

Northumbria University Business School

Dr Teresa Roca, Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Human Resources at Northumbria Business School, shares how she uses Belbin across the world to give students a competitive advantage, increase employability and develop emotional and cultural intelligence.

"I have been using Belbin with our Undergraduate and Postgraduate students at Northumbria University for several years. More than 600 students complete their Belbin Individual Reports each year as part of the modules I deliver in the fields of Employability, Leadership and Human Resources.

How do you use Belbin?

Belbin is part of the set of tools and psychometric tests I deliver to contribute to students' employability and career development. I find it extremely useful in raising awareness of behaviour in teams and as part of their learning how to manage the self and others manage effectively.

Belbin is a very straightforward tool. It is easy for students to analyse and interpret their results and contribute to their experiential, developmental and assessed work.

The recent addition of Belbin in Chinese will be a huge help to International Students who have sometimes struggled to complete their Self Perception Inventory in English.

Students complete their Belbin Team Roles Assessment online and are asked whether they can identify behavioural patterns that will help them learn about themselves in a responsible and objective manner – that will support them to achieve their full potential.

How does Belbin affect employability?

I believe that our students have a competitive advantage as they go out into their chosen careers - that their Belbin Reports have helped them become more self-aware and aware of behaviours in their peers. This makes them better able to understand differences in communication.

I also think that this knowledge and awareness contributes to the development of their emotional and cultural intelligence: by knowing about their own preferred Team Roles, their strengths and areas for development as well as of their peers, they learn to be sensitive to others.

When our students go to assessment centres, having carried out their Belbin profiles and self-reflection, they are better equipped 'to stand out from the crowd' when undertaking group exercises.

Our postgraduate students are often looking for career progression so they are also advantaged if they choose to use Belbin. This may contribute to their having less conflict and miscommunication issues with the teams they lead and manage – making them more successful leaders or managers. They may also choose to use Belbin in their selection procedures and demonstrate that they are not just more employable by having essential soft skills – they may be seen as furthering their own careers and those of others.

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Using Belbin with Undergraduates

I use Belbin with more than 400 undergraduate students each year. Belbin equips students with the knowledge and skills to go on a journey of self-discovery and make better-informed career choices. They use a series of developmental tools and psychometric tests. Belbin is at the heart of their experiences with teamwork.

Belbin Team Role theory is explained in a theoretical lecture before the Self Perception Inventories are completed. The resulting Report goes directly to students. These are then used in group exercises in seminars and students can choose who they want to work with. We recommend that they look to build balanced teams – it is always interesting to see how activities unfold.

The activities enable them to draw on their Belbin profiles – students are usually curious and excited about the possibility of learning more about themselves. They are also prompted to ask for Observer feedback.

Using Belbin with Postgraduates

Belbin is also an integral part of my delivery within Master's studies. Belbin supports the development of Master's students who endeavour to be more successful managers and leaders. In the UK, we use Belbin as part of a series of activities during residential weekends for MSc students.

I have also used Belbin in Singapore with cohorts of high-profile, part-time MBA students in residential weekends which are organised around teaching students self-awareness and team work skills.

They enormously valued identifying the opportunities to use Belbin within their jobs and future projects. The feedback in Singapore in particular, was fantastic.

Belbin is not just a way to develop themselves in isolation - students appreciate the feedback from others in the residential and from their workplace colleagues and superiors.

Using Belbin to teach conflict management skills

My lectures teach students of different levels (level 6 and 7) to spend more time reflecting on themselves and others – they use Belbin to find explanations and provide evidence for their behaviours, emotions and *modus operandi* in critical incidents and scenarios to deepen their self-awareness of how and why they acted in certain ways. In turn, they develop their problem-solving and/or conflict resolution strategies, by acquiring invaluable know how to build on in their careers.

Conflict is inevitable in the workplace. I am committed to suggest to our students not to look to avoid problems, but instead, to learn and be empowered to address it effectively through deeper understanding of themselves and others. Belbin is a tool that enables us to equip students with the skills, knowledge and awareness to address these issues both professionally and within their relationships. Our students become empowered and more resilient. They have another window into their understanding of themselves and other human beings.”