

The Enneagram: A brief overview

What is the Enneagram?

The Enneagram is a powerful tool that can facilitate organisational change due to its focus on personal and professional transformation. Put simply - it is a system about people—how we are the same, how we are different, and what makes us "tick". Enneagram is a Greek word meaning nine-pointed diagram. Its nine personality types provide business leaders with insight into their own personal beliefs, habits of attention, blind spots and resistance to change. An ancient and profound psychological system, it has valuable applications in organisations today. For example:

- Managing your emotions in challenging encounters
- Enhancing your communication style
- Giving effective feedback
- Responding to conflict constructively
- Creating high performing teams
- Developing leadership excellence



The Enneagram today, is most often presented as a system of personality types. Each personality type can be characterised by core beliefs or world views which influence and determine perceptions, thoughts, values and behaviours, which are universal to the type.

The word Enneagram (pronounced Any – a – gram) is of Greek origin and refers to a diagram with nine points or lines..

There are nine different Enneagram styles, representing nine distinct habits of thinking, feeling, and taking action, connected to nine unique personal and spiritual developmental paths. Each of us has only one place or number on the Enneagram; while your Enneagram style remains the same throughout your lifetime, your characteristics may soften or become more pronounced as you grow and develop.

Our Enneagram programs bring home the validity and value of colleagues, clients and employees, often misunderstood points of view.

These insights are essential in developing the greater self awareness needed to succeed in today's changing business environment. Our programs are designed to help your team to:

- Develop greater personal power and effectiveness
- Resolve conflicts that impede productivity
- Build heightened perspective
- Unlock potential and erase barriers to success
- Act versus react

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The Enneagram & Self Awareness

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

1. Why should I learn about my Enneagram point? How can it help me at work?

Being able to articulate our values, our world view and reveal what is going on under the surface for us can bring us greater freedom. As we learn about our habitual way of being in the world, we can begin to transform our behaviours from stumbling blocks to our greatest gift. In other words, we move from unconscious behaviour to conscious behaviour. We can begin to take greater charge of our emotions and thought patterns, rather than them running us. This can produce greater benefits for us in the workplace and our personal lives.

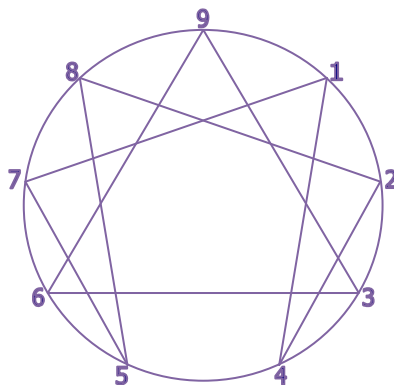
The potential of the Enneagram to inform the corporate world is immense. Organisations can apply the Enneagram at four levels: at the individual level to build self-awareness, at the relational level to improve interpersonal communication, at the group level for purposes of team-building and conflict resolution, and at the organisational level to develop a conscious corporate culture (Issacs and Labanuskas 1998).

Applying the Enneagram in a workplace setting can have enormous benefits in transforming personal behaviours and leadership styles. In applying the Enneagram we can access greater self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and hence to an improved sense of personal control and self-esteem. The framework also helps us to better understand both the attitudes and behaviours of other people, especially those over whom we have influence. It achieves these ends by teaching us how to:

- read and interpret our own emotions and those of others
- develop greater self-discipline
- access greater behavioural freedom
- develop emotional resilience
- move towards a pathway of personal change and improvement
- motivate ourselves and others!

2. How does it help me to learn about the other points on the Enneagram?

As we begin to learn the very different ways of perceiving the world, without judgment; we learn to listen carefully to others point of view. We gain tremendous compassion for all the ways of perceiving, including our own. We begin to experience others "as they are to themselves" and to see the tremendous value of each way of being. It's almost like being in someone else's skin for a short time. Our relationships improve by leaps and bounds when we begin to listen carefully for a tune other than our own. Whether we "nail the point" or figure out someone's Enneagram type is completely unimportant. We simply begin to truly hear other viewpoints and value them as we do our own. We all want to be heard and valued for who we are. The Enneagram gives us a framework for doing just that. We find a way to honor the diversity of ourselves and others.



The Enneagram cont'd

3. Aren't people likely to start putting people in boxes, pigeonholing them, or sticking them in categories with the Enneagram?

Any system, even a good one, can be misused. However, we all categorize every day. Man/Woman; Christian/Muslim; small/large; quick/slow; athletic/lazy. Of course, we try to look beyond our simple categorizations to the human being beyond them. Categories are our way of making sense and order out of our world. But we need to hold them lightly, seeing them for the very incomplete picture that they are.

So it is with the Enneagram. No two people are alike in all ways, ever. At first, your enthusiasm for the Enneagram may cause you to "run rampant" typing people. Relax. Hold it lightly. It's just a phase that will pass when you begin to learn more about the complexities of the Enneagram or look past the point to the individual. One word of caution: this phase of typing people or "speaking in numbers" can be extremely annoying to friends and family who may not share your enthusiasm.

4. How can I change my behaviour at work to become a better team player or leader?

Personal and professional growth cannot be forced or rushed. It requires us to develop the practice of presence and self observation. By cultivating a capacity to be present to ourselves and others and by watching ourselves, our thoughts, deeds, feelings; we begin to unravel the mystery of why we do and see as we do. We open ourselves to a greater vision and a larger self. We move toward wholeness and fulfillment. Our personal commitment to growth (personally and professionally) has a lot of bearing on the rate that we see some change.

While there are exercises that are helpful for each point, change happens gradually as a result of activating and strengthening our inner observer. We become aware of our patterns and that very awareness is the start of the transformation journey. Working with a specialized coach over a period of time can accelerate your learning and help you identify your inner observer and unconscious patterns and motivations. It is fair to say however that the power for transformational growth is in your hands. Spending regular time in reflection also helps you understand where you are at. It's a combination of placing your attention on transformation, getting some good advice and support and letting it happen.



5. Which Enneagram Point or type is the best to be?

No point is better or worse than any other. Like us, they are just different. And as you continue to explore, you find that there are many flavors of each point, and subtypes, and on and on. In fact you will recognize characteristics of each point that will apply to yourself. Soon, we can see beyond the Enneagram and understand the value in diversity.

6. Where did the Enneagram originate?

Some scholars have traced it back as far as 10,000 years. This oral tradition has been thought to be intricately woven into the Kabbalah, and most recently believed to be used by Sufi mystics. This sacred information was given to the West only recently and refined by psychologists (1960's and 70's), who synthesized it into its present form. Although many books have been written about the Enneagram, most teachers believe it can still

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only be learned through the oral tradition. However, books can give helpful background information to augment oral teachings.

7. What is a Wing?

Each point also accesses the energy of one of the two points next to it on the diagram. For example, a Seven may have a Six Wing or an Eight Wing. While they will still have primarily Seven views and behaviors, their personality will be flavored by Six or Eight and they will look quite different. Most people have one Wing point that is dominant, although at some time in their life, they access the energy from the other wing point.

8. Explain the movement to Stress Point and Growth Point?

When habitual behavior is not effective in relieving stress or anxiety, we move to our stress point (the arrows on most Enneagram diagrams). This allows us to take action to alleviate the stress. Stress points are not bad per se, they help us by giving us other resources to deal with life's issues. However, accessing the less desirable traits of our stress point can lead to unwanted consequences when we are totally unconscious of them. As we become more conscious, we may find ourselves utilizing more of the gifts of our stress point without being run by it.



When we are secure, we move to our growth point (the opposite direction on the diagram). Often we take on the more positive, beneficial traits of our growth point as we develop. It is possible to experience the "low side" of your growth point. Again, all we need do is notice. The inner observer makes it possible for us to live consciously with fuller access to our gifts and strengths.

9. What if I can't figure out what point I am?

Often, people can narrow it down to one or two, even three points they feel describe them. Take your time. Most of us have little experience with the inner observer in our culture (unless we are long time meditators). As you observe more, you'll be able to identify patterns and come closer to your point. It's less important that you know your point right away than that you observe your feelings, thoughts, and habitual ways of acting and perceiving. You can also have a trained Enneagram teacher/coach to help by working through the points of the Enneagram with you.

For further information about a customised leadership development program that uses the Enneagram as a foundation tool or executive coaching using the Enneagram contact Lindy at Collective Possibilities today.

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