

THE ENNEAGRAM IN THE WORKPLACE

**THE
ENNEAGRAM
IN THE
WORKPLACE**

**BETTER INSIGHT INTO
YOURSELF AND OTHERS**

OSCAR DAVID

Warden Press

© 2018 Oscar David Consultancy B.V., Amsterdam

ISBN:

Paperback: 978-94-92004-68-0

E-book (Epub): 978-94-92004-69-7

E-book (Kindle): 978-94-92004-70-3

Original title: *Het enneagram in organisaties. Beter inzicht in jezelf en anderen* (Amsterdam: Mediawerf, 2017 [2nd edition]). Translated from the Dutch by Christine Hayes. A slightly different version of this translation was previously published as *The Enneagram for Managers. Nine different perspectives on managing people* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2001).

Cover design: Studio Marlies Visser, Haarlem

Interior design and lay-out: Akimoto / Gijsbert Raadgever, Amersfoort

Photo author: Saskia Kerkhoff, Amsterdam

This edition published by Warden Press, Amsterdam

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

wardenpress.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	7
Introduction	9
Part 1: Nine different perspectives on understanding people	16
Type 1: The Improver	20
Type 2: The Helper	27
Type 3: The Performer	33
Type 4: The Individualist	39
Type 5: The Observer	45
Type 6: The Trouble-Shooter	51
Type 7 The Visionary	57
Type 8: The Asserter	63
Type 9: The Mediator	69
Part 2: About the Enneagram	74
1: The Enneagram as a model	76
2: The Enneagram in business	91
3: Working with the Enneagram	106
4: The Enneagram and personal development	116
Part 3: Bibliography	130
Books	131
Questionnaires	137
About the author	139

PREFACE

I believe that success greatly depends on the ability to understand the motivation behind our own behavior and that of others. This book presents a method of developing this ability. It has proved helpful to me and also to the many leaders and professional people with whom I have worked as a leadership consultant. My view is that in gaining better insight into human behavior, the achievement of success and satisfaction in our work and in life in general can acquire greater meaning. It was in 1992 that I first heard about the method known as the Enneagram. A colleague returned from California, bringing with her a remarkable book that she wanted me to read: *The Enneagram: Understanding Yourself and the Others in Your Life*. The book defined nine different personality types, the premise being that we all have the nine types in us, but that one of the nine is more applicable to each individual than the others. Of course, as a psychologist, I'm familiar with personality typologies, so I wasn't particularly impatient to discover another variation on the theme.

But although I had some reservations at the beginning, it wasn't long before I was thoroughly enthralled. The types were described according to their behavior, and also in terms of the motivation for that behavior. It was clear how different types might demonstrate identical behavior for entirely different reasons. I was impressed how recognizable the examples of the nine types were, and how this gave me more insight into others and myself. Thoroughly fascinated, I wanted to learn more. I contacted the author of the book, Helen Palmer, and went to California several times to study with Helen and her colleague David Daniels, learning to become an Enneagram trainer. My interest in the Enneagram grew rapidly, far beyond being a favorite topic of conversation at parties. My clients also became interested in the subject, wanting to know more about my new insights.

Before long, the Enneagram was integrated into team-building sessions, leadership development programs and executive coaching. I saw how many of the participants made the same discovery as I had: that the Enneagram is an inspiring framework, that continually gives fresh insight into how we 'work'. This book is based on my workshop experience with leaders and professionals in a large number of international organizations. Some of the examples and quotes have been altered to preserve their anonymity.

The book can be used in a number of different ways. You may find it a useful introduction to the Enneagram. You could also use it as a short 'workshop' of your own. You will be able to explore your own Enneagram-type, and you may find it interesting to study the answers to some of the questions asked by your colleagues in management. The book is above all intended to encourage and help you in the further development of your self-knowledge and understanding of others.

For the sake of simplicity, I have used the pronoun 'he' in most cases, where either 'he' or 'she' could apply.

INTRODUCTION

Why do some people always seem to have the boss's ear, while others don't seem to be able to get anywhere with him? How come some leaders always find support for the unpopular changes they introduce, but others are more likely to be faced with resistance? What is the reason why some leaders can effortlessly acquire and maintain a good customer network, while others have to struggle every inch of the way?

In many of these situations, it is not professional expertise alone that allows the successful to achieve the results they want, but also insight into their own behavior and that of others. In my view, the achievement of a high degree of insight into behavior and motivation is potentially possible for everyone. I would like to demonstrate with this book how your increased awareness of this potential could help you in your work.

A bit of psychology

No two people are alike. You don't have to be a psychologist to come to this conclusion. I have certainly never met an exact twin of myself, and presumably neither have you. People may resemble each other in some way, but in reality they are quite different from each other. The question is, how does this happen? Why are we so different from each other? How, in fact, do we come to be who we are?

There are different theories about this. Some people think that who we are is a result of our upbringing. This is the 'nurture' theory. Nurture entails our upbringing in the widest sense of the word, involving not only the influence of our parents, but also that of teachers, society at large, our national or regional culture and the beliefs with which we grow up. Other people believe that personality is largely inherited: the 'nature' theory. You will often hear belief in this view expressed in the comment: 'He has been like that ever since he was a baby.' Or personality is a combination of nature and nurture. And again others believe that personality is a result of what happened in previous lives: karma and reincarnation. This may sound a bit exotic, but it is a view taken by many of the world's population. Finally, some contend that our personality is determined by a combination of all of the above.

The viewpoint on which this book is based is that people have an inherent tendency towards certain qualities and weaknesses. Taken as a whole, these qualities and drawbacks constitute the personality. This line of thought means that it is irrelevant which of the above theories you favor. The question now is how predisposition towards a specific personality type leads to the development of specific qualities and weaknesses.

As an analogy, imagine a human baby in the first months of life as a circle. Now, I am not a father myself, but I am regularly invited to make the acquaintance of new arrivals in the families of my friends and relatives. Contemplation of the new life usually moves me deeply. I sometimes wonder if I'm the only one to experience these sentiments, although I suspect that most of those present succumb to the same experience. It is interesting to hear how those most closely involved express their feelings. The new-born baby is frequently described as 'pure beauty', 'pure love' or 'pure trust'. A new-born child seems to embody qualities that we perceive to be pure, or uncontaminated.

Now let's see what happens later on in at the child's life. As an example, one of my clients—I'll call him Ben—told me that he grew up in the country. When I asked Ben what he could remember of the first years of life, he could not recall many memories. However, there was one in particular that he remembered in vivid detail. When he was only about one or two years old, an important event occurred in the daily life of the small community where he lived. The days of pre-planned, boring trips to the next biggest town, some 40 miles away, came to an end. A shopping center was opened on the very outskirts of the village, bringing impulse buying and last-minute shopping within easy reach of its inhabitants. On the day of the grand opening, Ben's mother wheeled him the short distance to the new shops in his baby-buggy, thrilled to have variety and convenience on her doorstep at last. Of course, everyone else from the village was there. Ben's mother enjoyed some window-shopping and went to the supermarket for her groceries; chatted with some neighbors she met there and returned home, very pleased with the new development. Once home, however, she was overcome with the uneasy feeling of having forgotten something important. To her shock, she suddenly realized that she had forgotten all about little Ben. Horrified, she ran back to the supermarket, only to discover that the shop had already closed.

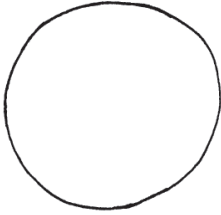


Fig. 1: Perfect Circle



Fig. 2: Trauma

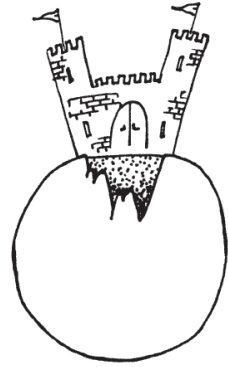


Fig. 3: Fortress

From a psychological point of view, being left behind in the supermarket is a far-reaching affair. To all intents and purposes, Ben is now no longer protected by his mother. He is thrown on the mercy of the outside world. Up to this point still a perfect circle (*Fig. 1*), Ben now experiences trauma (*Fig. 2*). In medical science, trauma is a physical wound. Although Ben, in this example, is not physically wounded, what he experiences is a psychological wound. It is all very well to be pure love, trust and hope, but that doesn't protect you from being wounded. Ben therefore has to develop a successful survival strategy. Metaphorically speaking, he builds a construction over the wound to stop the bleeding. This construction eventually grows into a fortress, and this is Ben's personality (*Fig. 3*).

The personality contains a strategy intended to help us achieve success in life and at work, and to avoid unpleasant experiences. The good news is that it helps us to deal with our surroundings sensibly. If we had no personality and remained pure love, hope and trust, our chances of survival would probably be slight. The bad news is that the personality has only a limited repertoire. No matter how convinced we may be that our way of thinking, feeling and acting is unique, in practice you will notice how predictable people's reactions are, when we are familiar with their character.

In a sense, the personality is comparable to the masks used in Greek tragedy. The word personal is in fact derived from the Greek word for mask, *persona*. The Ancient Greeks used masks to allow actors to fulfil their roles more easily in the

dramas they enacted. The masks made it more difficult for the public to see the true identity of the actor, but that was precisely the point: all attention was diverted to the role the actor was playing. The personality works more or less the same way, psychologically speaking.

The following pages describe a method of identifying the different kinds of masks people wear. You can see which mask fits you best. It might be interesting to explore how to make better use of it.

The Enneagram

The Enneagram is an efficacious model that describes nine different views on life. Ennea is the Greek word for nine, and a grammos is a model.

You will recognize some of your own attitudes in all of the perspectives, depending on the situation you are in. Experience proves, however, that the more a person studies the different perspectives, the more obvious it becomes that some of them are more personally applicable than others. In fact, most of us discover one particular strategy that seems to match our own closely. This doesn't mean that we don't recognize and even employ other perspectives on occasion; it is just that they don't come so naturally to us, or we only use them in certain circumstances. The following brief exercise will demonstrate my point.

Exercise

Put the book down for a moment, so as to leave your hands free. Now cross your arms. Presumably you will find this easy to do. Now cross your arms the other way around. You may have to think about this first, but you won't find it difficult to do either. When I asked you to cross your arms the first time, you didn't need to think about it: the action was automatic. You didn't say to yourself: "Now I'm going to cross my arms. That's interesting. There are different ways to do that. Which one shall I choose today?" You just crossed your arms. You were operating on automatic pilot, so to speak. The second attempt probably took a little more effort. Not, that you weren't able to carry out the action, but you quite likely thought about it briefly first.

The same is true for our natural Enneagram perspective; we assume our preferred viewpoint automatically. There is no effort involved, and we are hardly even aware

of it. Just as we are normally not really aware of how we usually cross our arms. As soon as we become aware of our choice of perspective, however, we can make better use of the qualities, which, according to the Enneagram, are inherent to it. We are also better able to anticipate the pitfalls that this perspective entails. Furthermore, it is easier to let go of our usual perspective once we see that we have a choice.

The Enneagram perspective is derived from the personality, which develops in the first years of our lives. As already mentioned, my view is that people are predisposed towards a specific perspective. Certain experiences, being left behind on a shopping spree, for instance, reinforce the development of a specific pattern according to an individual's predisposition towards a specific mode of reaction. Identical experiences can therefore trigger different modes of reaction, due to differences in predisposition.

Exercise

Which attributes would those who know you best, both privately and at work, use to describe you? Make a list of these qualities.

Then make a list of weaker points they might mention.

Now select five positive qualities and five weaknesses that you agree with. Keep this description at hand while reading the next chapter, to help you identify your own type.

Models as maps

This book presents a model that describes human behavior and the motivation behind it. Bear in mind that it is a model, not the reality. At best, a model can only describe situations so that we are better able to recognize reality, and benefit from the description. The Enneagram is like a map, intended to help us understand human motivation better. Don't be tempted into confusing the map with the territory. It is merely a tool to guide us in the right direction.

How this book is organized

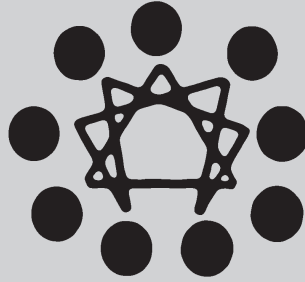
The book is a guide to the Enneagram and its potential for use.

Part 1 presents a bird's-eye view of the different types, so that you can make acquaintance with the Enneagram and learn more about yourself and others from a different

point of view. You can use this part of the book to help identify your own type. The descriptions function as a checklist against your own experience, and you may recognize them as being applicable now or at some other period in your life. You may also enjoy reflecting on which people you know who might fit the descriptions.

Part 2 gives the answers to a selection of questions that have been put to me in recent years during workshops and consultancy discussions. These questions deal with the Enneagram as a model, the Enneagram in companies and organizations and methods of working with the Enneagram. This section offers you the possibility of furthering your knowledge through the experiences of other leaders and professionals. It is also intended to provide more insight into the relationship between the Enneagram and personal development.

Part 3 is an extensive bibliography. I have included a short review of the books mentioned in order to help you choose appropriate books for your continued exploration of the Enneagram.



PART 1

NINE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

This part of the book introduces each type in different ways. Each chapter is organized so as to give you a quick overview of the type in the sub-sections ‘Type number and name’, ‘The supermarket’, ‘What others appreciate in this type’, ‘What others find problematic about this type’, ‘Country, region or a city type, and ‘Self-assessment’. The additional sections go into more detail, to help you to become more familiar with each type.

Type number and name

The types are numbered from 1 to 9. Each number also has a name. One of the interesting aspects of the Enneagram is that it is not a normative model, meaning that no type is considered better than any other is. Any type can be a good leader. The differences between them refer to the extent to which a person has developed the qualities related to a specific type, or become stuck in its pitfalls. The names given to each type will probably give rise to associations; some names may sound more positive or negative than others. Because this is definitely not the intention, it is usually the type number that is referred to throughout the description, rather than the name given to it.

The Supermarket

Under each type you will find an indication of what Ben's response to the supermarket incident might be, if he were that type.

What others appreciate

This is a list of five qualities or other aspects that others appreciate about a type. It is of course not complete, and only the most frequently named aspects are listed. By 'others' is meant colleagues, associates, leaders or bosses and clients.

What others find problematic

Here too, the most frequently mentioned aspects are listed. Some people may discover more qualities and others more flaws in themselves or others. Again, 'others' refers to colleagues, associates, leaders and customers.

Country, region or a city type

One or more countries, regions or cities will be mentioned as representing an Enneagram-type. Naturally, this by no means indicates that most people from the mentioned areas will belong to that specific Enneagram type. However, a number of aspects of the culture can help to clarify what the country, region or a city type might be taking place. Organizations often embody the characteristics of the country, region, or a city type.

Self-assessment

The self-assessment shows one way in which a type might describe himself. The description given here is a compilation of the most frequently mentioned aspects

given by people of this type. You may find that some of the qualities mentioned have not blossomed in yourself in quite the same way, or that failings are described that you mastered long ago. Don't let this throw you off the scent.

Issues

This is a discussion of the six most frequently occurring issues for each type. Each theme is related to particular qualities and failings. One issue may highlight the qualities, while another may focus more frequently on the failings. Your personal experience could well contain a difference balance of the two than in the examples chosen. You may recognize some issues from the past, or conversely, they may have only recently come to light. Since this book focuses primarily on how to achieve greater understanding in the workplace, only a few examples of private and personal situations have been selected. Naturally, they could equally well apply to the private sphere. The quotes and examples cited for each issue are from real people: other leaders and professionals. In some cases, a few details have been altered, only to preserve the anonymity of their source.

Leadership style

Attitudes towards leadership have been given for each type. This does not mean that this type always acts in that way. In spite of the fact that a specific type may be more inclined towards relationship-oriented coaching, it could well be that he has learned to be task-oriented in certain situations.

Under pressure or stress

This is a description of how each type might think, feel and act under pressure or stress. The theory of the Enneagram is that the characteristics of another type are assumed in times of stress or when under pressure. Following the direction of the arrow on the line between the types, as illustrated on the Enneagram model, reveals which type this is.

Relaxed or safe

When relaxed or secure, the type follows a different line, against the direction of the arrow. This sub-section discusses which elements of another type are assumed in these situations.

How to deal with a particular type

This section offers five suggestions for improved co-operation with a leader, associate, colleague or client of the type discussed. Almost all the suggestions were offered by leaders and professionals of the relevant type during workshops, when asked what tips they would suggest to improve communication with their type. That does not mean that the suggestions will be applicable for everyone of this type; there is no infallible recipe for this. Always check first with the person in question. If possible, ask whether he thinks that the suggestion would work for him. In fact, you might like to ask whether they have any suggestions of their own. Apart from contributing to the dialogue, there's always the possibility that they are not the type you thought they were!

Suggestions for development

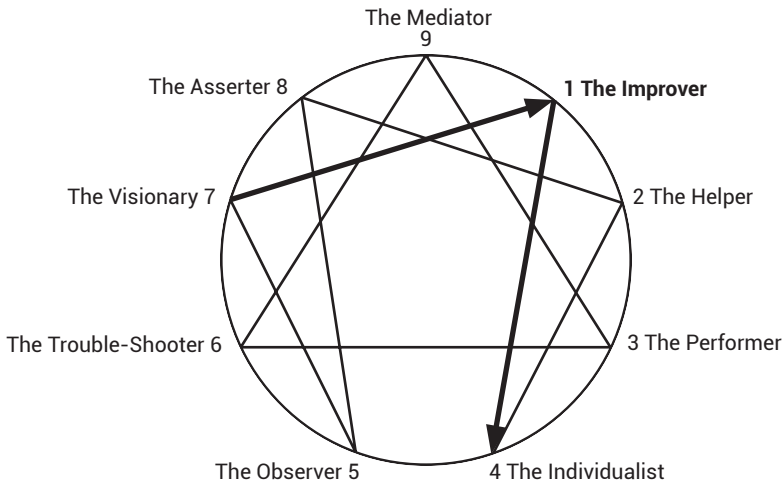
Each chapter includes a list of four suggestions for further development of each type. These are interesting possibilities for the types themselves, but they could also be used by a leader or coach to encourage the development of staff of this type. Here too, the suggestions are those offered by other leaders and professionals during the course of workshops, as ways in which to optimize their own effectiveness. They are not intended as a substitute for careful assessment on your part. Check first whether the suggestion is applicable for you. You may have better ideas. And if you should decide to offer the suggestion to an associate, even greater care is advisable. It might be wise to check first what he thinks of it.

Organizational characteristics

Companies and institutions also frequently have specific characteristics that play an important part in the organizational culture. Eight characteristics are listed for each type.

TYPE 1

THE IMPROVER



Left behind in the supermarket, Type 1 thinks to himself

“This could have been handled better. If there were a decent infant-detector system at the entrance to the supermarket, the problem wouldn’t occur. It’s easy. The system registers each mother and infant entering the supermarket. If either the mother or the infant leaves alone, an alarm goes off. Maybe I should do the work myself, to make sure that all baby-buggies are properly equipped...”

What others appreciate in Type 1

- A good eye for detail
- Keeps to agreements
- Sense of responsibility
- Never loses sight of principles
- Knows just how things ought to be