



The Enneagram as a Productivity Tool

The *Enneagram* is a tool with remarkable depth and bottom-line impact that, when applied properly, helps people better understand themselves, each other, their clients and customers, and the organizational culture in which they work. This results in being more successful as leaders, working more effectively with each other and with the overall organization, as well as improved sales and customer relations.

Why have we found the *Enneagram* to be so useful in helping organizations to be more successful? Effective leaders continually strive to better understand themselves, their strengths and challenges, their filters and blind spots. In addition, a frequent source of conflict in organizations comes from assuming others see the world through the same glasses we do, and therefore that everyone else is a more or less well-developed version of us. A common language and model greatly assists in appreciating diversity, self-development and working together more effectively.

The *Enneagram* describes nine different sets of values and filters through which the world can be seen. It does not “put people in boxes.” Rather, it’s a respectful and **dynamic** system that provides a path of healthy development for each type, including how to build on strengths and avoid pitfalls. It assists leaders and employees in understanding themselves, clients, customers, others in the organization, and the organization itself through new eyes. Energy is freed for productivity and creativity that was previously lost in frustration and agitation.

Integration of the *Enneagram* allows teams and organizations to optimize individuals’ strengths, take advantage of synergy, improve teamwork, enhance mutual understanding and respect, improve leadership, enhance communication, and increase sales, customer satisfaction, morale, productivity, and employee retention.

Organizational leaders have often already experienced a variety of assessment tool for understanding themselves and others such as the **Myers-Briggs** and the **DISC**. With so many other tools available, why consider using another one? How is the *Enneagram* different from other assessment tools?

- ◆ We’re certified and proficient in a variety of assessments, including the **Myers-Briggs** and **DISC**. While we still use both of those, we’ve found the *Enneagram* to be by far the most powerful and effective tool for self-development and working together more effectively.
- ◆ Leaders, particularly higher up in the organization, find it more challenging, insightful, practical, and engaging than any other system.

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- ◆ It has a depth and clarity that is unmatched by any other system. In order to be used effectively, it also requires more self-awareness than do other systems, as well as more of an initial investment in time and energy. As such, we find it particularly suited to leadership development at the upper levels of organizations.
- ◆ We've found that each organization tends to have a clearly identifiable *Enneagram* type as well. That organizational type profoundly impacts how work gets done. Understanding the organization's type is very helpful in learning to work productively within its culture. Determining the *Enneagram* type of the organization as a whole provides a roadmap for effective organizational change, as well as identifying strategies that are likely to be unsuccessful.
- ◆ One of the biggest dilemmas with sales organization is assuming way too much, assuming they know their customers and clients like the back of their hands. There is an immediate return from making sure that the line of perspective is clean between the organizations and its customers, and that they're actually projecting what they think they're projecting. With its application to both self-understanding and understanding others, effective use of the *Enneagram* greatly assists in increasing rapport with clients and customers, resulting in substantial bottom-line impact.
- ◆ Most systems place individuals along a series of scales, and your "type" is determined by the summary of your scores on each of those scales. The *Enneagram* starts from a bolder and stronger perspective: that there are nine types, and, while we each have traits from all nine types, each of us at the core is only **one** type, and that type will not change (although our **Level of Development** can and will change, showing the path of self-development). Therefore, once you know your type, there is extraordinary specificity in your ability to dive deeply into self-understanding and, ultimately, increased fulfillment and productivity.
- ◆ The *Enneagram* is focused on much more than surface behavior—it instead illuminates what actually drives the surface behavior, the underlying motivations. Without development, the *Enneagram* types operate quite unconsciously in us. We don't notice the assumptions we make, the beliefs we hold, and our particular emotional, mental, and physical patterns. We instead operate on autopilot. When people first learn the *Enneagram* they tend to be quite surprised at how much of what they considered "spontaneous" behavior is accounted for by the *Enneagram* type. Later, they are equally surprised at the increase in their ability to lead and perform more effectively.

Levels of Development

While we each have aspects of all nine types, there is one type that is "our" type, and we retain this type throughout our lives. There are, however, levels of development within each type. This is what makes the *Enneagram* a dynamic system. Rather than putting people into boxes, it shows them the box they're already in, and how to most effectively get out.

There are nine levels of development. The top three are the **High Performance** levels. At **High Performance** there's a sense of flow, being fully engaged with the task, moving with little or no friction against the internal or external world (adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Individuals, teams, and organizations at **High Performance** have greater sustained high productivity, improved sales and customer satisfaction. People are focused on the task rather

than on meeting personal agendas. There's a sense of energy and flow. At the three **Average** levels there's a mix between productivity and energy-sapping patterns. At the three **Acute/Chronic Stress** levels there's an increasing sense of spinning wheels, heightened conflict, resistance, difficulties with clients and customers, and other significant problems.

For any of the nine types, increased **Level of Development** leads to more freedom, flexibility, productivity, enjoyment, balance, adaptability, and being "out of the box." Decreased **Level of Development** is reflected in stress, tension, stuckness, out-of-balance, dissatisfaction, lowered productivity, and being "in the box."

At **High Performance** we're seeing other people (both within and outside the organization) as people, with their own unique needs, and balancing our own needs with those of others. This increases respect and opens communication, along with trust and rapport. At **Average** we're becoming more self-centered, and seeing others in light of our own needs, with less concern for their needs. This leads to increased friction with co-workers, clients and customers, while the true source of this friction is typically out of our awareness. We create resistance without knowing how or why. At **Acute/Chronic Stress** we're seeing others much more as objects, less as people, with significantly more negative impact on all relationships.

Each type has unique gifts. When we're relaxed on the inside we're best able to express those gifts, and at **High Performance** we're being the highest expression of our type. We're enjoying who we are, and those around us. Others enjoy being around us, and relate to us well. When there are difficulties, internal or external to the organization, we're able to deal with them effectively and productively. As we go down in **Level of Development** we begin to lose degrees of freedom. We find ourselves repeating patterns that habitually have not worked in our lives. Our level of satisfaction and productivity diminishes, and we tend to express the more negative side of our type. Productivity, sales, and customer satisfaction all suffer.

Shifting Level of Development

If there wasn't a way to shift level of development, there would be no point in learning about the *Enneagram*. On an individual level, we move up in **Level of Development** as we become more self-aware, honest with ourselves, open, relaxed, present, balanced, take healthy responsibility, and, perhaps most importantly, act in accordance with our deepest wisdom. We go further down in **Level of Development** when we blame, play victim, complain, are dishonest with ourselves, beat ourselves up, become agitated, and especially when we don't act in a way that's consistent with our inner wisdom.

We all encounter difficulties in our lives, both personally and professionally. When we apply the higher qualities of our type to these difficulties, we tend to resolve them most effectively, and at the same time move up in **Level of Development**. These higher qualities include kindness, compassion, and gentle honesty. When we apply the lower quality of our types to these difficulties, we tend to deepen our difficulties and turn them into real problems. Our applied "solutions" may lead to more imbalance in our lives, e.g. interpersonal difficulties. These lower qualities include blame, lack of personal responsibility, avoidance, and being harshly critical of ourselves and/or others.

At the organization or team level, there are factors that have a profound impact on the **Level of Development** of all people within that organization or team. On the positive end, these factors include clarity of roles and goals, trust, clear communication, appreciation, collective accountability, having the tools to do the job right, and, especially, an overall sense of being able to make a difference. On the negative end, these factors include fostered competition, job insecurity, distrust, individual rewards, excessive conflict, heightened stress/tension, and lack of clear working agreements.

The Nine Enneagram Types

Type One (Reformers)

- ◆ **Filter:** I see what's wrong, and how it can be improved. I carry around an internal yardstick and measure myself and others against it.
- ◆ Rational and idealistic, at **High Performance** they display integrity, objectivity, responsibility, and commitment to quality. They live by their values, hold high standards, and they don't cut corners.
- ◆ At lower levels of development they're hard on themselves, and that hardness "leaks out" as resentment or criticalness of others. They become more judgmental, moralizing, impersonal, intolerant, and dogmatic, seeing only their one "right way."

Type Two (Mentors/Helpers)

- ◆ **Filter:** What are other people feeling? What do they need? How can I meet their needs?
- ◆ Interpersonal and caring, they're attracted to service and making connections. At **High Performance** they're empathetic, altruistic, appreciative, encouraging, warm hearted, generous, and kind. People feel supported and cared for.
- ◆ At lower levels of development they become intrusive, giving-to-get (strings attached), possessive, and out of touch with their own needs. People can feel manipulated, and their flattery can come across as insincere.

Type Three (Achievers)

- ◆ **Filter:** How can I be successful? How can I accomplish the next goal as efficiently as possible?
- ◆ Ambitious and image-conscious, at **High Performance** they are authentic, adaptable, competent, enthusiastic, and motivational. They energize those around them with a can-do attitude. Once given a goal they'll work tirelessly to achieve it.
- ◆ At lower levels of development, they start to treat people as objects that are helpful or barriers to getting the job done, and people begin to resent it. They can come across as superficial, arrogant, self-serving, pushy, insincere, opportunistic, and untrustworthy.

Type Four (Designers/Individualists)

- ◆ **Filter:** How can I express my creativity and uniqueness in this situation?
- ◆ Expressive and individualistic, at **High Performance** they're creative, self-aware, sensitive, inspired and aesthetically oriented. They bring depth to their work lives, and encourage others to be more fully who they are. They find ways to put their unique stamp on whatever they are doing.

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- ◆ At lower levels they become more moody, hypersensitive, and withdrawn. They can start to notice what's wrong in their lives, and become envious of others. They can become self-indulgent and alienated.

Type Five (Investigators/Observers)

- ◆ **Filter.** Detaching from the situation, stepping back to analyze and understand it.
- ◆ Intense and intellectual, at **High Performance** they're extremely perceptive, insightful, analytic, and inventive. Deeply curious about the world, they find their own answers and explore uncharted territory. They make remarkable leaps and connections, and are valued as sources of considerable wisdom.
- ◆ At lower levels of development, they tend to hold back of themselves, disliking intrusions on their time and space. They can be perceived as detached, arrogant, preoccupied, reclusive, and eccentric.

Type Six (Troubleshooters)

- ◆ **Filter.** Where is the danger? What might be the worst-case scenario? How can I/we prepare for it? What are peoples' underlying motives?
- ◆ Committed and security-oriented, at **High Performance** they are trustworthy, dedicated, warm and dutiful. They constructively point out potential problems before they become major issues. They value teamwork, and are cooperative, supportive, loyal team players. They often have a quirky, dry-witted sense of humor.
- ◆ At lower levels of development, they become nay-sayers, consistently focusing their attention on what might go wrong. Disliking unpredictability and rapid change, they can become reactive, anxious, suspicious, blaming, doubting, worrying, and volatile.

Type Seven (Enthusiasts)

- ◆ **Filter.** What's the next interesting, stimulating, fun thing to do? What can I plan next?
- ◆ Busy and fun-loving, at **High Performance** they can take any situation and find a way to make the best of it. They're joyous, spontaneous, enthusiastic, resilient, buoyant, playful, optimistic, charming, and multitalented.
- ◆ At lower levels of development they can become scattered, chronically unsatisfied, and have difficulty following through on commitments. They can come across as impatient and impulsive, with a short attention span.

Type Eight (Challengers)

- ◆ **Filter.** Who has the power? Who might be trying to influence me? How can I make an impact?
- ◆ Powerful and willful, at **High Performance** they make sure that they are empowered, and also empower those around them. Champions of the underdog, they protect those in their care and are self-assertive, magnanimous, courageous, and pragmatic. They take charge, can stand the heat, and make sure that they can make a difference.
- ◆ At lower levels of development they start to use their considerable strength to protect themselves, and can throw people off balance by becoming intimidating, bullying, and combative. They can become boastful, excessive, blaming, and have black-and-white thinking.

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Type Nine (Peacemakers/Mediators)

- ◆ **Filter.** How can I stay comfortable? Where can I find a sense of harmony?
- ◆ Pleasant and modest, at **High Performance** they are accepting, patient, calming, supportive, harmonizing, and steady. They build consensus, and masterfully blend divergent points of view.
- ◆ At lower levels of development, their desire for harmony takes the form of conflict-avoidance, and they can sacrifice their own position for the sake of keeping the peace. They can also become disengaged, stubborn, procrastinating, passive-aggressive, resistant, and apathetic.

Organizational Benefits

- **Sales and Customer Satisfaction.** The *Enneagram* has a profound impact on sales and customer satisfaction. Frequently there's a considerable gap between how we actually come across to clients and customers, and how we think we come across. The *Enneagram* effectively helps to reduce that gap. In addition, gaining a better understanding of the customer, realizing that the customer may have very different perceptual filters and pay attention to very different things, allows us to more effectively tailor our approach to each customer.
- **Organizational Development.** This is a powerful productivity tool. It assists the organization in understanding itself and how to build on its strengths, as well as in how to bring out the strengths of its members.
- **Team Development.** Work teams that use the *Enneagram* learn to appreciate each other in profoundly new ways. They learn to take some of their "conflicts" more lightly, seeing how those conflicts can often be explained by the personality differences illuminated by the *Enneagram*. People learn how to communicate better with each other, how to be more appreciative and respectful and approach their work by "being in it together."
- **Leadership Development.** Creating a highly personalized, targeted and focused individual development plan, maximizing strengths and learning how to overcome potential obstacles in the most efficient and effective way.
- **Employee Retention.** The *Enneagram* illuminates the ways that different people want to be treated. Understanding the *Enneagram* leads to clear conversations and actions around employee retention and motivation.
- **Appreciation of Diversity.** The *Enneagram* helps people to understand each other, increasing positive and energizing interactions while decreasing the potential for unnecessary conflict and tension. This facilitates taking advantage of the many different perspectives and then coming together in a way that keeps people excited and allows for maximum creativity, contribution, and productivity.

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