



ORGANIZATION
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

ODN Practitioner
Online, July 2004

**BOOK REVIEW for Organization Development Network
Practitioner Online (July 2004 Issue)**

***Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work:
How to Use the Enneagram System for Success***

By Ginger Lapid-Bogda, Ph.D. (McGraw-Hill 2004)

Reviewed by Maurice L. Monette, Ed.D.

Director, Organizational Psychology MA Program
John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill, CA

Finally, a book on the Enneagram that OD practitioners can relate to! It is authored by an OD and change consultant who is a member of the OD Network as well as the current president of the International Enneagram Association. *Bringing Out The Best in Yourself at Work* integrates the insights of the Enneagram personality styles with practical applications of behavioral science and management theory. While the book is broadly aimed at anyone who interacts with others in a business environment, it will be particularly useful to you as a primer on the Enneagram at work, a handout to your coaching clients, and a text for training and team development interventions. While the book cannot fully prepare you to assess personality types or train and coach with the Enneagram, I highly recommend you read it. It will give you a taste of how deeply our lifelong patterns of motivation influence how we communicate, give feedback, manage conflict, create teams, and exercise leadership. You may even be motivated to get Enneagram training and integrate the system into your OD practice.

Bringing Out The Best in Yourself at Work begins with a chapter on how to identify and interpret personality style. If you are not already familiar with the Enneagram, you can assess your own personality style – or at least begin to explore the styles and identify familiar patterns. You will see the power of the Enneagram almost immediately. Parenthetically, the Enneagram has been a great gift to me as a practitioner. It has helped me to appreciate my strengths and notice the ways that my ego gets in the way of my OD work. It has inspired me to develop my intentions more

carefully and, overall, attend to my *self* as an instrument of my work. Once you have identified your own type and received some training in the Enneagram, the chapter will also help you to help your clients assess their own styles. Conveniently, this self-assessment requires no additional instrumentation, and training aids are available if desired.

The five central chapters apply the personality types to communicating, giving constructive feedback, managing conflict, creating high-performing teams, and leveraging leadership. Each chapter begins with a familiar model of the particular skill and then applies the model to typical behaviors of the nine personality types. The “Communicating Effectively” chapter, for instance, explains the sender-receiver model and the general types of communication distortion. The chapter then presents each Enneagram type’s typical speaking style, body language, blind spots, and distorting filters. The chapter on “Creating High-Performing Teams” tells a story about the personalities on a real-life team and analyzes the story from the perspectives of team goals, interdependence, roles, and the four stages of team development. When coaching or training, you can use these chapters to help clients understand their motivations and behaviors. You can include type-specific illustrations and encourage type-specific applications, even if participants are not familiar with the Enneagram. When diagnosing or seeking to understand a group or organizational situation, you can observe and factor in type-specific behaviors as you prepare to suggest possible interventions.

The final chapter on “Transforming Yourself” offers style-specific exercises that facilitate self-exploration and personal change. The exercises are simple but profound. They encourage self-observation and gradual, gentle transformation of mental and emotional patterns. Few books on the Enneagram styles offer so many concrete practices.

My 15 years of teaching the Enneagram suggest that effective use of the Enneagram in OD requires both certification training and reflection on human development issues that are not raised in this book. The Enneagram is a very sharp tool; it cuts deep into behavior and motivation. It can be difficult to use and teach because it challenges the ego and tends to place it on the defensive. I have been most successful as a trainer and consultant when I have clearly separated personality style from the person, that is, when I have focused my attention not on type-related strengths and weaknesses seen through the Enneagram lens, but on the person whose essence and capacity far surpass his or her feelings, thoughts, opinions, and habits. My clients have been relieved that I have not identified them or encouraged them to identify themselves with their Enneagram styles. My disciplined focus of attention on the essence of their personhood has helped them to see their

habits both as useful coping-mechanisms and as distractions that sometimes prevent them from being the heroes they really are. It has enabled them to notice their lifelong habits less defensively and enter more willingly and playfully into the collaborative process that is personal and organizational transformation. To stimulate your reflection on human development issues, read Sandra Maitri's *The Spiritual Dimension of the Enneagram* (2000) and books by A.H. Almaas such as *Essence* (1986) and *Facets of Unity* (1998).

Bringing Out The Best in Yourself at Work belongs on your bookshelf. You will refer to it time and again. Perhaps you too will applaud this book as the single most useful Enneagram book for OD practitioners.