – and Belbin was the catalyst for the discussion to unpack the things they were keeping inside. It's fair to say that the conversations that followed were a revelation. The manager could see the gaps in their team – and the huge opportunities for personal development which are vital to retention.

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On Belbin and the opportunity it provides FDB.

Belbin provides FDB with a huge opportunity. Belbin offers us an insight into individuals strengths where we can now objectively look to utilise rare, untapped talents and use them and develop them when opportunities arise. It's not about a secondment for months on end – even if a Completer Finisher is brought into a project team for one day, that could see the team over any challenge the team is experiencing. Imagine the value of putting a Plant in at the point where they are needed? Enabling a team to really get going?

Embedding a culture of agility – of bringing in the people and behaviours at the start, middle or end of a project will be a huge asset going forwards. Having this intelligent outlook gives FDB the agility to respond quickly and make people feel so valued when they are parachuted in.

Their work is enriched and learning can be taken back to their 'day job'. And of course some projects have more profile than others so this is also a great way to help people have visibility for their contributions to projects, regardless of their size. By having your role enriched, there's an intrinsic motivator and this helps massively within the business.

And of course that helps with retention.

It's not just about retention. We look for these engagement opportunities because it's the right thing to do. At FDB we believe that these practices are the right thing to do and as a by-product we get retention – it's just another outcome.

We are here to help make life changing medicines – I know I'm coming back to the same phrase but if we can accelerate that process and get medicine to people more quickly, why wouldn't we do that? Being able to pluck someone from one team and parachute them into another fits so well with our purpose – it's part of our outlook to talk about our sense of purpose – and the value in knowing that your contribution helps that purpose be achieved cannot be underestimated.

If you're not already using Belbin to help your teams become High-Performing, please call us on 01223 264975 to talk about how we can help. Or email us at team@belbin.com. We work all over the world, helping individuals, teams and their managers - including the C Suite - get to know themselves and each other - and enable everyone to make their very best contributions in the workplace.