USING ENNEAGRAM IN SMALL BUSINESSES AS A WAY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

There are many different ways of leading and managing people in today's companies. Enneagram offers an interesting way of finding people’s motivations and explaining their attitudes to work. It divides people in nine personality types and the history of the method goes back into the 4th century. The nine types are the basic division of personalities and the concept takes into account that the tested person may have a wing to another personality type and also that people may have different behaviour when they face stress or when feeling secure. Enneagram concept assumes that the basic personality type is inborn. In small businesses, where each single employee is very important, Enneagram can help to hire the right people or to build efficient teams and pleasant work environment as in a small company of 5 employees 1 employee represents 20% of the whole business. Surveys have found Ennegram as reliable and valid. Enneagram is a very good and cost-efficient alternative to commonly used personality tests and using the method can improve management and leadership leading to sustainable development of small businesses.

Key words: leadership, management, Enneagram, sustainable development.

Introduction

I was very impressed by Enneagram theory when I heard it in a class of Managerial Leadership in 2007. I started thinking how reliable it can be and how it could be used in business to achieve better results. The word Enneagram comes from a Greek word “enneas” which means “nine” [4]. According to Kamineni [3], Enneagram technique of dividing people into different personality types is more than two thousand five hundred years old. The system comes from East and originated in Naqshbandi order of Sufism [7] however there is probably a difference between the Enneagram symbol and the concept of division into nine different personalities. The Enneagram symbol is probably the oldest and the nine types of personalities have sources in Seven Deadly Sins in the 4th century and Kabbalah in the 12th century (Fig. 1). It is certain that the symbol was introduced to the West by George Gurdjieff in 1940s while the descriptions of the nine types belong to much younger times – Oscar Ichazo in 1980s and Claudio Naranjo in 1990s were the founders of the modern Enneagram system. The concept was further developed in 1996 by Don Riso and Russ Hudson who added some other features into the types’ descriptions [3]. To the Czech Republic the concept of Enneagram arrived in 1997 when the first lecturers started teaching it and in 2002 David Daniels introduced Enneagram at the Charles University (Brazda).

Results and Comments

Each of the nine types can have a wing to the type which is next and may behave differently, based on the individual’s health [5]. Enneagram concept assumes that the basic personality type is inborn. I found myself and many friends who would belong to these categories but can we really believe that?

Jerome P. Wagner and Ronald Walker [7] performed a research in the early stage of Enneagram development. Their research was based on 390 respondents and the aim of the study was that the system has any “empirical validity and validity to complement its intuitive validity”. As a part of the survey, the respondents were given information on Enneagram and were asked to find themselves in the categories. After 3 months to 9 years they were
asked again to categorize themselves. As a result, more than 79% of the people did not change the opinion and were consistent with the previous result. The conclusion on the survey was that the results are positive. Another study on Riso-Hudson Enneagram [6] has also shown the system as reliable and valid. However, there are not many sources on the reliability and validity of Enneagram, I consider the concept as a good classification of people's behaviour as I also asked few friends of mine to find themselves in Enneagram and also to complete an online Enneagram test. Most of the feedback I got was positive and the people would agree with their characteristics. As being a good leader requires understanding of humans, the Enneagram system might be a good and proper way to help managing people.

It might be good to connect a chaotic but creative person with someone organized and practical. In small businesses where there are just a few employees it is important to have the right team, keep the right people and use their abilities efficiently. In a company of five people one employee performs 20% of the whole business thus the need for efficiency and satisfaction is extreme. Elisabeth Taubert from People Smart Consulting G.P. said: "Companies often have plenty of technical talent ... What stops a company most often is the relationship side of the business." [1]. There are different personality tests which can be used, including the Enneagram.

One of the mostly used tests is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which divides people into four categories and then it classifies people as ones of sixteen types. Some companies use the Myers-Briggs test for hiring, some to build teams. But some companies believe that Enneagram has better and more accurate results and the result provide them chance for perfect combinations [1]. To get some quantitative results for deploying personality tests, Adler [1] mentions company which has taken an in-house Enneagram workshop and they increased their productivity by 5-10% after the program. However, the same company does not find the test absolutely reliable – they used Enneagram for hiring and they hired a wrong person – as they later found out, the person was lying on the test. If I as a leader used such a test, I would always have to rely on my own feelings and not purely on the results as it might be incorrect. Also, although the tested person might be in the right type with the right wing, we shouldn't expect there is theory which would be 100% accurate and for some people there is not just one “box” – no single decision should be based purely on a test.

I see a good potential on using the Enneagram in business as I believe business is about people and not about numbers. When the relationships work then the numbers can be good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>MANAGERIAL ORIENTATION</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One: Reformer, Perfectionist, Idealist</td>
<td>Wise Seeker, Reasonable, A Principled Teacher</td>
<td>By the Book, Leads by Example, High Standards</td>
<td>Idealism, Reasonableness, Objectivity</td>
<td>Narrow-mindedness, Obsessiveness, Punishiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two: Helper, Giver, Mentor</td>
<td>Dauntlessly Altruist, Caring, Nurturing Helper</td>
<td>Cheerleader, Appreciators, Management by Encouraging Others</td>
<td>Dauntlessly, Empathy, Generosity</td>
<td>Manipulation, Correction, Feeling Victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three: Motivator, Performer, Producer</td>
<td>Authentic, Self-assured Person, Outstanding Performer</td>
<td>Task Oriented, Belief in Integrity, High Profile, Autocratic</td>
<td>Inner-directed, Adaptability, Ambitious</td>
<td>Opportunism, Duplicit, Unpredictiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five: Thinker, Observer, Sage</td>
<td>Pioneering Visionary, Perceptive, Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Philosophical, Well-informed, Detached</td>
<td>Understanding, Involvement, Expertise</td>
<td>Rejection, Distortion, Dominance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six: Loyalist, Trooper, Partner</td>
<td>Self-affirming, Engaging, Committed Loyalist</td>
<td>Reckless, Protective of Inner Circle, Ally</td>
<td>Self-Affirmation, Engagement, Cooperation</td>
<td>Insecurity, Over-reaction, Masochism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven: Generalist, Visionary, Futurist</td>
<td>Energetic, Attentive, Enthusiastic, Accomplished Generalist</td>
<td>Management by Juggling, Building Around and Networking</td>
<td>Gratitude, Enthusiasm, Productiveness</td>
<td>Division, Compulsion, Gambit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight: Leader, Advocate, Boss</td>
<td>Magnificent Hero, Self-confident, Constructive</td>
<td>Autocratic, Blunt, Confrontational</td>
<td>Self-Resistant, Self-Confidence, Influential</td>
<td>Ruthlessness, Recklessness, Destructiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine: Peacekeeper, Mediator, Diplomat</td>
<td>Self-possessed, Receptive, Sensitive, Empathetic</td>
<td>Participatory, Introvert, Sharing-orientation</td>
<td>Ambivalence, Non-aggressiveness, Supportive</td>
<td>Neglect, Delegation, Self-abandonment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and increasing while bad relationships can destroy the whole company, especially when we talk about small businesses. The Enneagram could also be a very good tool for motivating employees in a small company. Money does not need to be the main motivator and there might be some better motivators based on the personality type. For example, type 7 could appreciate flexible work hours while type 3 could be happy for a vision of a promotion.

Conclusion
The Enneagram is a very old method of dividing different personalities into nine groups and each of the groups can have a wing to the other one. People may behave differently when they are under stress or when they feel safe. There are not many sources on the reliability of Enneagram but from those available I believe it is a reliable method of personality testing, although in our country sources on Enneagram can be mostly found in “esoteric” or “spiritual” section. In my opinion it is caused by the youth of the system and this will change as the theory will get into practice. Using Enneagram may be a very useful tool in small businesses as each employee and his/her performance is very important and these people can not be substituted easily. In my business I would prefer to use it to get to know people’s motivators and to build the right teams. In comparison to large corporations, I believe the Enneagram system could be used only in much decentralized corporations – in the classic ones all results usually turn into numbers in a system and there is a lack of individual approach. It could cause more damage than profit. Such an approach is much easier in small businesses where I believe Enneagram is the right way to help doing business better and develop sustainably!

References