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### **Wake-Up and Take Action:**

#### ***The Need for Us to Look at Ourselves***

A Reaction to Barbara Ehrenreich's New Book *Bait and Switch:*

*The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*

By Ginger Lapid-Bogda, Ph.D.

This is the first of three articles about the ethics of using the Enneagram in organizations.

Some of you may already know about a new book, *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream* by Barbara Ehrenreich, that includes derogatory comments and stories about both the Enneagram and the MBTI. An accomplished writer and poignant storyteller, Ehrenreich goes undercover to explore the world of the unemployed white-collar worker trying to find a job in current corporate America. During her pursuits, she employs the services of multiple "coaches," one of whom uses the Enneagram in his career coaching work.

In writing this article, I intend to raise some questions and stimulate conversation within the Enneagram community through three different lenses. One lens is that of an organization development (OD) consultant for over 33 years, during which time I have seen the best of organizational life, the worst of it, and everything in between. The second lens is that of being the author of a new business book, *Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work: How to Use the Enneagram System for Success*, that integrates the theory and practice of management theory and the behavioral sciences with the Enneagram. The third lens is that of the current president of the International Enneagram Association (until December 2005), an organization deeply committed to the ethical use and application of the Enneagram.

Interspersed throughout the article are excerpts about the values and ethical use of the Enneagram taken directly from the IEA website. The values and ethics statements of the IEA provide clear guidelines for using the Enneagram in a variety of contexts.

#### ***Bait and Switch* References to the Enneagram**

What does *Bait and Switch* really say about the Enneagram? Ehrenreich's intention was to secure a white-collar job and to then write about her on-the-job experience. Instead, she had such a troubling experience with finding work that she shifted her book's focus. Her initial encounters – and the topic of her entire first chapter - - were with three coaches; one used the Enneagram, one used the MBTI, and a third helped her with resume writing. In varying degrees, she was displeased with all three

coaches, but her report about her Enneagram career coach is most relevant to this article.

“Morton” (the pseudonym for Ehrenreich’s Enneagram career coach) apparently explained the Enneagram system to her, gave her an Enneagram test, which she disliked intensely because she found the questions confusing, and used dolls to illustrate his coaching points. Although Ehrenreich says she ended up giving socially desirable responses to the test questions, it appears that she may have scored as a Enneagram Four: “In my case, the non-resourceful side includes being overly sensitive and prone to melancholy and envy, not to mention the bad traits that come up when you draw diagonals from Loving and Effective.” (p.26)

Based on his analysis of Ehrenreich’s Enneagram test scores, “Morton” tells her that she probably doesn’t “write very well” and that the “suggested activity’...would be ‘intensive journaling workshops’ to polish [her] writing skills.” (p.26)

We can all imagine Ehrenreich’s reaction to this recommendation given that she has published thirteen books and is a frequent contributor to *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *Time* magazine. Ehrenreich might be equally surprised at our (the Enneagram community’s) reaction to hearing that anyone would link writing skills (or any skills, for that matter) to a person’s Enneagram style.

Ehrenreich is correct in some respects. There are coaches, consultants, trainers, and organizations that misuse psychologically oriented instruments and assessments. Sadly, the Enneagram will likely be among them if it used either by individuals or organizations that don’t understand the Enneagram well or don’t realize the implications and dangers of using psychological tools in business settings. However, most of us who are part of the Enneagram community do use the Enneagram with integrity. We need to constantly examine our own behavior and to also consider what we might do when others do not use the Enneagram in accurate or ethical ways. As a cautionary note, we should be very careful when we use the Enneagram with organizations and with individuals in a business context. It is our collective problem.

## **Lessons to Learn from the Issues Raised in *Bait and Switch*: Using the Enneagram in Organizations**

### **1. Know What You Know and Don’t Work in Areas Where You Are Not Yet Competent**

Ehrenreich’s reported experience with the Enneagram is a cause for concern, but it is by no means the experience most people in organizations are having with the

Enneagram. While there will inevitably be misuses of the Enneagram, far more often it is being used effectively in organizations worldwide in ways that help employees, leaders, and organizations rather than hurt them. Oracle, Sony, the Bank of Thailand, Nu-Ear, and Wachovia are all using the Enneagram with enthusiasm and success. What makes these situations different from the one Barbara Ehrenreich describes?

First, the Enneagram is being taught by managers, consultants, and trainers who know the Enneagram well, respect its power and limitations, treat people with respect and do not objectify them as numbers around a circle, and know how to apply the Enneagram to address their organization's specific challenges.

At Wachovia, Colleen Gentry, Senior VP of Executive Development and Executive Coaching Practice Leader, has created a state of the art leadership and coaching effort, one that is extensively benchmarked. At Nu-Ear, a division of Starkey (premier hearing aid manufacturer), General Manager Chad Jorgensen is integrating the Enneagram with neurolinguistic programming and creating dramatic innovations in his sales force. In Thailand, consultant Wajasit Losereewanich, who was previously a high-ranking human resource professional with Reuters, is working with the Bank of Thailand.

Jaime Colmenarez, General Manager of Sucromiles, a multinational chemical company in Colombia, uses the Enneagram to develop his leadership team and to improve the organizational climate. I am currently involved in a year-long project with a major U.S. pharmaceutical company (they prefer not to be named) creating a leadership program that integrates the Enneagram with their leadership competencies that is also being used as the basis for creating learning communities throughout their information technology division.

Just because someone knows the Enneagram does not mean that he or she is qualified to teach it or consult with the Enneagram in organizations. To work in the field of organization development (which emphasizes participation, group dynamics and processes, and systems thinking) or management consulting (where the consultant plays a more expert role) takes years. Someone with five year's of experience in OD is still considered a beginner. To become an effective trainer or consultant, it is not enough to just find a client and try your hand at it. Competence in OD or management consulting requires taking courses, extensive reading to develop a solid theoretical base, and apprenticeships with experienced trainers or consultants.

Even savvy leaders use the services of consultants when embarking on change initiatives. They are smart enough to realize that that may not have the expertise required and that even if they do, they may not have the time or objectivity necessary.

Many universities offer OD certificate and degree programs, as does NTL (National Training Laboratories at [www.ntl.org](http://www.ntl.org)). Pfeiffer and Associates ([www.pfeiffer.com](http://www.pfeiffer.com)) is an excellent resource for books and materials. In addition, a partial organization development bibliography can be found at the end of this article.

Coaching is another profession that requires training, and to be an excellent coach can take years of experience in addition to formal training. It is the fastest growing human resource profession around the world, but it is also one that has no professional oversight. Ehrenreich is right that anyone can call him- or herself a coach, get business cards or a website, and then charge high prices to people who are usually quite vulnerable when they seek coaching help. New Ventures West is an example of a coaching institute that produces many excellent coaches and also uses the Enneagram as one (but not their only!) core methodology.

To know the Enneagram well enough to both use it and apply it in organizations (or anywhere else) also takes time. As most of us know, the more we learn about the Enneagram, the more we know there is to learn. Unlike the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), which can only be used by practitioners who have gone through a specific certification process, we do not have something similar in the Enneagram community. In addition, the MBTI also has only one test (with several versions), whereas the Enneagram has numerous tests available.

This situation – no single certification process and a multitude of testing instruments – creates a quality control challenge in the Enneagram community. It is essential that those of us working in organizations continue upgrading our Enneagram-related knowledge and skills, whether we are new to the field or have been studying the Enneagram for a long time. And if we are new to the field and using the Enneagram in organizations, we need to read and re-read Enneagram books, get basic Enneagram training with established Enneagram teachers, commit to taking advanced Enneagram classes, attend the yearly IEA conferences, and participate in IEA chapter events. And although we now have a number of excellent tests available, none of them have (or ever will have) 100% validity and reliability. Teaching the Enneagram will always require those of us who use instruments in organizations to really know the Enneagram well as we help people identify their place on the circle.

I think of Enneagram teachers like Russ Hudson and David Daniels who attend IEA conferences and actually attend other teacher's sessions. Some of you will remember Jerry Wagner at Claudio Naranjo's post-conference day at the Washington DC conference where Jerry was all flushed and invigorated by his experience there. These three teachers among others set an excellent example for the rest of us to the importance of lifelong learning.

Enneagram training programs abound worldwide, and many of these programs listed on IEA website calendar of events ([www.internationalenneagram.org](http://www.internationalenneagram.org)). It is incumbent on us to make sure we are well trained and that we not only offer our clients quality content and services, but we also do them no harm because of our lack of knowledge, skills, and experience.

**Relevant IEA Ethics (taken from IEA website)**

Enneagram professionals strive to maintain high standards of competence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or experience. They are cognizant of the fact that the competencies required in serving, teaching, and/or studying groups of people vary with the distinctive characteristics of those groups. In those areas in which recognized professional standards do not yet exist, they exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work. They maintain knowledge of relevant scientific and professional information related to the services they render, and they recognize the need for ongoing education.

**2. Don't Use the Enneagram in Career Development Coaching or Use It Very Carefully**

In *Bait and Switch*, Barbara Ehrenreich is looking for a \$50,000 per year job with health care benefits; she is *not* seeking psychological assistance. It is clear from her book that she does not understand or believe in the connection between finding a job and the information she will gain from having a psychological assessment from "Morton." This discrepancy is even more acute because she tells "Morton" that she already knows what kind of job she wants – one that utilizes her writing and communication skills.

I must confess that I don't understand why "Morton" would have used the Enneagram in this situation, given the client's goals. Ehrenreich simply wants a job, and there is no evidence that either her personality is getting in her way or that she desires to do self-development work as part of her career coaching.

In the field of OD, we have a term called "One Trick Ponies." This term describes consultants and trainers who can do only one thing well. We also have another telling

phrase that describes something consultants and trainers are taught to avoid: “Being a hammer in search of a nail.” It is not clear if “Morton” is a “One Trick Pony,” but he was clearly a “hammer in search of a nail” using the Enneagram as the hammer when there is no evidence and no research that there is a relationship between job type and Enneagram style. In fact, to link the Enneagram with career choice becomes a form of stereotyping. Should Fives be channeled into research jobs? Should Ones become proofreaders? Perhaps Nines should work in the insurance industry! Who should be in marketing – Threes or Sevens? This line of thinking takes us in a dangerous direction, one that has ethical implications.

Beverly Kaye is a consultant who put career development on the map in the 1970s with the career development book, *Up Is Not the Only Way*. Her recent book, *Love ‘Em or Lose ‘Em: Getting Good People to Stay*, became a bestseller. After Beverly read my book, she wanted to talk about how or if the Enneagram could be integrated with career development and job placement. We came to the same conclusion: NO. The Enneagram illuminates habits of thinking and feeling as well as patterns of behavior. It tells us about nine varieties of inner motivations and worldviews. The Enneagram does *not* offer insights related to skills, talents or interests, which is why it doesn’t belong as a tool in career coaching. Perhaps the Enneagram can be helpful with job interviewing, but there are many other more effective methods to teach job interviewing skills that take less time to learn.

The Enneagram does fit well does fit well with on-the-job coaching in organizations as long as the Enneagram is used in conjunction with real organizational challenges facing the client such as enhancing leadership skills, dealing with conflict, and communication skills. It also fits well with coaching outside an organizational context, such as life coaching and spiritual coaching. It is essential that those of us in the Enneagram community understand the difference between and among the various forms of coaching and that the work we do with clients matches our skills, the client’s needs and the credentials required.

For more information about how to use the Enneagram for organizational coaching, two good books are available. *Out of the Box: Coaching with the Enneagram* by Mary Bast and Clarence Thomson offers real stories with coaching clients of the nine Enneagram styles and demonstrates how to integrate the Enneagram with the client’s goals. *From Awareness to Action – The Enneagram, Emotional Intelligence, and Change: A Guide to Improving Performance* by Robert Tallon and Mario Sikora frames

leadership coaching in the context of leadership performance and also contains insights about how the Enneagram style of the coach influences his or her coaching behavior.

**Relevant IEA Ethics (taken from IEA website)**

We encourage each professional to use the Enneagram within his or her areas of training and expertise. For example, we expect that business consultants would use the system for organization development, team building, and leadership training; coaches might use it with clients to help them improve their personal and interpersonal effectiveness and work performance. Neither a business consultant nor a coach would typically do psychotherapy with individuals who have serious emotional problems, such therapy being the domain of licensed psychologists and other mental health professionals.

**3. Don't Use the Enneagram in Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Firing Decisions**

In her foreword to my book, *Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work*, Helen Palmer summarizes all we need to know about the ethical use of the Enneagram in organizations with respect to recruitment, hiring, promotion, and firing:

“One commonly asked question about the system is “Which type is most suitable for a specific job?” or “How can we build an ideal team?” And the answer is “Find mature human beings. People aren't hired for their type. They are hired for their skills, their creativity, past experience, and whether they act like grown ups. This book is an excellent guide for understanding how different types of people can learn to communicate effectively, perform well on teams, manage conflict and lead with compassion. The way to use the Enneagram system for success in these key areas, is by way of knowing yourself and others as they actually are, which as the title suggests, brings out the best in ourselves at work.” (p.xii)

Although an entire article could be written on just this topic alone, let me share two pieces of information to illuminate the issues involved. One is a story from one of my clients. The other is a legal issue.

Two years ago, I had a coaching client named Brent, a smart and capable chemist who was a senior manager in a consulting firm. In fact, he was one of the firm's best leaders. Although Brent wanted to be coached, he was adverse to my using the Enneagram as part of his coaching because several years earlier, when he had worked for a large company, he had been turned down for a leadership position because his MBTI scores did not match the company's profile of a successful leader. Not only had Brent become demoralized by this event, he had left the company soon after. He had contemplated suing the organization, but had decided against it for personal reasons. Eventually, we did use the Enneagram in his coaching, and Brent found it very beneficial in understanding both his leadership strengths and his development areas.

As a coach and consultant, I was appalled that any psychological instrument was be used in the way it was used with Brent. How can anyone say that a certain personality profile works better in a specific job or role? Doesn't this sort of thinking also lead to organizational cloning, preventing organizations from the benefit of diverse perspectives? Witnessing Brent's distress over this matter, I was even more concerned. How would you or I feel if we were recruited, hired, promoted or fired based on a personality profile rather than on the basis of our skills and performance?

The second issue is a legal one. My organizational clients require that I carry hefty professional liability insurance in case of a lawsuit. This year, my professional liability insurance cost close to \$8000, even though in 33 years of consulting, there has never been a single claim brought against me. When consultants use the Enneagram in organizations and if they or the organization use the Enneagram as a basis for recruitment, hiring, promotion, or firing decisions, both the consultants and the organization are opening themselves to lawsuits that hurt everyone involved.

One of my clients was asked this question by his employees: "The Enneagram is amazing to learn, but how is it going to be used? Will it be a factor in our performance reviews or possible promotions?"

His response was simple: "The Enneagram is simply a tool to assist you in your personal and professional development if you want to use it, and there are other tools available. Embracing and using the Enneagram is not a requirement. However, because the organization is growing at an exponential rate and we need the best from each of you in this fast paced, constantly changing environment, your commitment to your own development *is* a requirement."

#### **4. Link the Enneagram to Work Environments Cautiously, But *Not* to Specific Jobs and Skills**

Although a moderate case can be made that there are Enneagram type-based preferences for work environments, these can become over-simplifications and stereotypes. For example, while we say that Fives, Sixes, and Sevens prefer work environments that stimulate their thinking, isn't that also true for the remaining six styles? We might also conclude that Twos prefer environments where they have contact with people, but many other Enneagram styles also like this.

What is more true is that everyone likes work environments that treat people with dignity and respect, where they get fair compensation for their time, skills and results,

where they have cordial relationships with coworkers, and where their bosses are not abusive.

In *Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work*, I do refer to type-based preferences regarding team goals and interdependence – for example, Ones liking precise goals and Sevens preferring visionary ones or Fives preferring a high degree of autonomy within a team compared to most Sixes, who prefer moderate to high team interdependence with the exception being highly counterphobic Sixes. At the same time, I explain these as preferences, not absolutes, and emphasize that team members of all styles will bypass their preferences for the good of the team as long as they understand why the goals and degree of team interdependence are so critical to the team's success.

If type-based work environments are difficult to pin down, assuming that specific jobs or specific skill go with certain Enneagram types has no basis in research or in reality. Are individuals of some Enneagram styles better communicators, better writers, better researchers, or better artists? Do certain Enneagram types make better engineers, teachers or leaders?

I have personally heard some consultants within the Enneagram community refer to Threes and Eights as the “natural” leaders. This is quite troubling for a number of reasons. First, management theorists are still debating what makes for excellence in leadership, so how is it that any of us can assume we know what makes an outstanding leader. Second, some Threes and Eights may (or may not) be the first ones to step into leadership vacuums that sometimes appear in groups. Asserting leadership behavior early on in a group's life does not make the person *the* leader; it simply means the person tends to assert him- or herself quickly. Third, leadership excellence appears in nine different forms, with leaders of each Enneagram style having a type-based leadership paradigm and related strengths and development areas.

Current research indicates that the best clue to excellence in leadership is the leader's degree of Emotional Intelligence (EQ). And, no Enneagram style has a monopoly on EQ. EQ refers to intrapersonal intelligence (self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-management) and interpersonal intelligence (the ability to interact effectively with others). EQ in the context of leadership roles and organizational needs is an area where those of us who work with the Enneagram in organizations can make a significant contribution.

**Relevant IEA Values (taken from IEA website)**  
**Type does not fully describe an individual.**

The Enneagram does not tell us anything meaningful about a person's history or quality of character, intelligence or talents. People are more than their type. We recognize that awareness of this is particularly important in the workplace.

## Summary

The list of organizational applications of the Enneagram and related ethical implications is more comprehensive than this article has room to include, but these additional areas can be part of further discussions. Part II of this series will include interviews with prominent Enneagram teachers to gain their perspectives on ethics and the Enneagram, particularly when used in organizations.

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## Recommended Organization Development Books

### General OD

Block, Peter. *Flawless Consulting*. Austin, Tex.: Learning Concepts, 1981.

Massarik, Fred, and Pei-Carpenter, Marissa. *Organization Development and Consulting: Perspectives and Foundations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002.

Pfeiffer, J. William, ed. *Theories and Models in Applied Behavioral Sciences*. 4 vols. San Diego: Pfeiffer & Company, 1991.

### Conflict

Walton, Richard E. *Managing Conflict: Interpersonal Dialogue and Third-Party Roles*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987.

### Leadership

Bradford, David L., and Cohen, Allan R. *Power Up*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

Kouzes, James M., and Posner, Barry Z. *Credibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

### Teams

Katzenbach, Jon R., and Smith, Douglas K. *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Reddy, W. Brandon, and Jamison, Kaleel, eds. *Team Building: Blueprints for Productivity and Satisfaction*. Alexandria, Va.: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1988.

Smith, Kenwyn K., and Berg, David N. *Paradoxes of Group Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.