

"The Enneagram system, an ancient psycho-spiritual system with roots in Asia and the Middle East, offers profound insights into the nine very different ways in which people think, feel, and behave. There are nine Enneagram styles representing nine distinct habits of thinking, feeling, taking action, and worldviews each connected to nine unique developmental paths."

Developing Communities of Leaders through the Enneagram

By Ginger Lapid-Bogda

Life-Saving Inc. (a pseudonym), a leading pharmaceutical company with over 9000 employees worldwide, is known for its commitment to developing state-of-the-art, life-enhancing drugs. Considered to be one of the most desirable places of employment in the United States, the company has gained its reputation as a result of its rapid growth, the high price of its stock and related employee stock options, and the pride employees take in being able to say that they work for a company that saves lives and believes in developing its people.

The Leadership Learning Community initiative in the Information Technology Division, one that employs over 500 people and whose employee base has been growing over 35% annually, focuses on thirteen Leadership Competency Modules that integrate the Enneagram with Life-Saving Inc.'s core leadership competencies. These modules, delivered in intact management teams of learning communities, form the basis for dialogue, discovery, self-responsibility, professional enhancement, and team development.

The thirteen modules, one delivered every other month for three hours, include the following leadership competencies:

1. Drive for Results
2. Strive for Self-Mastery
3. Know the Business: Think and Act Strategically
4. Communicate Successfully
5. Make Optimal Decisions
6. Lead High-Performing Teams
7. Take Charge of Change
8. Develop Your Talent
9. Collaborate Across the Board

10. Focus on the Customer
11. Manage the Work Process
12. Maintain Your Technical Edge
13. Create Extreme Growth: Organizational and Personal

Each leadership module includes the following:

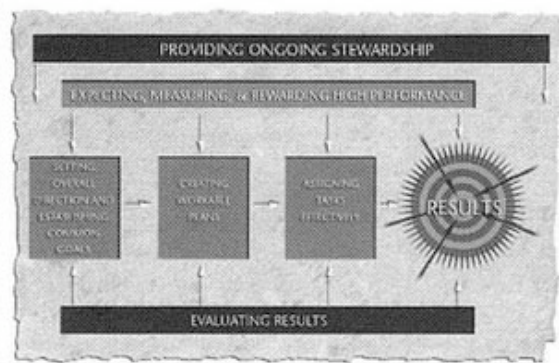
- » Details of the core components of the competency
- » Descriptions and stories showing how people of each Enneagram style tend to have style-specific strengths and development areas related to that competency
- » Numerous self-assessments for learning community members to complete
- » Developmental stretches for each Enneagram style
- » A list of resources for further learning
- » A development-planning tool

The key concepts from Modules 1, 2, and 3 make the Leadership Learning Community initiative easier to understand. *Figure 1* illustrates a high-level overview of the core components of Module 1, *Drive for Results*; the components are described in greater detail in the actual module.

Similarly, Module 2, *Strive for Self-Mastery*, explains the components of self-mastery in detail, using *Figure 2* as an overview of the competency.

Module 3, *Know the Business: Think and Act Strategically*, describes the key aspects of the external and internal environment for environmental scanning and then the sequential process for developing a

FIGURE 1



strategic plan – vision, mission, strategy, goals, and tactics as shown in Figure 3.

Learning community members read and complete the workbook portions of the module during the three-hour learning community session and are given ample time in silence to read and reflect. Having participated in daylong Enneagram workshops prior to the learning community sessions, learning community members already know the Enneagram system and their Enneagram styles. For readers unfamiliar with the Enneagram, a brief description of the system and styles will help in understanding this aspect of the learning community initiative.

The Enneagram System and the Nine Styles

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distinct habits of thinking, feeling, taking action, and worldviews each connected



Enneagram Symbol

to nine unique developmental paths. Each of us has only one place or number on the Enneagram roadmap as illustrated on the Enneagram symbol, and while our Enneagram style remains the same throughout our lifetime, our characteristics may soften or become more pronounced as we grow and develop.

The Enneagram describes people of every culture accurately, although there may be nuances to the actions of individuals who come from different cultures but have the same Enneagram style. However, the underlying personality dynamics and motivations remain the same across cultures. The same is true for gender: men and women of the same Enneagram style may display some gender-influenced behavioral differences, but the pattern and dynamics of the style remain unchanged.

The following descriptions briefly explain the nine Enneagram styles and the common leadership paradigms and gifts for that style:

Note: Leadership paradigms refer to the set of assumptions and beliefs, often unconscious, about what leadership is that influence how we behave and what we tend to overlook. These paradigms affect our leadership strengths because we tend to pay attention to these areas. They also influence our potential derailers – attributes and behaviors that can hinder

our success – because we place less emphasis on these areas.

Enneagram Style 1



Diligence

ONES seek a perfect world and work diligently to improve both themselves and everyone and everything around them. Their basic orientation is this: *What is right or wrong, correct or incorrect?*

Leadership Paradigm: *The leader's job is to set clear goals and inspire others to achieve the highest quality.*

Leadership gift: *the pursuit of excellence*

Enneagram Style 2



Giving

TWOS want to be liked, try to meet the needs of others, and attempt to orchestrate the people and events in their lives. Their basic orientation is this:

Are they needed, liked, and appreciated?

Leadership Paradigm: *The leader's job is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of team members and to motivate and facilitate people toward the achievement of organizational objectives.*

Leadership gift: *motivation and service to others*

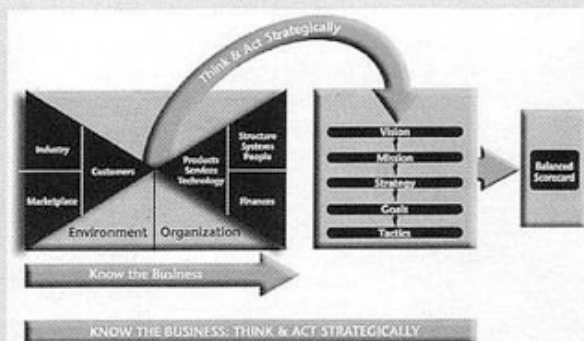
Enneagram Style 3



Perform

THREES organize their lives to achieve specific goals and to appear successful in order to gain

FIGURE 3



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FIGURE 2



the respect and admiration of others. Their basic orientation is this: *How can they gain the respect and admiration of others?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to create an environment that achieves results because people understand the organization's goals and structure.

Leadership gift: obtaining results

Enneagram Style 4



Mood

FOURS desire deep connections both with their own interior worlds and with other people, and they feel most alive when they authentically express their feelings. Their basic orientation is this: *Can they express themselves authentically, and will they feel rejected or deficient?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to create organizations that give people meaning and purpose so they are inspired to do excellent work.

Leadership gift: the pursuit of one's passion

Enneagram Style 5



Knowledge

FIVES thirst for information and knowledge and use emotional detachment as a way of keeping involvement with others to a minimum. Their basic orientation is this: *Will demands be made on them for time, energy, resources, information sharing, and emotional reactions?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to develop an effective organization through research, deliberation, and planning, so that

all systems fit together and people are working on a common mission.

Leadership gift: the importance of objectivity

Enneagram Style 6



Doubt

SIXES have insightful minds, are prone to worry, and plan for worst-case scenarios in order to feel prepared in case something goes wrong. Their basic orientation is this: *What can go wrong, who can be trusted, and what is the best decision?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to solve organizational problems by creating a creative problem-solving environment where each person feels that he or she is part of the solution.

Leadership gift: insight and planning

Enneagram Style 7



Options

SEVENS crave the stimulation of new ideas, people, and experiences; avoid pain and discomfort; and create elaborate future plans that will allow them to keep all of their options open. Their basic orientation is this: *How can they feel excited by ideas and experiences and also avoid constraints, distress, and pain?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to get people excited and create innovative ventures so the organization can take advantage of new and important business opportunities.

Leadership gift: innovation and flexibility

Enneagram Style 8



Challenge

EIGHTS pursue the truth, like to keep situations under control, want to make important things happen, and try to hide their innocence and vulnerability. Their basic orientation is this: *Is everything under control, and can they conceal their softer sides?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job

is to move the organization forward by leading decisively, getting capable and reliable people into the right jobs, and empowering competent people to take action.

Leadership gift: making important things happen

Enneagram Style 9



Harmony

NINES seek peace, harmony, and positive mutual regard and dislike conflict, tension, and ill will. Their basic orientation is this: *Is everyone being heard, including them, and is the environment harmonious?*

Leadership Paradigm: The leader's job is to help achieve the collective mission by creating a clearly structured and harmonious work environment.

Leadership gift: inclusion and consensus

Learning Community Dialogues

After learning community members read the competency module, they then participate in a learning community dialogue session based on a dialogue prompt.

In Module 1, *Drive for Results*, the dialogue prompt asks participants to share a success story related to driving for results, analyze their strengths and skills embedded in the story, and then discuss how these strengths relate to their Enneagram style. After each person completes his or her story and analysis, other community members add additional strengths and skills gleaned from the story and how these relate to the person's Enneagram style.

In Module 2, *Strive for Self-Mastery*, the dialogue prompt involves concepts from Figure 4, the Enneagram style information about how individuals of each Enneagram style function at the three levels of self-mastery – low, moderate, and extreme – and the development stretches corresponding to the community member's Enneagram style.

The bell-shaped curve illustrates levels of self-mastery, and each person assesses silently his or her position on the self-mastery curve. Learning community

FIGURE 4



members then select the developmental stretch related to their Enneagram style that they believe will accelerate them furthest to the right on the curve and that they are also willing to do. Members then share their chosen developmental stretch, describe how this activity will benefit them, and finally, ask for specific support and assistance from other learning community members in helping them with this development activity.

In Module 3, *Know the Business: Think and Act Strategically*, the dialogue prompt asks learning community members to consider and discuss the following:

- » One area of strength and one development area related to Know the Business: Think and Act Strategically
- » How the strength and development areas are related to their Enneagram styles
- » How each person can leverage his or her strength for the success of the team
- » The development area she or he is most excited about learning to strengthen

Results

Although the Leadership Learning Communities have only participated in the first three competency modules, changes are already apparent at the individual, team, and cultural levels.

Individual Changes

On the individual level, success is being measured by several factors: (1) observing changes in the behavior of individual managers, (2) the stories managers tell about themselves, and (3) the stories about the managers from their direct reports. Most managers have made large developmental strides in a very short period of time, using their understanding of the Enneagram and the support of their learning communities in their self-development – for example, becoming more assertive (Enneagram Style Nines), more vulnerable (Enneagram Style Eights), more emotional (Enneagram Style Fives), less emotional (Enneagram Style Fours), more focused (Enneagram Style Sevens), more balanced in their outlook (Enneagram Style Sixes), less

judgmental (Enneagram Style Ones), less other-directed, (Enneagram Style Twos), and more solid in their sense of self (Enneagram Style Threes).

Managers also express both excitement and relief about using the Enneagram for leadership development because they say that the Enneagram helps them to understand themselves better and to

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become more self-accepting. They realize that their personality differences are the result of nine different worldviews, all of which are equally valid. At the same time, they also say that using the Enneagram for their professional development feels freeing. One manager expressed this idea using these words: “I used to feel that I was in a box. The Enneagram doesn’t put me in a box; instead, it shows me the box I’ve been in and provides a development path out of these constraints. Does everyone else feel like the Enneagram is liberating them too?” Others in the learning community concurred.

Team Changes

Managers report that the learning community sessions are making a contribution to them personally and professionally; the three-hour sessions provide them time-out for self-reflection, time they rarely take in their busy work lives. The learning community meetings also enable them to deeply consider important aspects of their leadership in a non-threatening, supportive, and collaborative environment.

Managers also report that they enjoy learning about themselves and their teammates in what they experience as an affirming and intellectually stimulating

environment. The learning community approach allows them to reflect and then to receive feedback and support simultaneously. Managers are valuing the idea that development happens more quickly, more thoroughly, and more objectively in a community setting.

In addition, managers are learning about other Enneagram styles as a result

of the dialogue that occurs among learning community members. Because all learning community members are choosing to share their self-reflections (members can opt out of contributing), all members are learning more about their own styles from peers of the same style and gaining a greater understanding of the styles different from their own from peers of other Enneagram styles. This enables them to work more effectively with their direct reports, customers, bosses, and family members, as well as their peers.

Finally, these learning community sessions are building bonds and strengthening the teamwork within these management teams. The self-disclosure, feedback, and sincere offers of support from other learning community members translate into increased communication, trust, and cohesion. This has been a strong, positive outcome of the learning community process, although team building was not a primary objective of the learning community process.

Cultural Changes

The culture in information technology (IT) is now becoming one in which managers take responsibility for both their work lives and self-development. The culture has been one where the organization has been

responsible for leadership development but now, managers have both the tools and the opportunity to take personal and professional development into their own hands. The entire culture is changing from one where the organization was perceived as the active agent in the work lives of leaders to one where leaders now participate in and feel accountable for their own productivity, creating their own career path, and developing high-performing work environments.

The culture is also shifting from one where development was an individual endeavor to one that understands that growth and development are collective undertakings. The managers firmly grasp the importance of leadership excellence, interpersonal communication, and respect – both for themselves and for others who are not like them – is the foundation of organizational excellence, and that none of this can occur without a community of support, growth, and change.

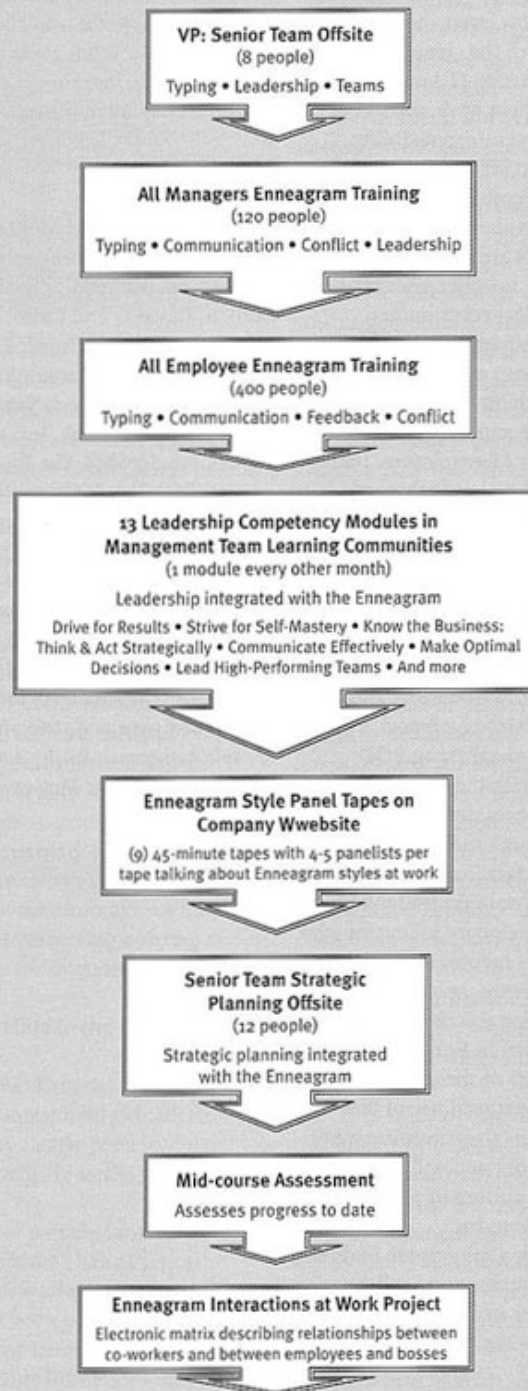
Finally, the organizational culture is changing to one where all points of view and work styles are valued and included as never before. While the organization is quite diverse and has always been a proponent of diversity in its many forms – for example, race, gender, culture, nationality, and sexual orientation – the Enneagram has brought people together even more. People of the same Enneagram style bear striking similarities, and this has helped bridge gaps between people. There is also an increasing understanding, appreciation, and fascination with differences, in contrast to simply understanding that differences exist.

These cultural shifts are primarily a result of the competency modules but are also supported by several other Enneagram-related initiatives within the IT business unit.

Sustainability

The Leadership Learning Community initiative, part of a larger change effort in the Information Technology division of Life-Saving, Inc., began in March 2005 with an offsite retreat for IT's senior management team and has cascaded into

FIGURE 5: Sustainability



multiple projects in slightly over one year. The Sustainability flow chart shows the scope and sequence of the change effort.

With everyone inside IT knowing and using the Enneagram at work, the use of the Enneagram as a self-responsibility and self-development effort is reinforced daily. Managers and employees are having excellent discussions about their working styles and co-workers are using the Enneagram as a way to better understand one another. Individual contributors regularly express their appreciation for making the Enneagram available to them, and many of them are using this information at home and in their work with customers. New IT employees, both managers and individual contributors, receive an Enneagram and training tools upon their arrival as part of new employee orientation.

In addition, the use of the Enneagram at work is spreading throughout the organization through several vehicles: (1) word of mouth from managers and employees in IT, (2) strong support from internal HR generalists and OD specialists familiar with the work in IT, (3) from senior vice-presidents who know the Enneagram through their executive coaches, and (4) the fact that the vice-president of IT is an opinion leader within the organization, a visionary innovator who often tests the waters before other parts of the organization embrace a new way of working. Four additional strategic business units are now involved in Enneagram work; all are offshoots of the original work in IT. This widespread use of the Enneagram reinforces the commitment of IT division to this work and will most likely lead to an expanded culture of participation throughout Life-Saving, Inc.

The impact of this initiative is in direct proportion to the time spent on reflection. To quote John Heider in *The Tao of Leadership: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching Adapted for a New Age*:

Time for Reflection

Allow regular time for silent reflection. Turn inward and digest what has happened. Let the senses rest and grow still. Teach people to let go of their

superficial mental chatter. Teach people to pay attention to the whole body's reaction to a situation. When group members have time to reflect, they can see more clearly what is essential in themselves and others.

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