

## The Enneagram

**Personality** is the sum of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others. The more consistent the characteristic over time and the more frequently it occurs in diverse situations, the more important the trait is in describing the individual.

The study of human characteristics has resulted in powerful training instruments for human resources in organizations. One of the most widely used personality development tools in recent years has been the **Enneagram**, which has proved particularly useful in training programs in companies such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Alitalia (the flag carrier and largest airline in Italy), Proctor & Gamble (P&G; an American multinational company of consumer goods), and Boeing Corporation (an American multinational corporation that designs, manufactures, and sells airplanes, satellites, and telecommunications equipment). The Enneagram has been integrated into business training programs for the development of competencies, and to help to discover the rules of behavior of the participants and their colleagues to improve team performance and its alignment with the values and culture of the organization.

### The Nine Archetypes of the Enneagram

The following are only archetypes (models or epitomes), not real people. Real people, in addition to having a tendency toward one of the personality types, are affected by a series of influences as a result of their gender and culture, in addition to the experiences they have lived through, which make them unique. All the different ways of understanding the world have their positive and negative aspects. Taken together, they prove highly useful in enabling individuals to adapt to the world and other people, although it is also possible that at times they may paralyze and stop people from seeing other forms, which at certain times might be useful in helping themselves function (De Anca & Vasquez, 2007).

1. **The perfectionist.** This character is a person who is committed to action, and who is objective, just, and noble. The basic resource of a perfectionist is to do things well, being a perfectionist down to the finest detail; "a place for everything and everything in its place" would be the perfectionist's motto.

Perfectionists are tremendously useful for a society or group as they develop the plan in their perfectly ordered mind, and it can be implemented without changing a comma. They are afraid of making mistakes, and as a result, their negative side can lead them to be incredibly rigorous and correct, judging everything and everybody, including themselves; they do not forgive even the smallest error, and anger is their worst defect.

2. **The helper.** This character is generous, empathetic, and sensitive. Helpers know what those around them need and do not hesitate to sacrifice their requirements to satisfy those of others.

Their principal fear is of being rejected, and as a result, their negative aspect can be that by using their ability to provide the necessities for others, they build a network of dependency around them, which means that the helper does not need to ask for help from those around them, as they all depend on the helper and as a result they are always around. As a result, the helper's worst aspect can be pride.

3. **The performer.** This character is an empathetic person. They know what others want, and as a result, they know how to be liked and be sociable. They find it easy to surround themselves with people who react with enthusiasm to the plans they propose. It is easy for them to organize meetings, parties, whatever it is that their group requires or wants. They are extremely efficient; they know how to evaluate people, giving everybody the sensation that they have achieved what they wanted.

Their biggest fear is a social failure, and to avoid it, they can resort to manipulation and suppressing their most intimate desires in pursuit of social recognition, leading in the worst cases to losing their connection with their ego, as they only function in terms of parameters of external recognition.

4. **The artist.** This character is a highly sensitive person, with a deep capacity for empathy. They are also resourceful and creative. They empathize not only with the person but with the deepest human sentiments; and it is in this way that the artist can manage to reflect so deeply the feelings of the majority of humanity.

On the negative side, and due to this great profundity, their fear of not experiencing great passions occasionally rises to the surface, leading them to reject the ordinary life of the majority in search of the experiences they feel they deserve. They suffer enormously from the resulting solitude, which, even though they searched for it, deep down they resent, as they feel they deserve social recognition that never comes. They, therefore, envy those who do receive recognition and in their worst aspect eventually envy all those who, unlike them, can live simple, satisfactory lives.

5. **The observer.** This character is an intellectual person, with a large capacity for observation and relating to phenomena that occur in their surroundings. They are tremendously inventive and refined, surprising all when they speak, which they do not do often.

Their capacity for observing everything leads them to fear losing control and that, circumstances might overwhelm their capacity to reason; as a result, they can be terribly selfish, using others to satisfy their needs without letting anybody enter into their protective sphere, not even those closest to them. To protect themselves and not have to depend on anybody, they accumulate everything that is within their reach, so that their negative aspect can be tremendous avarice.

6. **The collaborator.** This character is a thinker and is characterized by a strong sense of responsibility. Collaborators are tremendously loyal and gregarious. They respect tradition, their elders, and the values of their group. They have a clear understanding of how society works and are happy to belong to it. Collaborators make the perfect colleagues at work as they are perfectly happy to work overtime in the interests of the group.

Their fundamental fear is of being expelled from the group, and as a result, they are almost obsessive about following all the rules. Their fear of being expelled from the group can lead as far as cowardice and can even lead them to accuse another to avoid being accused or their membership of the group is thrown into question.

7. **The optimist.** This character can use their powerful intellect to make everything relative; the optimist is the perfect companion on a night out. The optimist always looks for the positive element and tries to get the most out of life and out of whatever situation presents itself to them.

But their need to make everything relative hides a deep-rooted fear of seeing the ugly side of things and of suffering, and as a result, their negative side leads them to run away from any potentially conflictive situation, whether it be at work, in the family or with their partner, looking for a new life and new challenges in other places. They exploit situations to the maximum, getting the most from them until they no longer satisfy them completely and they must move on and look for new situations.

8. **The challenger.** This character is a person of action. They are strong, intense, and realistic and have deep and clear convictions. They can be caricatured as action heroes with endless courage who does not give a second thought to risking their own lives in what they believe to be a just cause. They will try to resolve an unjust situation and will burn all their bridges without the least thought if they think that this is the right way forward. They can involve everybody in their cause at first, but they are also incapable of reasoning with others who question their authority.

They fear weakness, which they do not tolerate, not even in themselves, and their worst defect is the excess with which they act, exhausting the few who still follow them and survive their excesses.

9. **The mediator.** This final character of the group is a person of action, who ironically could pass almost unnoticed as a result of how little they like to move. The mediator is calm, friendly, and practical; they are decent, patient, and tolerant. They have a passion for calm and harmony, and for everything around them to be tranquil. They are slow in everything, including talking and walking, and might frustrate all those around them, who, although deeply admire the harmony they transmit, never manage to get them to do any of the things they have promised to do.

Their biggest fear is conflict and they would be incapable of taking sides in a dispute or acting if this affects anyone around them; as a result, they prefer not to give an opinion or to act when faced with doubt. This need for everything around them to be perfect leads them in their negative aspect to forget about themselves so that all those around them are happy and do not protest; mediators do not mind whether they go to the cinema or listen to the radio or not, forgetting in the end what it is that they really want, and as a result, missing out on important opportunities to develop themselves and do something in life. They will say yes to everything that is asked of them so as not to come into conflict with anyone, although the hours will pass and they will never get around to doing whatever it is they have promised, much to the desperation of the person who asked them to do it in the first place; as a result, their defect is laziness.

Each character type brings a series of advantages and disadvantages with it to a common project or goal. By way of illustration, in the first stages of innovation, *archetypes 4, 5, and 9* would be particularly useful, with each one functioning from feeling, mind, or action; they are especially creative as a result of their tendency to observation and profundity, independent of social influence. Once the project has been designed, these characters would be less useful as a result of their difficulty in organizing others.

However, *archetypes 3, 7, and 8*, also functioning from feeling, mind, or action, can organize others, convince them and direct them in a plan of action to put whatever the project might be into operation. These characters would not have the patience to consolidate the project and continue with it, and as a result, *archetypes 1, 2, and 6* are ideal as they develop the established norms, respect them, and ensure that the system works.

When people are being more considerate about cultural differences, the better it can determine their work behavior, and ultimately, creates a positive organizational climate where everyone performs well.

The Enneagram is indeed a dynamic tool for enhancing communication on every level of an organization. It "lubricates" all interactions throughout the workplace. Moreover, it helps retain valuable employees by increasing job satisfaction and productivity. It can be used in determining the right person for the job with the optimal personality fit, and for executive coaching to help their people work at the highest level of their capacities. The Enneagram is particularly valuable in the tourism and hospitality industry for team building, team development, conflict resolution, negotiation, and leadership development.

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#### References:

- De Anca, C. & Vasquez, A. (2007). *Managing diversity in the global organization: Creating new business values*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Robbins, S.P., & Judge, T.A. (2018). *Essentials of organizational behavior* (14<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Education Limited.