# Unit 6: Interpretation Guide for Team Role Preference Self-Assessment

The lecture and chapter for this topic discussed the importance of teams to the success of organizations and explored a variety of stages of team development and the roles that team members can play as part of a team.  A team member might play one or more roles at any given time and, over time, the roles s/he plays may vary.

All of the roles addressed by this self-assessment are important to the success of a team.  Who plays which role(s) is dependent on a number of factors including the needs of the team, the capabilities of team members, the team's purpose, leadership, organizational culture, personalities of members, expectations of team members, and individual preferences.

Five important roles typically found in teams are described below:

**Encourager:**  An effective encourager focuses on building the enthusiasm and commitment of team members.  This is often done through praise for team members and their ideas, through statements that create optimism, and through statements that are supportive of team members and their efforts.  The encourager may often comment on the value provided by individual team members and the collective strengths of the team.  This behavior can foster team solidarity.

**Gatekeeper:**  The effective gatekeeper encourages and ensures that all team members have and take the opportunity to contribute to the team.  This is done in an effort to prevent individual members from dominating discussion and to encourage all members to participate.  The gatekeeper may paraphrase what s/he perceives as consensus to move discussion forward.  This behavior can help all ideas be heard and contribute to team cohesion.

**Harmonizer:**  The effective harmonizer can effectively mediate conflict situations.  This is done to prevent conflicts from becoming overly personal and to facilitate the healthy management of conflicting positions.  The harmonizer finds ways to bridge gaps between team members and their positions while emphasizing that conflict can be a healthy, natural part of team interactions.  S/he keeps the focus on team goals and finding ways to achieve those goals.

**Initiator:**  The initiator often suggests new goals or ideas for the team to consider.  This is done in an effort to keep the team focused on the future and on identifying potential paths to team success.  At times, rather than suggest goals or ideas, the initiator might initiate a process that encourages other team members to offer suggestions for goals and ideas for achieving success.  The initiator understands that, without shared goals, teams seldom achieve at a high level and takes the lead in defining and pursing paths to important goals.

**Recorder:**  The recorder performs a "group memory" function by documenting discussion and outcomes.  S/he may restate what has been said and done to date to help the team assess its

progress and to help identify what still needs to be done.  This can help team efficiency as well as help the team make sure that important aspects of the team's work are being conducted and that outcomes are being achieved.

The purpose of this self-assessment is to identify the degree to which you tend to assume each of the five potential team roles.  There is no one most important role for a team but it is of utmost importance that all five roles are appropriately executed.  At some stages of development, some roles are more important than others but this may change over time.  At times, you may need to hold a combination of roles and the role(s) your team needs you to hold may change over time.  Often team members gravitate toward the roles that they believe they are best at and avoid those they are less comfortable with.  For the good of the team, however, it is important that you learn how to hold any of these roles and prepare yourself to do so when the team needs that from you.

As you look at your self-assessment results, first determine whether you have one score that is substantially higher than your other scores.  If so, that is clearly your team role preference and probably the one you will be the most comfortable with.  You are likely to gravitate toward that role over time and across teams.  If you routinely hold that role, your identity is likely to be defined that way by your other team members.  If you allow this to happen, you may limit your value to your team over time and limit your ability to broadly contribute to team success.

Some of you will not have a dominant role preference.  If that is the case for you, it could sometimes be difficult for other team members to determine where you "fit" when the team is first formed but this can make it less likely that you will be pigeon-holed as someone who can only play one role.  Having no strong role preference will probably make it easier for you to move across roles as your team evolves over time and as you move from team to team.

As you look at your scores remember that all of these roles are important to a team and that what is critical for team success is that someone successfully fills each of these roles.  Also note that the first three roles emphasize interpersonal behavior while the last two emphasize a task orientation.

Higher scores for a role indicate higher preference for holding that role.  Consider the following:

## Encourager

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Score of 3-7 | = | Low Preference for Encourager Role |
| Score of 8-10 | = | Medium Preference for Encourager Role |
| Score of 11-15 | = | High Preference for Encourager Role |

## Gatekeeper

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Score of 3-7 | = | Low Preference for Gatekeeper Role |
| Score of 8-10 | = | Medium Preference for Gatekeeper Role |

Score of 11-15     =     High Preference for Gatekeeper Role

## **<u>Harmonizer</u>**

Score of 3-7     =     Low Preference for Harmonizer Role
Score of 8-10     =     Medium Preference for Harmonizer Role
Score of 11-15     =     High Preference for Harmonizer Role

## **<u>Initiator</u>**

Score of 3-7     =     Low Preference for Initiator Role
Score of 8-10     =     Medium Preference for Initiator Role
Score of 11-15     =     High Preference for Initiator Role

## **<u>Recorder</u>**

Score of 3-7     =     Low Preference for Recorder Role
Score of 8-10     =     Medium Preference for Recorder Role
Score of 11-15     =     High Preference for Recorder Role