

Bad Apple Syndrome

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Occasionally, an individual's behaviour can have a disproportionate effect on the team as a whole. Sometimes this effect is a positive one, but as consultants we tend to be involved when the effect is detrimental to the team. This was highlighted by **Barrie Watson**:

"I was approached by the directors of an American electronic components manufacturer. From meetings with the CEO and other directors it was elicited that the main team issue was due to the Operations Director. It was claimed that his behaviour alone rendered business meetings a waste of time, as they usually contained lots of conflict, apportioning blame and slanging matches." Each director completed a Belbin Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) and Observer Assessments (OA) on one other. The team building event was designed and involved:

1. Providing and explaining the Belbin reports for each person.
2. Explaining the issue of difficult Team Role chemistry. We tend to be comfortable with people with similar behaviour to ourselves, but more effective with people who have an 'opposite' Team Role profile.
3. Conducting a business simulation exercise: this involved each director reporting back on how they interacted with the other directors during the exercise and which of these interactions they enjoyed the most and least. (Care was taken to avoid personal or speculative comments.)

Two weeks after the workshop each director was given a one hour slot to discuss their Belbin reports and devise a personal effectiveness strategy.

"Each Director demonstrated a better understanding about the difference between **difficult Team Role chemistry** (contrasting/opposite Team Roles) and **problem behaviour** (too many allowable/non-allowable weaknesses without the corresponding strengths). This they reported helped the interaction between each of them, both inside and outside formal meetings. There was a consensus that their formal meetings were much more effective. The Financial Director summed it up by saying: **"We sometimes end up laughing now about something that previously we would have fought over."**

The Director, whose 'difficult' behaviour was having a detrimental effect on the business meetings, made good progress as a result of his enhanced awareness and mutual feedback.

"This improvement was verified after three months by each Director obtaining a new set of Observer Assessments from each of the other directors. There was a marked decrease in the number of high scoring List B words and a corresponding increase in List A words. This showed that **the strengths of each behaviour were being seen and valued more by others and not being overshadowed by corresponding weaknesses."**

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