



Sandra Ford Walston

## THE ENNEAGRAM

### A Business Model for Nine ways to Work Together

*He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is wise.*  
--Lao Tzu

**B**reakdowns and disruptions that hinder an organization's advancement rarely have to do with unskilled employees. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins discovered that "good is the enemy of great is not just a business problem. It is a *human* problem." What if there was a system that would enhance your ability to synergize greatness? What if this knowledge prompted you to respond insightfully to a peer's best intention? What if this tool could shed light on the filter you use to approach all of life?

"Spiked success" is very different from sustainable greatness. Organizations cannot afford to ignore the human dimension differences that permeate the workforce. How willing are you to honestly explore the personality patterns that lead your organization to greatness or ... undermine it?

The tool of choice to value and manage who you are at work and what you are not is the Enneagram (pronounced "ANY-a-gram"), from the Greek "nine" (ennea) and "figure" (grammos). It is a nine-pointed geometric figure that maps out a system of nine basic viewpoints that include nine different ways of working together. Combining spiritual wisdom and modern psychology, the Enneagram system offers a cultural view that one's true mission in life is to understand all people through compassion rather than judgment.

There are many helpful instruments human resource groups and corporate trainers can utilize to improve and advance their employees' performance—at all levels. Choosing to draw on more than one assessment method in the workplace uncovers a richer understanding of an individual's leadership strengths and challenges. For example, to more accurately target the individuals' behaviors, you can overlay the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (four preferences with sixteen personality types) as the longitudinal perspective with the Enneagram pinpointing the latitude point of view. Invaluable components are revealed when skilled presenters overlay several indicators.

Diverse organizations, such as lawyers, engineers, non-profits, government agencies, psychologists, executive coaches, and *Fortune 500* companies look to the Enneagram to:

- improve and deepen communication
- reveal leadership tendencies
- expedite strategic planning processes
- expose group dynamics
- recognize a client's viewpoint

- uncover conscious assumptions (closely held opinions)
- solve problems
- remove preconceived notions

The Enneagram system does not compete with other indicators, so it is not necessary to discard other tools. You can expect to genuinely enhance your understanding of behaviors and attitudes by incorporating the Enneagram into your toolbox. Keep in mind, personality instruments are not to put you in a box, but rather to help you recognize the box you are in. Knowing your Enneagram filter allows you to diminish your habitual patterns of perceiving and create a space for discerning the value of others.

### **Not Just Another Personality Tool**

What could be obtained if everyone signed on to learn their “Enneastyle”? National director and vice president of a consulting engineering firm, Keith Ferguson has been studying the Enneagram for over fifteen years, “Learning the Enneagram helped to reinforce the fact that each person has unique gifts to offer and some fundamental roadblocks that stand in the way. The Enneagram reinforces the awareness that no one personality is the best but that we all can make a real difference when we discover the greater gifts that we have and can learn to offer them without conditions. Second, it has helped me to rise above the typical personality ‘ego’ battles that take place in the workplace and to stay focused on higher ideals.” Employees utilizing the Enneagram learn how to clear their mind so discernment is possible to achieve the greater good of the company’s goals.

As you discover which one of the nine Enneastyle “flavors” resonates with you, you will perceive more about your original whole self. The Enneagram teaches that we are different in significant ways. The names associated with the nine Enneagram types represent an angle of the type:

- Type One: The Perfectionist/Humanitarian/Reformer, strives to do things right; has a strong sense of what is right and wrong.
- Type Two: The Giver/Pleaser/Helper, need to be needed and valued, and to help others.
- The Three: Achiever/Producer/Performer, has a need to be productive, work hard and succeed.
- The Four: Romantic/Individualist/Connoisseur, wishes to explore deep passions and be understood; leads others to new depths.
- The Five: Observer/Sage/Investigator, seek objective information to know and understand everything to master the game.
- The Six: Questioner/Troubleshooter/Loyalist, worries about problems, has a need for safety and security, and wants to be prepared.
- The Seven: Enthusiast/Epicure/Adventurer, needs to be happy and avoid pain; enjoys planning new ideas or possibilities.
- The Eight: Boss/Leader/Challenger, seeks to be strong and exercises power to keep control.
- The Nine: Mediator/Peacemaker/Unifier, merges with others to bring all sides together to avoid conflict.

Understanding personality types can only communicate ideas about each type's reality, not reality itself. At work, each Enneagram type has a characteristic agenda and operates within a particular decision-making frame. A partner in a law firm, Thomas Kanan, said, "The Enneagram system of personality classification is a tool for self-knowledge. It is used as a means of understanding the motivation of others and their preferred working styles and problem-solving techniques. The Enneagram is unique in its ability to be used almost immediately in everyday business and social settings for enhancing communications with others."

Engaging, yet practical, each Enneastyle at work names a set of behaviors that can be examined and understood without recrimination. Interpersonal issues shift from blame (the other person's viewpoint is defective) to perceiving the point of view from that person's approach. Theresa Hart is a Fortune 500 manager and an Eight, said, "The Enneagram is an invaluable tool to advance team building activities. My knowledge has helped me understand myself, my actions as a leader and my subordinates' reactions to my leadership style. We have avoided needless wastes of time and conflict."

### **Opportunities to Transform Belief Systems**

As a business model for nine ways of working together, the Enneagram presents a powerful insight to help people face and work through their limitations in order to achieve their full potential. Learning your Enneagram preference can be a powerful catalyst for positive personal change to enhance your effectiveness as a leader; hence, sustain long-lasting greatness. The Enneagram facilitates change in these ways:

- **Allows awareness of present patterns.** The Enneagram enhances self-awareness to identify what is and the direction to how you would like to be. It is a motivational model, not a behavioral model. Therefore, it is best to determine your character type through a process of discovery, focusing on the compulsion or "driving force" of each style versus relying on questionnaires.

Mr. Kanan is a Nine and believes that to be loved and valued one must blend in and go along to get along. Consequently, Mediators are self-forgetting, harmony seeking, comfortable, and steady, but also conflict avoidant and sometimes stubborn. He is under enormous pressure to practice law, participate in the management of the firm and work with strong personalities, "It is fascinating to me how I now can react to my own habitual practice in a more effective and successful manner. Understanding my type, I have become more decisive and assertive which increased my confidence to express and maintain my boundaries."

- **Disrupts or eliminates patterns.** Limitations, long-held belief systems and fears are blocks or barriers to what you may strive for at work. Stuck in repetitive loops, the story of who you are and who you aren't can be revealed when you stop the old behavior sets. As a result of surrendering your belief systems, you can change. The Enneagram opens you to the experience of others, and helps you get out of your own way. It reduces the breakdowns that paralyze people against working more easily and efficiently together.

- **Chooses new patterns, attitudes and responses.** Expanding your awareness about human individuality is a fascinating process. The Enneagram is not only comprehensive, illustrating a full range of human potential, but it is also dynamic, revealing ways in which each person can grow and maximize his or her potential at work (and home). A Three, Keith Ferguson said, “Without the Enneagram, it is much easier to keep getting pulled back into the quagmire of interpersonal competition and defensive behaviors.”

Few organizations seek to design and implement a noble legacy that transcends generations. Stuck in workplace positionalities, organizations hover around being good. Jim Collins wrote, “Good is the enemy of great.” The key component to achieving greatness requires an intention to provide training and coaching that concentrates on valuing personality distinctions, such as the wisdom-based Enneagram.

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### 5 Insights for Understanding the Enneagram at Work:

#### About the Author:

Sandra Ford Walston, The Courage Expert, innovator of STUCKThinking™, is an organizational effectiveness/learning consultant, speaker, corporate trainer and courage coach. Specializing in understanding courage behaviors, individual personalities and leadership styles that focus on the tricks and traps of the human condition, the author/trainer facilitates individuals and groups in discovering their hidden talents. She is the internationally published author of regional bestseller, *Courage: The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman/Reclaiming the Forgotten Virtue* (Greece and Brazil). Her second book is currently agent represented. She is qualified to administer and interpret the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and is a certified Enneagram teacher. Currently she is a candidate for an Honorary Doctorate Degree.

Sandra provides skill-based programs for public and private businesses, including Caterpillar, Inc., Auburn University, Procter & Gamble, Wyoming Department of Health Public Nurses, Farmers Insurance, Wide Open West and Hitachi Consulting. For eleven years she taught Continuing Professional Education courses for the Colorado Society of CPAs and she returns to the University of Denver Graduate Tax Program in 2009. To learn more about how Sandra can help your business cultivate success or to purchase a copy of her first book, visit [www.walstoncourage.com](http://www.walstoncourage.com) or contact her 303.696.1010 or [swalston@walstoncourage.com](mailto:swalston@walstoncourage.com).

## Sidebar

### **5 Insights for Understanding the Enneagram at Work:**

Whether at work, home, or in social, spiritual, or emotional setting, discovering your Enneagram personality type can help change the way you relate to yourself and others as well as helping you maneuver through the everyday work circumstances and issues.

1. *Who uses the Enneagram system of understanding personalities?* Diverse organizations work with the Enneagram for professional development, leadership, strategic planning, communication, sales/marketing, conflict resolution and group dynamics. Prominent business and religious leaders, academicians, attorneys, consultants, therapists, authors and screenwriters use the Enneagram worldwide. Noted organizations using the Enneagram as a valued resource today include the CIA, the Jesuits and Stanford University Medical School.
2. *The Enneagram is neither a religion nor “The Truth;” it is a personality theory.* The Enneagram is a wake-up tool to the reality of our deeper nature. Properly applied as a process that evolves (like all personality instruments), it should not be a labeling device nor used to “fix” people.
3. *What is the benefit of discovering your “Enneastyle” and changing your awareness?* Discovering your Enneagram personality type can help change the way you relate to yourself and others as well as helping you face circumstances and issues.
4. *Why use the Enneagram in your organization?* The Enneagram focuses employees and managers to ask important questions about their work teams, such as (a) What is valued in our organization and what is not valued? (b) What allows a team to assess the quality of the team relative to the company’s goals? (c) Which lens of the Enneagram makes the decisions and plans? It is a tool that can assess the source of breakdowns and provide the guidebook to resolve them.
5. *Here are a few benefits the Enneagram provides:*
  - Recognize your own “adaptive” style
  - Seek to understand other styles rather than condemn them
  - Move from vanity of being “right” to being effective through humility
  - Learn not to take comments so personally as you become aware of the other person’s Enneastyle
  - Generate a more collegial atmosphere