# Clarifying roles – ARCI

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# Introduction

This is our version of the well-known RACI tool. It is a simple process for identifying for any given task or decision who is accountable for the decision (where the buck stops), who is responsible for doing the work, who should be consulted and who needs to be informed about the results of the work or decision.

The tool enables you to bring clarity to the different roles of individuals involved in a task or decision. It also enables them to solve some key matrix challenges, particularly the increase in the number of people who think they should be consulted.

This is the most used process for clarifying responsibilities and roles and can be highly effective. We will focus on what is different about doing this in the matrix.

# The Tool

## Create a spreadsheet with a row for each task or decision you want to clarify.

Create 4 columns – Accountable, responsible, consulted and informed.

For each task identify the roles of the people involved using the definitions below. Put their names in the appropriate columns.

If you want to find out more about the standard use of RACI you will find a huge number of examples, spreadsheets and formats on the web – just search "RACI".

# The Tool *continued*



| Role | Simple definition |
|------|-------------------|
| Accountable | Start with accountabilities – this role approves the completed work and is held fully accountable for it |
| Responsible | This role conducts the actual work or owns the problems |
| Consulted | This role has the information and/or capabilities to complete the work. There is two-way communication (typically between R and C) |
| Informed | This role is to be informed of progress and results. One-way communication (typically from R and A) |

**Search on "RACI" on the web for dozens of examples**
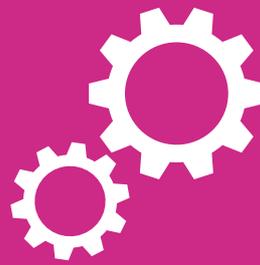
# The Process

> We call the process ARCI – because you should always start with defining who is ultimately accountable for the deliverable. The traditional advice in RACI is that there should only ever be one person who is accountable, however, in a matrix, multiple accountabilities are common.

> Because the matrix is more connected, more people can become involved in tasks and decisions and we have to be careful to make sure that we only involve people where necessary or we can become swamped with unnecessary meetings and emails. There is a risk that everyone will think that they should be consulted; if these people are invited to meetings they will also think they should be decision-makers which can slow down the process.

> It's extremely important to be clear about the consulted and informed roles. Consulted = I will get your opinion before I act or decide, Informed = I will let you know once I have decided. Both of these can happen outside of your decision making meeting.

> You can also get some useful information out of the pattern of accountabilities and responsibilities which can identify unnecessary work, gaps or lack of clarity – look out for these patterns.
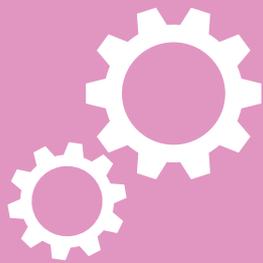
# The Process *continued*

| Role | Horizontal column (tasks) | Vertical column (roles) |
|---|---|---|
| Too many Rs | Overlap of roles | Overwork |
| No Rs or As | Gaps in the system or unnecessary work | Is this role necessary? |
| Too many As | Interference and confusion | Unclear organization structure |
| Too many Cs and Is | Unnecessary information flows | Is this role necessary? |

**Where do you think roles are not clear in your business?**

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# Conclusion

Remember that complete clarity may not be achievable in a complex matrix or virtual organization. We need to get comfortable with a certain level of ambiguity and attempting to analyse every task and decision in detail can easily become a trap. People often use job descriptions to explain what they **do not** do and to stay in their silos, rather than just doing what needs to be done.

Because ARCI analysis is quite bureaucratic we wouldn't recommend doing it for everything, you can spend years conducting a full analysis that will immediately be out-of-date in a fast moving environment. We recommend using it only by exception where there are persistent misunderstandings between departments or about responsibilities, decision rights or accountabilities.