

role on a team is the consistent way you communicate with others on the team. You work out your role as you balance your own expectations of yourself and the expectations others have of you. There is also evidence that your personality and the personality characteristics of other team members have major influences on team role development.<sup>56</sup>

Over 60 years ago, group communication scholars Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats identified a list of group roles that remains a classic way of identifying the group and individual roles that group and team members typically assume.<sup>57</sup>

In business and corporate settings, your specific role may be prescribed by your job title or position. If you are the boss, you may be expected to be the procedural leader and conduct meetings, set the meeting agenda, or assign people to do certain jobs. But even if your position in the organization prescribes your role, there are still some roles that are shaped by the specific situation and job at hand. The roles people assume in teams can be classified into three types.

**TASK ROLES** *Task roles* are behaviors that help the group achieve its goal and accomplish its work. Gathering and sharing research with the group, taking minutes of meetings, and writing ideas on a chalkboard are examples of task role behavior. These roles are listed in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Task Roles

Task Roles	Description	Example
Initiator/contributor	Offers new ideas or approaches to the group; suggests ways of getting the job done	"How about developing an agenda to help us organize our work?"
Information seeker	Asks for additional clarification, facts, or other information that helps the group with the issues at hand	"Can anyone tell me how many times we have had to cancel our fall conference because of bad weather?"
Opinion seeker	Asks group members to share opinions or express a personal point of view	"So, what do you all think of the new uniform that all of the service workers have been asked to wear?"
Information giver	Provides facts, examples, statistics, or other evidence that relates to the task confronting the group	"Within the past year, the Vice President for Information Technology has told us to use two different information management systems."
Opinion giver	Offers opinions or beliefs about what the group is discussing	"I think the new information technology policy will decrease our productivity."
Elaborator	Provides comments or examples to extend or add to the comments of others	"Jessica, that's a good point. The same thing happened to me when I worked for our main competitor two years ago."

Coordinator	Clarifies and notes relationships among the ideas and suggestions that have been offered by others	"Travis, your ideas sound a lot like Sondra's suggestion. Sondra, why don't you elaborate on your idea and we'll see if Travis agrees or disagrees with you."
Orienter	Summarizes what has occurred and seeks to keep the group focused on the task at hand	"I think we're getting a bit off track here. Let's go back to the issue on the agenda."
Evaluator/critic	Assesses the evidence and conclusions that the group is considering	"How recent are those statistics? I think there are newer figures for us to consider."
Energizer	Spurs the group to action by making comments to motivate the group to work harder	"Come on, team. We can do it if we just keep at it! Don't stop now."
Procedural technician	Helps the group accomplish its goal by handling tasks such as distributing reports, writing ideas on a whiteboard, or performing other tasks that help the group	"I'll write your ideas on the board. After the meeting, I'll copy them and summarize them in an email to each of you."
Recorder	Makes a written record of the group's progress by writing down specific comments, facts, or the minutes of meetings	"I'll take notes of today's meeting."

**SOCIAL ROLES** *Social roles* focus on behavior that manages relationships and affects the group climate; these roles help resolve conflict and enhance the flow of communication. Soothing hurt feelings and helping the group celebrate its accomplishments are examples of social role behavior. These roles are listed in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2: Social Roles

Social Roles	Description	Example
Encourager	Offers praise and support and confirms the value of other people and the ideas they contribute	"You're doing a great job. Thanks for working overtime on this project."
Harmonizer	Manages conflict and mediates disputes between group members	"Grover, you and Nicole seem to be agreeing more than you are disagreeing. Both of you want the same goal. Let's brainstorm some strategies that can help you both get what you want."
Compromiser	Resolves conflicts by trying to find an acceptable solution; seeks new alternatives	"Muriel, you want us to meet at seven o'clock p.m., and Samantha, you'd like us to start at eight o'clock. What if we started at seven-thirty? Would that work?"