

**BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN YOURSELF AT WORK:  
HOW TO USE THE ENNEAGRAM SYSTEM FOR SUCCESS**

**By Ginger Lapid-Bogda, Ph.D.**

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*Reviewed by Clarence Thomson*

Lapid-Bogda comes as close to using the Enneagram scientifically as is really necessary. She knows the Enneagram thoroughly; she uses it as a template and shows us how real people in a variety of business settings behave. She is as careful with data and interpretation as any lab-coated researcher.

She starts off on the right foot. She makes careful observations. She notices postures, voices, and places in rooms; she sees the defenses each style employs. This grounds her work thoroughly. The reader feels at home in the rooms where mini-dramas take place. She hears the Fours lamenting, notices the Fives pulling away from the group, and she chronicles the Eights taking over.

She displays the Enneagram's plasticity as she records the same foci and strategies operating in groups, in leadership roles, in dealing with hierarchies, and in delicate personal relationships. Her ability to distill what Enneagram dynamics are being played out is solid. One reason for the reader's confidence in her solidity is the detail she provides.

Her detail is traditional, not technological. She tells stories, she quotes extensively, and she employs case studies. Recent research in linguistics has shown that narratives contain more usable information than any other form of communication. So much for power-point and spread sheets. Lapid-Bogda describes situations, tells the stories of styles, and then lets us watch as she relates what they do, how they understand themselves, and how their Enneagram styles shape the narrative. For example, she describes a situation in which a conflict is swelling. She turns to the Seven and describes how she handles, and especially how she does not handle, the conflict. She describes the behavior, but then she broadens the lens and shows how the behavior in this situation has a matrix of a focus of attention (short!) and a strategy (escape!), and then highlights the consequences of the behavior. She enriches the story by noticing the body language (pacing) and the speech patterns (fast, scattered, and anecdotal). Your reviewer is a Seven. Works for me!

After she puts each of the styles through their focus and strategy paces, she bravely sets out to suggest how to function best with the psychic equipment at hand.

This is the weakest part of the book, but it is not her fault. The Enneagram is a marvelous diagnostic tool. The Enneagram does not say what to do about any of

the ego-fixations (neuroses, really) it describes so beautifully. So when a Four is wallowing, Lapid-Bogda's recommendations are not very different from a One fussing because order is not being observed. The suggestions she does make, she gleans from other fields. They are good suggestions, but are fairly repetitious.

After a brief, probably successful, chapter to help people recognize their own Enneagram style, Lapid-Bogda employs an Enneagram template to five central business concerns: communication, feedback, conflict, team development, and leadership development.

Her first chapter on communication sparkles. She profiles each Enneagram style with their speaking style, body language (this is important and difficult and has to be quite general), blind spots, and distorting filters. Her examples are vivid and helpful.

She then turns her attention to the delicate topic of constructive feedback. Many business people have attended school. Feedback was in the form of red marks on your paper, so some childhood wounds lurk in our cells. She addresses each style both ways: how to give constructive feedback and how to take it. Her stories and the specific suggestions for each style make this chapter worth the book's price.

The chapter on conflict follows. She creates some of her own terminology based on a model by Jack Sherwood and John Glidewell to describe critical encounters. Situations that activate our Enneagram types' sensitive spots are called "pinches." "Pinch" becomes a valuable technical term. It is a situation in which party of the first part transgresses without being aware that his or her behavior offends. The irritation the offeree feels is called a pinch. If the pinch escalates and a conflict ensues, that is called a "crunch." She assumes and then demonstrates most satisfactorily that pinches are Enneagram-specific. A transgression can easily annoy, frustrate, or otherwise irritate some styles but not others. Unclear directions are a pinch for Ones, but Sevens have this wee tendency not to follow directions well anyway, so a lack of direction doesn't pinch them. On the other hand, micromanaging will drive a Seven or an Eight up the cubicle wall, but Ones may feel like Peter Rabbit facing the briar patch.

She suggests that employees let people know what their pinch is. With proper care and feeding, an employee can do that. Without some personal development, however, most people will assume that what bothers them bothers everyone else to the same degree and in the same way. This is where her Enneagram template is so valuable. If and when people know their Enneagram style, they can smoothly articulate (probably the high side of) their style and tell co-workers what will pinch them. If you are an Eight, it is helpful for everyone to know that you "tell it like it is," you are brutally honest (and honestly brutal on some days?) and that you will really prefer to be the boss on whatever turf you labor. However, until you learn that you are an Eight, you may easily assume that "everyone" wants to be the boss, everyone should tell unvarnished truth, and there is no reason to avoid conflict: just fight it out.

Lapid-Bogda is not guilty of a circular argument here, though. It is more correctly a spiral. The better you know your Enneagram style, the more felicitous your maneuvers to prevent pinches from becoming surges. The more you know you are a Three, the less of a Three you are. So the more you tell, the less it's true.

After telling people where you are most likely to feel pinched, she tells you to immediately let people know when you are feeling pinched. This is preventative. She knows from experience (and documents some cases so the readers know too) that unvoiced pinches accumulate and then escalate into crunches. Psychic blood follows. Probably beyond the scope of this book is the age-old question, "How do I do that?" The operative word is how. A reclusive Five, a charming Seven, a people-pleasing Two will all find it hard to let people know when they are inwardly churning. That's why God invented ulcers. So the advice is good, but people will need help implementing it.

Her next step is really good and the Enneagram template strengthens it. She has the pinchee ask "what does this pinch tell me about myself? How can working with this pinch help me improve myself?" This is so much better than assuming the person who pinched you is part of the axis of evil. Asking that question really fleshes out the general description of an Enneagram style.

The chapter on team development analyzes a case from preparation through completion. She gives the standard four stages a team goes through, (forming, storming, norming, and performing) but then focuses on which members had which problems and carefully delineates the Enneagram problems people had at each stage. She does a marvelous job discerning and deciphering the Enneagram information from an interesting narrative.

The last chapter, "Leveraging Your Leadership" illustrates why the Enneagram doesn't work well for career planning. You can lead in nine different ways. Lapid-Bogda doesn't prefer any over any other. Instead she lists the strengths and derailers for each style. I'll use style One as the example because both Obama and Clinton, who campaigned this year to be our leader, are style Ones. Let's see their strengths and derailers.

Ones lead by example, strive for quality, and pursue perfection. They are organized, consistent, perceptive, and honest. These qualities can be derailed into their being reactive, overly critical, defensive if criticized, controlling, opinionated, and detailed to a fault. In addition, they are often unaware of their inner anger. If Lapid-Bogda were a consultant to our aspiring One leaders, here is her advice:

1. Replace being right with being effective. (Where was she when Ralph Nader needed her?)
2. Delegate more. She not only suggests more delegation but offers a number of concrete ways to do it.

3. Have more fun at work. She offers some light-hearted suggestions. “All work and no play...” is apparently still valid.

She concludes with a short chapter on self-transformation. She offers self-help, again for each style. She breaks her advice down in orderly fashion: daily (external) activities, mental activities, and emotional activities. What is missing from this self-help is the category of physical activities. That’s not her fault; that’s an area the Enneagram community (with a few stellar exceptions like Andrea Isaac) has not developed well yet. It is also an area that American corporate culture does not address. Physical working conditions are of little concern until medical bills suggest otherwise.

This is a superb reference work for coaches, managers, and executives. Her examples are so clear, the template so illustrative, and the organization so easy to follow that each chapter is a workshop.

I’d give Ginger Lapid-Bogda nine stars.

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