

Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter

Completing the Circle by Mary Bast

New E-Book

Out of the Box: Coaching with the Enneagram

For the first time, a pdf version of our book is available at both our sites (below), for only \$10.95.

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New E-Book

More Out of the Box Coaching

Our new e-book contains exciting ideas from our 2002—2007 newsletters, organized for easy access according to topic. Available at both our sites (below): the most up-to-date practices to bring about transformational change.

One of my colleagues is experimenting with using a questionnaire for data collection instead of personal interviews. A self-aware and curious Six, she works with emerging leaders and keeps current on HR and OD best practices. Her experience and research indicate a growing preference for the anonymity and objectivity of written questionnaires. Personal interviews can be subjective and unreliable, and it may be too easy for recipients to identify who said what. When line-level employees are interviewed, the rumor mill can create a perception that their boss is in trouble. Questionnaire results, in contrast, are typically seen as more objective and scientific. I trust my colleague's judgment. Furthermore, as a Six and a head type, she's comfortable with the statistical output of standardized questionnaires.

In my graduate years I co-authored a book on social research methods, so I understand the importance of reliability and validity in data collection. But I'm a Nine and a gut type. It's harder for me to interpret data not founded on my own senses. Years ago, I completed the Center for Creative Leadership's training for *Benchmarks*. After two consultations using *Benchmarks*, I went back to personal interviews. It's a splendid instrument. But I was at too much of a distance from the sources of data to feel confident discussing the summary tables and statistics. As an Enneagram Nine I missed my "gut" reading of people in the clients' sphere of interaction. I wanted context. I needed to connect with everyone involved.

Doing both a written 360 and an interview can seem cumbersome to busy executives. But even if the needs of a client organization required a written 360, I'd find a way to convince them follow-up conversations are necessary. Why? In addition to the reasons I've mentioned, interviews provide me the opportunity to quietly and implicitly sell the value of coaching. On more than one occasion, clients I've interviewed about someone else have come to me later for coaching or sent referrals. And again, this illustrates the importance of considering your Enneagram style. When you ask Nines to tell you what they do and why you should hire them instead of someone else, you might hear some stuttering and stammering. Our forté is getting someone else to talk. We might not have the immediate pizzazz of a Three or a Seven, but give us someone to interview and we're on our way!

Moreover, I want to intervene directly in the system (OK, OK, I admit gut types also have control issues). I can get a "read" on my client's co-workers and ask questions that plant the seeds for my client's success. "What exactly will you see that will convince you this person has changed? How will you reinforce that when you see it?"

As an aside, I have a sweet example of two railroad executives who couldn't stand each other. My client was an Eight, his peer I interviewed was a Three. These two can be natural enemies, in part because they're both aggressive types, and in part because the Three's competitiveness can threaten the Eight's fear of showing weakness and the Eight's need to be in charge can threaten the Three's perceived path to success. In this case, however, the Three knew I had some presence in the system and wanted my approval, so he promised to let the Eight know when he saw improvements (continued on page 2).

Completing the Circle (continued)

When I asked the Eight what happened the next time they met, he said, “Well, I asked for his input the way you and I practiced. He looked embarrassed, then patted my knee, and said ‘Good work.’ We didn’t know what to say next!”

Twenty years ago I was convinced that the best profile for collecting data about my clients was one tailored to the organization. I would facilitate a focus group discussion to identify key factors for success in their organization and industry, help them set priorities, and create behavioral profiles that became the measures for development coaching. In some cases the same profiles became part of their performance management system, especially in companies where performance feedback had been informal. This was obviously a lot of work, but there was terrific ownership of the profiles and a positive striving toward behaviors mutually agreed upon as key to their organization’s continued success. Note also that Nines value collaboration, so I was again operating from my Enneagram style.

Regardless of experience or Enneagram style, however, technological innovations and ease of Internet access may force all of us to rethink our strategies. Our clients now can respond to an online questionnaire with an iPhone while sitting in the airport. Many organizations have a sophisticated understanding of leadership development and talent management. And it’s rare these days to hear, “You’re a coach? What does that mean?”

In addition, a number of validated and reputable questionnaires on the market benchmark generic success factors—behavioral profiles and/or personality traits. The model that’s intrigued me most recently in conversations with coach clients is The Leadership Circle (TLC), which connects “a well researched battery of competencies with deep motivations and underlying habits of thought” and “reveals the relationship between patterns of action and the internal assumptions that drive behavior.” The profile allows an Enneagram interpretation of results, especially in the self-limiting Reactive Tendencies, which draw from the Hornebian categories of moving toward (“Complying” in TLC terminology), away from (“Protecting”), and against (“Controlling”) others.

The bottom line—you can collect feedback for your clients through interviews, create your own questionnaire, draw from a variety of available questionnaires (either written or online), or use a combination of questionnaires and interviews, either generic or tailored to the organization. New models, questionnaires, and applications are appearing daily. Each has its benefits and potential problems. While it’s most important to assess your client’s culture, needs, and desired outcomes when choosing your approach to collecting feedback, it’s also important to play to the strengths of your Enneagram style. No matter what the data, your own presence and confidence are the key components to a successful outcome.

Help for Coaches

Want a quick summary of key coaching strategies for each Enneagram style? Now available as an e-book, our tips for coaching the nine styles point out how to match your clients at the level of first-order change, then help them break through to second-order change. A free preview of *Coaching the Nine Styles* is available at both our web sites.

ONE-ON-ONE COACHING TELECLINIC

Mary or Clarence will mentor you in out-of-the-box coaching principles and practices applied to your own situations. Enrich your life and/or help others by learning how to accelerate transformational change.