Bring the Enneagram to Business
What is Expected When We Teach the Enneagram in Organizations

By Ginger Lapid-Bogda, Ph.D.

Gerald, an information technology director for a well-known aerospace company, was given one day's notice to prepare an executive briefing for senior management on the status of a strategic project that was having serious problems.

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Mary, the owner of a five million dollar technical consulting firm, knew that her own leadership style interfered with her firm's success, but she neither knew how her style impeded its progress nor what to do about it.

Gerald and Mary participated in a course about the topic of managing organizational change, and the course included the Enneagram as a guide to both self-understanding and improving interpersonal effectiveness at work. Both Gerald and Mary returned to work with marked improvements in their leadership abilities.

During the course, Gerald learned that *leaders must lead* if an organizational change effort is to succeed. He also realized that, as a Nine, he tended to not assert himself -- the organizational, however, needed him to do so. Not only did Gerald develop a first-class executive briefing on extremely short notice, he asserted himself during the briefing. Gerald did not present options to the senior managers, as he would have done prior to taking the course. He actually told the senior managers that they needed to lead the organization, and he gave specific recommendations regarding what they should do.

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Mary, an Eight, had led her firm using a hands-off leadership style. When this approach was not successful, she tried to lead through command and control. Dissatisfied with the outcomes of both styles, Mary came to the managing change course seeking a solution to her leadership dilemma.

From the theory and practice of managing change, Mary learned that she needed to empower her staff by doing the following: providing clear direction; training them in specific skills; measuring accountability; rewarding effective behavior; and leading by coaching.

From the Enneagram, Mary learned what she needed to change in behavior in order to lead by coaching. She realized that she intimidated her employees, although this was not her intention. Once she understood exactly what part of her behavior caused others to feel intimidated -- the quickness of her mind, her lack of asking questions, and her fast rate of speech -- she changed how she interacted with others. Mary became the team's coach, rather than the team's commander.

These stories not only demonstrate the power of the Enneagram in organizations, they also illustrate several significant factors to consider when bringing the Enneagram to the business world. These factors include the following:

- Use real stories from the business world
- Link the Enneagram to specific business issues
- Use methods and materials appropriate to the business environment

Use real stories from the business world

As you read the two stories at the beginning of this article, think about what effect they had on you? Hopefully, they grabbed your interest, conveyed the potency of the Enneagram, and they suggested that the author knows something about the subject. These are the reasons why stories are so important in the business setting. Business stories and examples are also what people in organizations expect.

Many of us have Enneagram stories from our personal lives, from our therapy clients, or from other non-business situations. In business, however, it is expected that at least 90 percent of the examples will come from organizational life. The companies that hire people to teach the Enneagram expect work-related benefits. They want visible business results from the money they pay for our services and from the time that their employees must take away from work in order to participate in these sessions.

The participants also expect business examples. Although they may use the Enneagram in their personal as well as their professional lives, they want to understand exactly how to apply the Enneagram to concrete organizational issues. In addition, some participants may react negatively to a session that strikes them as too psychological and overly personal. Work-related examples get the teaching points across without generating adverse reactions. For example, consider these two versions of the same story:

Example 1 -- A personal story

"My sister, a Two, and I had not been in contact for ten years. However, after both of us learned the Enneagram system and developed greater personal insight, we were able to understand the causes of our interpersonal difficulties. As a Five, I expected her to simply know that I cared about her, but she constantly wanted to be in direct contact with me and to talk. As a Two, she became very frustrated with my lack of direct response to her, and kept coming toward me in an attempt to establish contact. Once we understood the Enneagram, our relationship improved dramatically."

Example 2 -- A professional story

> "Paul, a Two, and Tom, a Five, had worked in the same department for ten years, but they had never established a strong working relationship. In fact, they had avoided one another whenever possible. However, after learning the Enneagram, Paul realized that, as a Two, he had been pushing for more interaction with Tom out of his own needs to have close, affirming relationships. Tom understood that his tendency to detach emotionally and act autonomously was frustrating for Paul. Once they understood the Enneagram, their relationship improved dramatically."

The two stories above cover nearly identical material, and both are short, focused and descriptive. Both show the value of the Enneagram in dealing with conflict, but the personal nature of the first story may create some anxiety in the participants. They may worry that they will have to talk about their family relationships in the presence of their coworkers; this concern can distract them from paying attention during the rest of the session or cause them to shut-down and not participate fully in the discussions.

Link the Enneagram to specific business issues

Organizations do not usually sponsor programs that are solely for their employee's personal growth, although they are some enlightened and values-based companies that do understand the connection between personal development and on-the-job success. However, when a personal growth program is concretely linked to specific business issues, many companies become far more interested.

Gerald's and Mary's stories clearly illustrate how insights from the Enneagram can improve leadership styles. In addition to leadership, the Enneagram can be easily applied to conflict, communication, feedback, team behavior and team development, coaching, change, motivation and retention, and many other organizational topics. The challenge for those of us who teach the Enneagram in business settings is to understand both the precise nature of these applications and the business context in which these applications are to be used.

For example, conflict resolution in organizations is different from both marriage counseling and mediation. Marriage counseling is usually far more personal and emotional. Mediation often has a more adversarial underpinning than most conflict resolution situations. The rules are also different for the three approaches, as are the roles played by the third-party.

Coaching in organizations is also not the same as psychotherapy or spiritual counseling. Organizational coaching has specific goals, timelines, and organizational accountability for its outcomes. Psychotherapy deals with far deeper psychological issues, requires a license, and is 100

percent confidential. Spiritual counseling is often longer term than coaching and usually focuses on issues of meaning and spirit, rather than issues of behavior and consequences.

Teaching the Enneagram within an organization is different from public programs; teaching the Enneagram to an intact work team is very different from teaching it to a random assortment of company employees. First, most organizations have cultural norms (implicit rules of behavior) that discourage crying or strong outbursts of anger in the workplace; there is no similar taboo in public programs. Second, employees want control over the amount of personal information they share with their coworkers. If employees talk about their bosses, other participants can easily identify the leader. Third, while intact work teams can benefit enormously from the Enneagram because team members often know each other well, the risk of revealing personal information is higher, In addition, delicate or volatile team issues may emerge during the session, and the trainer needs to know how to deal with these sensitive issues.

When the Enneagram is taught in-house, companies expect that the person they hire will have subject matter expertise in the specific business application area. When the Enneagram is applied to team effectiveness, it is presumed that the trainer has expertise in team behavior, team development, and team roles. When the application area is feedback, the trainer will need to be well versed in methods for giving effective feedback. When the application area is conflict resolution, the trainer or consultant will need to understand the organization factors (beyond personality) that cause conflict, and be able to teach concrete methods for resolving organizational differences.

Organizations also expect employees to learn new skills when they attend training sessions. For example, with the Enneagram, they will want participants to learn how the different Enneagram types behave. However, they also want their employees to learn why they behave in this way, and to develop skills that improve their interpersonal relationships. Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, once said that awareness is curative. While this may be true in the long run, organizations also want to see visible results in the short and medium term. Thus, the challenge for trainers and consultants is to offer concrete, practical, effective, and individualized activities for each Enneagram type.

Use methods and materials appropriate to the business environment

When asked the question "What does it take to be successful in this organization," many employees will give this answer: "You have to look like you belong in front of a viewgraph." The

same can be said for trainers. Trainers and consultants need to look comfortable in front of a viewgraph, even if they never use one. People who work in business like to work with trainers who look like they understand business, and who appear to be confident in the business context.

Organizations are used to working with trainers in specific ways. The following are some examples:

Most companies train their employees in two, four, or eight- hour segments.
It is essential to teach the basic introduction to typing during a four-hour segment without sacrificing quality. Specific Enneagram application sessions can be done later in two-hour or four-hour timeframes.

Companies expect to pay a materials fee for training programs.
$75-$100 per participant would be considered an average cost for many in-house training programs. They do, however, expect materials that are concise, look professional, are user-friendly, contain a minimum amount of jargon, and provide ease-of-use for later reference.

Most training programs are interactive (unless they are online); very few programs are lecture only.
Participants expect non-technical training to be fun, and few individuals have an attention span that lasts more than one hour. Participants enjoy discussions, demonstrations, individual work, and a variety of group activities. Videos can be well received, providing that they are also a part of other interactive activities. Mini-lectures -- between ten and twenty minutes in length --are typically interspersed between experiential activities and are used to provide cognitive input. As a note, the research indicates that most people learn best by doing and practicing rather than by listening only.

Even considering the difficult economic times we are in, many companies are still seeking innovative and effective ways to train their employees. Enneagram theory and practice are at an impressive phase of development and are well positioned to make the translation from the psychological and spiritual world into the business environment. The better the job we do at bringing the Enneagram to business, the more people we can help. The more people say, "The Enneagram! I've heard of that," the more opportunities available for all of us.

Ginger Lapid-Bogda, Ph.D., has been an organization development consultant for thirty years and works with Fortune 500 companies, service organizations, health care, law firms, and nonprofit agencies. In her book forthcoming book, *Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work: How to Use the Enneagram System for Success* (McGraw-Hill, 2004)*,* Ginger explains how to use the Enneagram in a variety of business application areas. She also provides consulting services, training programs, and Enneagram training materials. www.TheEnnegramInBusiness.com ginger@bogda.com (310) 829-3309