



## Business coach favours personality typing for an effective workforce

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Throughout history, many thinkers have devoted themselves to the task of classifying mankind's vast array of personality attributes into distinctive types.

The use of the enneagram is one such theory that has gained credence in recent years. It is a system that identifies nine precise personality categories. These range from Type One (the perfectionist), to Type Five (the detached observer) through to Type Eight (the boss) or Type Nine (the peacemaker). For the record, this writer has been designated a Type Six (the loyal sceptic).

Wendy Appel, an American former product development manager who now makes her

living as a business coach, is a firm adherent of the power of the

enneagram. She believes that if her students fully grasp the type of personality they are, it will help unleash their true leadership potential.

Recently, she condensed her teachings into a book, *InsideOut Enneagram: The Game Changing Guide for Leaders*. After self-publishing her work earlier this year, she embarked on a tour of the Emirates to promote her writings.

Obviously, the UAE's comparatively buoyant economy is partly behind her excursion. Yet, Appel claims, the fundamental reason for her visit is her belief that the enneagram can resolve office discord apparently caused by the multinational nature of the country's workforce.

"The thing about the UAE is that it's so international, and although cross-cultural teams have many benefits, they also bring up a lot of issues," she contends. "A lot of teams focus on cultural differences as the reasons they're having conflicts and problems, when in effect, once I use the enneagram, they realise it's actually different personality types who are having challenges with each other.

"So it breaks up this sort of cultural differences because, at the end of the day, we're all humans really. My message is, we all have a lot in common."

Appel effuses charm and warmth, both valuable attributes for someone who makes their living as a motivational speaker. Nevertheless, guidebooks preaching theories on how to smooth out antagonism in the workplace and engender career success are far from uncommon. So why did Appel feel compelled to add to this mass of literature?

"When I discovered the enneagram system it absolutely changed my life and I had to share this with people," she explains. "I wasn't planning to write a book at first. I'd produced these enneagram typing cards, and then I felt I needed a pamphlet to show how to use them.

"But I soon realised [that] there aren't many books out there which translate the enneagram to the business world and how it affects leadership.

"So what makes this [book] really different is that I looked at all nine types and how each type interacts with all the others. I looked at the synergies and where they are going to find sources of potential conflict."

From her studies, Appel concludes that any type can make an effective manager.

"Anyone has the ability to make a great leader. But, depending on their type, they're just

going to lead differently and create different types of organisations," she states.

She offers the names of some of the most esteemed CEOs of recent years to substantiate her point.

"Think about Jack Welch of General Electric," she says. "He was probably a Type Eight [the boss]. You know, he was like 'it's my way or the highway'. This is the most dominant type on the enneagram. He made his decisions from the gut. Type Eight's are very instinctual types, very dominant, very powerful.

"Alternatively, look at someone like Bill Gates," she goes on. "I would say he's probably a Type 5 [a detached observer]. He was more sort of inwards, withdrawn, very much an intellectual type. People like him will lead differently and create different organisations."

However, Appel concedes that it's unlikely that the aforementioned leaders actually made use of the enneagram system.

"I doubt they did," she admits. "but there are many roads to Rome. It just so happens I find this particular road very useful. What the enneagram does is take a lot of territory and really narrow it down.

"Anyone who's in leadership has got to be aware of their traps, their little gremlins and how to manage their behaviour. So it doesn't matter what type you are or if you use the enneagram, you just need to be aware of your flaws.

"As a leader, the most important thing you can do is influence. So, are you positively influencing people or not? How do you have positive influence on people? You have to inspire and motivate."

To many these would sound like nothing more than familiar platitudes espoused by any number of business coaches, although Appel insisted she was inured to criticism of herself and her theories.

"If it resonates through you, if you find value in it, that's fantastic. If it doesn't then that's fantastic too. Find something that does," she says.

"I'm very agnostic when it comes to most of these theories. But I happen to have a passion for the enneagram. I think it's fabulous. I can see how it's changed my life and other people's. So, if you don't agree with me, I hope you find your own way."

Beyond promoting harmony in the workplace, Appel has some loftier goals.

"I would like to see a shift in conscious awareness on the planet. The idea is to evolve, to

grow as a person, to become more healthy, to do less harm, to have a wonderful life and to bring joy into the world and people in your world. So if you find a way to stop doing these crazy things we all do as human beings and to find the best in yourself then go for it.

"It's a journey. You can get some really quick hits, but then you have to stay committed to it ... Everyone has skills and gifts - you have yours, I have mine."

"So I feel this is my skill and this is what I can do to make a better world for all of us. This is where I'm starting, both in my book and my work with businesses. This is what makes my theories the juice to my lemon."

On this subject, why, considering the fruit-related nature of her surname, do lemons feature so prominently on her book's cover?

"It's really a metaphor. When I wrote the book I was sitting in a [Majorcan] orchard surrounded by lemons and oranges. And I happen to love lemons - they're little orbs of sunshine. They're beautiful, bright, alive and vibrant.

"You know, it's a chemical symbol of transformation: before you ingest lemon it's acid and when you ingest it, it becomes alkaline. And the whole book is about inner transformation and also about squeezing a lemon and bringing out your best."

Finally, before we part, I ask Appel what type she is.

"I'm a typical Type Seven, [the enthusiast]," she replies.

Considering her passion for her work, she may have just stated the obvious.

*Hugo Berger is a features writer for The National.*