

Book Review

Chestnut, B. (2017). *The 9 Types of Leadership: Mastering the Art of People in the 21st Century Workplace*. USA: Post Hill Press.

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I think the biggest benefit of using the Enneagram is that it really lets people become a better version of themselves, as opposed to just typecasting themselves.

- T. Pierce, Chief Digital Officer, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, cited in Chestnut (2017)

The purpose of *The 9 Types of Leadership: Mastering the Art of People in the 21st Century Workplace* is to demonstrate the application of the Enneagram as a practical tool to lead and develop diverse people in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world (Chestnut, 2017, p. 13). Chestnut makes a case that one of the essential leadership competencies today is the art of people – a conscious approach to leadership based on a keen self-awareness, integration of light and shadow sides of self, and a deep understanding of others. What makes the Enneagram a credible foundation for this art is that it provides an elegant and practical way to develop emotional intelligence, arguably the most critical leadership capability of the 21st century. The Enneagram system helps leaders recognize their patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, shaped by previous experiences, family history, educational background, and absorbed cultural messages, about self-worth, professional accomplishments, and social success. By exposing such patterns, the Enneagram serves two purposes. First, it offers an opportunity to more consciously approach our behaviours by choosing to break patterns that do not serve us. Second, it serves as a tool for appreciation of diversity. The Enneagram system summarizes these patterns in nine archetypes, connected in a nine-star symbol. The full discussion of the philosophical, mathematical, and spiritual roots of the system is beyond the

scope of this review.¹ In its practical application to leadership development, the Enneagram system of archetypes serves as a tool to connect the understanding of personality types as a way of better relating to others, and the path to personal growth and development.

Chestnut, a licensed psychotherapist and executive coach, is a prominent authority on the modern interpretation of the Enneagram. She served as the President of the International Enneagram Association (2006 – 2009) and was a founding co-editor of the IEA journal in 2008-2009. The book under review, together with her first work (Chestnut, 2013), provides an accessible description of the Enneagram as it applies to leadership development.

After presenting a general business case for using the system, Chestnut provides a light introduction to the foundations and history of the Enneagram followed by detailed description of its nine types (and 27 subtypes) as they apply to leadership. Each chapter dedicated to an Enneagram type explains its typical personality structure. Descriptions of the type's strengths, patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, its blind spots, specifics of its communication style, and workplace behavior are also presented. As expected, there is plenty of practical advice on how to identify one's own type and how to more effectively communicate with and manage other Enneagram types.

In my view, what makes this book different from other leadership typologies is that in its advice it follows the essence of the Enneagram theory. The Enneagram presents personality as a survival strategy that may be modified by conscious choice. It goes beyond personality typing and offers descriptions of how the high- and low-integrated personality types manifest themselves. More importantly, *The 9 Types* outlines the path for moving towards better integration and balance.

This map of the path to integration is what makes the Enneagram so attractive as a tool for leadership development and executive coaching. It goes beyond typology and mechanistic advice on how to manage different types better. Too often popular personality systems promote stereotypes that lead to manipulation. In *The 9 Types*, Chestnut presents Enneagram as the “MBTI of the 21st century” (Chestnut, 2017, p. 11). Indeed, compared to other popular leadership assessment tools, this system provides a more nuanced description of personality types and a set of more specific and actionable recommendations to

¹ For a more complete review of the history and development of the Enneagram theory see Palmer (1991), Naranjo (1997), and Riso (1999).

managers. Leaders can use *The 9 Types* to design effective plans to grow into more integrated selves and to access a broader range of options for authentic relating across levels of their organizations.

To support the business case and to demonstrate the impact of the use of the Enneagram on the growth of managerial consciousness, social capital, and performance of organizations of all types, Chestnut provides numerous stories from leaders of prominent business and non-profit organizations across industries and cultures. These vignettes illustrate practical outcomes of the recommended uses of the Enneagram. We find cases of leaders who used the system for observation and understanding of their own patterns and limitations and, as a result, started making more conscious choices in building business and relationships. Also mentioned are the examples of how leaders' self-awareness and vulnerability brought about a dramatic improvement of relationships at work. Finally, we read about applications of the Enneagram to various leadership development initiatives. One of my favourite stories is how the Enneagram developmental strategies were used as a 'more egalitarian method' to motivate managers of all levels to become more conscious in their business and leadership choices.

The 9 Types is recommended to leadership development practitioners, coaches, and managers. It provides a simple and practical framework for building emotional intelligence in leaders and growing social capital in teams that may contribute to making modern workplaces more fit for human life. The Enneagram system offers the promise of a more conscious way to live and relate to others. *The 9 Types of Leadership* is a great companion for anyone who works to bring conscious leadership to organizations.

References

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