



Raj explains: “Some people – including some of the engineers and finance guys – were more cynical than others initially. They are very practical and fact orientated, and their initial feeling was perhaps that this exercise was a bit subjective. But once they understood more of the detail they bought into it.”

The thing that won everyone over was people’s scores – where they all fell on the Team Management Wheel. “When they could see the differences between their own styles and those of others, that had a really big impact, and the value came from them realising how they needed to adapt to get the best out of other people – particularly those working at the coal face,” says Raj.

The overall preference of Tarmac managers is fascinating too, she continues.

“I have done a sample profile for Tarmac, and it is all biased towards the Thruster-Organiser (29 per cent), Assessor-Developer (21 per cent) and Concluder-Producer (21 per cent) part of the Wheel. Upholder-Maintainers and Reporter-Advisers account for only two per cent and one per cent respectively of our management cadre. And when you look at our culture and the way we go about things generally, that all makes sense. It is the nature of our industry that there are lots of doers here – we need people who get on and get their hands dirty, and many of our managers started as operations staff.”

“ It’s always a challenge to embed change

Yet Raj was surprised at just how low Tarmac’s representation in some categories is. “That very obvious deficit really made people sit up and take notice – not least because it explains why, although we are in a state of continuous change, it is always a challenge to embed that change.”

It’s one thing recognising the deficit, but another doing something about it, because, as Raj says, going out to recruit new people to make an even Wheel is unrealistic.

“Some teams do get opportunities to bring in

slightly different people. But generally, having the team profile just makes people more aware of the gaps and forces them to address them by adopting behaviours that might not come naturally to them.”

The result

Paul O’Neill, head of logistics in Tarmac’s western region, has done the Team Management Profile five times, and over the years he has become expert at augmenting his natural bias, as he explains.

“I’m quite unusual in Tarmac in that I’m in the Explorer-Promoter, Creator-Innovator part of the Wheel, which is good for the balance, but it means that I’m naturally disorganised and undisciplined. Everyone thinks I’m very organised and disciplined, but I’ve had to force myself to be those things in order to hold up the Upholder-Maintainer, Controller-Inspector part of the Wheel where we are weak.”

He recently did the Team Management Profile with the top ten people in his current team.

“The shortage of Controller-Inspectors and Upholder-Maintainers in the business (which is reflected even in our specialist team) means that while we clearly need to continue coming up with new and innovative ideas, we also have to get better at monitoring their effectiveness, analysing what might have gone wrong and adapting them if needs be. We’ve started to do that now. In the past if something looked like it wasn’t working we would dismiss it as rubbish and scrap it in favour of something else.

And he ensures that this culture change is itself embedded by placing much more emphasis on project management and key performance indicators, and linking those to personal development plans and personal targets. “We do monthly checks and updates to see if we are achieving what we set out to do. Annual targets and appraisals are not sufficient in a business that is changing as fast as this one is: we have to accept change as a fact of life and ensure that individuals and the team are changing accordingly.

Tracey McQuade was able to recruit someone to the HR team who plugged an identified skills gap.

“When we were recruiting we were very mindful of the Upholder-Maintainer deficit in the team, and when we interviewed this particular person she appeared to have some of the traits we needed,” she explains. “When we subsequently profiled her, she was indeed very strong in that area. Had we not been through the Team Management Profile we would have recruited in our own image, as we had been used to doing – albeit unconsciously.”

Elsewhere, she adds, where project teams are being formed, team leaders attempt to get a better mix of preferred work styles.

This year Raj is augmenting the Team Management Profile with a programme of Margerison-McCann Opportunity Orientation Profile (QO₂[®]) training for some teams. The QO₂[®] makes people aware of their attitudes to risk and change, and will help to ensure that the changes at Tarmac become part of ‘business as usual’.

“ Cross-company communication has also improved, as have employee engagement scores

When Lyndsey Robinson first did the Team Management Profile back in 2010 she believed that there would be quick and medium-term wins for the business. Has she been proved right?

“People started talking to each other more, immediately,” she recalls. “On the day they did the exercise they’d come out of the room and ask each other about their Profiles. Longer term, the Profiles are very visible in many offices, teams refer to them repeatedly and the best teams use them when they are planning projects. The results are great for development purposes too: we link them with objective-setting and appraisals. What’s more, cross-company communication has also improved, as have employee engagement scores – which we know have an impact on the bottom line. While it’s difficult to pin such improvements down to the Team Management Profile specifically, it’s definitely played a part.”