

# Systemic Coaching and Enneagramics for Organization Knowledge Flow

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## Abstract

*Problems emerge when employees feel that their jobs are meaningless and unfulfilling. Often the possible best version of the employee does not match and correspond with the potential best version as viewed by the organization. This represents a knowledge management (KM) problem: essential types of knowledge must flow between organizations and their employees, which spans individual and organization KM, along the dimension referred to as reach. In this article, we outline an approach that fosters essential knowledge flow through two complementary techniques: 1) Vocation-coaching and 2) Enneagram dynamics.*

## 1. Introduction

Problems emerge when employees feel that their jobs are meaningless and unfulfilling: They are only doing their work to the rule or have mentally already resigned. Employee fluctuation is high, which generates additional costs for an organization, and has negative effects in terms of knowledge retention and knowledge transfer. A Gartner study found that only 13% of employees are largely satisfied with their experiences at work and that they are really engaged in their jobs – meaning that they are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and move the organization forward. However, why is this the case?

We think this is because employees - directly or indirectly - notice and feel that the job they are doing does not contribute to developing the best version of themselves: the possible best version of the employee does not match and correspond with the potential best version as viewed by the organization.

The central premise is: the more meaningful and fulfilling employees experience their work, the more productive and valuable they are for the organization. Moreover, this represents a knowledge management (KM) problem: essential types of knowledge must flow between organizations and their employees - in both directions – in order for work to become and

remain meaningful, fulfilling and productive for both sides.

Notice that such knowledge flow spans levels between individual and organization KM, along the dimension referred to as *reach* (Nissen, 2014). Bidirectional knowledge flow between individuals and organizations is very challenging, particularly in this case of essential knowledge.

In this article, we outline an approach that fosters essential knowledge flow through two complementary techniques: 1) Vocation-coaching and 2) Enneagram dynamics. Systemic coaching, and especially Vocation-coaching, generates knowledge about essential needs, values, basic desires and wishes, as well as knowledge about talents, skills, strengths and resources. The Enneagram categorizes personality types systematically and describes the dynamics of movement within and between types. Enneagramatic personality types can apply to organizations as well as individuals. We describe each technique in turn and then address the main issue.

## 2. The Coaching approach

In this section, we first outline some basics about coaching and the methodological characteristics of this approach. We then turn to Systemic Coaching and two special forms of coaching.

### 2.1. What is coaching?

Coaching is an interactive person-centered counseling and accompanying process in a professional context, which is limited in time, defined thematically and goal-oriented (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2021). The coaching of individuals, groups or teams is directed towards professional-technical and/or psychological-socio-dynamic questions or problems that relate to the world of work. The coaching process takes place on a viable relationship basis, which implies an equal level of cooperation and can be described as an expert communication process (Tomaschek, 2006). Coaches and clients interact cooperatively on an equal level, with the client being the expert in the specific consultation context and the

coach being expert in leading the coaching process of finding solutions (de Shazer et al., 2006). The conversation within a coaching process always aims at fostering self-reflection and self-awareness, awareness and responsibility, and self-help / self-management.

The process builds on clients' resource and solution-oriented competencies, which can be supported and activated (Grant & Cavanagh, 2018). Coaches develop together with and not for the clients individually appropriate solutions in alignment with the system. Coaching is often defined as a process with a strong link with learning and development and assisting individuals or teams to reach their full potential (Bond & Seneque, 2012). It is important to note that the coaching process is less about working through past-related problems and more about the future-oriented and solution-focused development of goals and strategies for achieving and implementing them. Potentials of the client are released and existing resources are realized. The emphasis of coaching is on enabling the client to help him/herself and on promoting responsibility, awareness and self-reflection.

To sum up coaching is strongly based on an Expert Model, which can be defined as “Client + Coach = Expert + Expert”. This means that the client develops his/her own individually suitable solution together with the coach; the coach does not provide any ready expertise or even the solution.

## 2.2. Systemic Coaching

Systemic coaching is the most widely used form of coaching and takes into account the larger system in which we all operate. Systemic coaching is rooted in Systems Theory, which explores the interconnections between elements and is an approach which encourages the client to consider the system in which they operate and the connections between the parts of the system. It builds on two basic principles (König et al., 2002; Tomaschek, 2007; Tomaschek et al., 2011). First, all people are part of one or more social systems. Examples are families, the work place, projects, circles of friends, organizations, sports clubs, etc. Second, a change in one person in a system changes the whole system. The principle of systemic thinking lies in the fact that if the client changes, the system changes as well. If one element of a system changes, the whole system has changed (Resch and Tomaschek, 2012).

Systemic coaching is defined as an approach to coaching which, “coaches the individual client or team with the system in mind—exploring the part in the whole, and the whole in the part—so as to unlock the potential and performance of both” (Whittington, 2020, p.11). Therefore, it prioritizes the system and is

informed by an understanding of the organizing principles and deep patterns consistently observed in them. This information and perspective are embodied in the inner attitude or ‘stance’ of the coach and shared through the application of systemic questions, interventions, mapping and constellations (Whittington, 2020, p.13).

## 2.3. Coaching with compassion and Vocation-Coaching

Coaching is a process and a role. As a process, it is an approach and set of behaviours that can enhance the motivating and inspiring effect of all helpers, whether physicians, nurses, therapists, teachers, trainers, people in the role of coach, clerics, counsellors, social workers, executives, leaders, managers and even parents. However, according to neurological, hormonal and behavioural longitudinal studies, it is coaching to the Positive Emotional Attractor (Default Mode neural network activation, parasympathetic arousal, and positive affect) that helps people to be open to new ideas, learning, change and other people. This type of coaching is called Coaching with Compassion (Boyatzis et al, 2013) or Vocation-Coaching (Kaiser & Fordinal, 2010).

Coaching with compassion not only aims to help the client develop, but also focuses primarily on the ideal self of the client. Boyatzis et al. state that “coaching with compassion invokes a psychophysiological state that enables a person to be open to new possibilities and learning”, while “in contrast, coaching for compliance (i.e., toward how the coach or the organization believe the person should act) and deficiency-based coaching invoke the opposite state—resulting in a person being defensive, reducing cognitive functioning” (Boyatzis et al., 2013). Consequently coaching with compassion focuses on invoking the Ideal Self to initiate and guide the change process. The Ideal Self is defined as the individual’s vision of whom he or she wants to be and includes his or her goals, values, and deepest aspirations for the individual’s future (Boyatzis et al., 2013).

Vocation-Coaching (Kaiser & Fordinal, 2010) has a special focus on creating and formulating a need-driven personal vision for the future. Methodologically, Vocation-Coaching is based on the approach of systemic coaching and enlarges it with several approaches and techniques from the fields of learning theory, knowledge management, spirituality and holism. It is a need-oriented process-model, which has a strong focus on the recognition of one’s own substantial needs. Therefore, the action-guiding question of this method is, ‘What do I really need for a fulfilling life?’ The most crucial focus of Vocation-Coaching is the assistance of a person to formulate a

personal vision based on his or her vocation (calling) including the main substantial needs of the person in the context of a fulfilling life and implying strategies to transform these needs into everyday life.

The Vocation-Coaching process can be subdivided into three main stages (Kaiser & Fordinal, 2010): Discovery, Strengthening and Conversion. The first phase focuses on discovering and learning the personal calling and the best version of oneself. Thereby, the essential needs are addressed and the approach of learning from the future is used. The basic idea is that clients are guided and accompanied into overextended visions - like utopias - in order to then derive the underlying needs of this utopia - quasi the essence. While the second phase elaborates intensively on the externalization and definition of the client's strengths, resources, talents and skills, the third phase creates an implementation strategy to achieve a sustainable and achievable vision. Additional and detailed information about the approach of Vocation-Coaching can be found at (Kaiser, 2016; Kaiser, 2017).

Both types of coaching – coaching with compassion and Vocation-Coaching – can be seen as transformative learning processes (Mbotka et al., 2022; Wellbelove, 2016) as they clearly facilitate the process of effecting change in a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). Such a transformational learning process allows one to learn about the best version of oneself and the qualities that characterize and define that best version. Therefore, both coaching approaches can be described not only as transformational learning processes but also as also deep learning processes. With the learning outcome in mind, it is easier to decide whether there is a meaningful and fulfilling match between the job a person is doing and the manifestations of the best version of oneself. As stated above, this represents a KM problem, as essential types of knowledge must flow between organizations and their employees, in order to make a good decision.

## **2.4. Knowledge Management and Coaching**

From a knowledge management point of view, coaching can be seen as a process-oriented implementation of Personal Knowledge Management (Cheong & Tsui, 2010). Personal knowledge management (PKM) is a concept that has grown out of a combination of fields as diverse as knowledge management, personal information management, cognitive psychology, philosophy, management science, communications, etc. (Pauleen, 2009) and can be defined as an overall structured process for intentionally managing information and turning it into useful knowledge (Cheong & Tsui, 2010).

According to Nonaka (1994) the knowledge conversion process from tacit to explicit knowledge

and the other way around is key for creating new knowledge. This applies not only to the organizational level, but also to the individual. Coaching specifically enables individuals to transform their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (externalization) and to reflect on and validate this knowledge in order to be able to use it usefully regarding the goals and tasks to be achieved. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse all coaching techniques for their potential contribution to knowledge conversion and knowledge generation.

The Vocation-Coaching process is framed by the guiding questions of what a person really needs to live a fulfilled life, what a person's deepest desires and wishes are, what talents and abilities a person has, and what he or she is responsible for. Consequently, very special knowledge types are generated during a Vocation-coaching process: knowledge about essential needs, values, basic desires and wishes, as well as knowledge about talents, skills, strengths and resources. Besides the other KM-related aspects the generation of self-transcending knowledge is a focal point of the Vocation-coaching process. Self-transcending knowledge is the knowledge about one's highest future possibilities. Scharmer, who first introduced the concept of self-transcending knowledge, cites Michelangelo on his sculpture of David: 'David was already in the stone. I just took away every-thing that wasn't David' (Scharmer 2001, p.138). The ability to see a David where others see a rock is the essence of self-transcending knowledge. Discovering one's own vocation/calling, making explicit substantial needs for a fulfilling life and becoming aware of deepest wishes and dreams can be seen as self-transcending knowledge on the journey from the existing self to the new Self.

## **3. Enneagramics**

In this section, we first outline the Enneagram. Then we summarize our organization mapping and interpretation.

### **3.1 Enneagram**

The Enneagram represents an ancient system— dating likely back to Pythagoras and beyond; along with a mystic and religious backdrop, in addition to mathematic roots—for understanding people (Integrative 9, 2023). As delineated in Figure 1, it consists of a circle with nine points that interconnect irregularly. For instance, the points 3, 6 and 9 interconnect only with one another via an equilateral triangle pattern, whereas the other six points interconnect only with one another via irregular hexagon.

In its most common usage and interpretation, each of the nine points corresponds to a human personality type (e.g., “Peacemaker,” “Reformer,” “Helper”), and each of the interconnecting lines corresponds to a direction of potential change in such type. Hence it refers to a dynamic system in addition a static one.

Further, the nine types are grouped generally into three parts corresponding to where they are centered in the human body: 1) Points 8, 9 and 1 are *gut*; Points 2, 3 and 4 are *heart*; and Points 5, 6 and 7 are *head*.



Figure 1 Basic Enneagram

Each of the nine personality types has some correspondence to these three centers in addition to the adjacent types (called “Wings”) on either side. For instance, Type 1 has Type 9 as a wing, and these two types are both gut centered; whereas Type 2 represents the other wing but is heart centered. The same applies all around the circle.

There are some correspondences between the Enneagram and other personality indicators. For instance, the Myers-Briggs instrument could map approximately to the Enneagram types as summarized in Table 1 (Drenth, 2023).

Table 1 Myers-Briggs & Enneagram Mapping

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Introverts (4,5,6,9) | Extroverts (3,7,8) |
| Sensors (6)          | Intuitives (4,5)   |
| Thinkers (3,5,8)     | Feelers (2,4,9)    |
| Judgers (1,8)        | Perceivers (7,9)   |

The Enneagram has a relatively large following and substantial literature, but they fall largely outside of the academic community (TraitLab, 2023). For purposes of this article, we focus on Enneagram dynamics (“Enneagramics”) that characterize possible movements between and constraints upon the different types.

The Enneagramics are delineated by the lines connecting the nine types: each type can transition only to one of its two direct connections over the short term. For instance, Type 1 is connected to Type 4 and 7: over the short term, these are the only two types available to Type 1.

Moreover, one such movement (i.e.,  $1 \rightarrow 7$ ) is considered to represent growth or integration, whereas the other (i.e.,  $1 \rightarrow 4$ ) suggests stress or disintegration instead. Thus, Enneagramics involve both magnitude (e.g., positive: growth or integration vs. negative: stress or disintegration) and direction (e.g.,  $1 \rightarrow 7$  vs.  $1 \rightarrow 4$ ). As such, we can characterize the possible movements using vector notation. For convention, a positive movement will be underlined (e.g.,  $\underline{1 \rightarrow 7}$ ), whereas a negative counterpart will be highlighted in bold (e.g.,  $\mathbf{1 \rightarrow 4}$ ). It is beyond the scope of this article to explain why one direction is considered positive and the other negative. The key is that motion is limited to two alternate types in the short term; and motion in one direction represents an improved state, whereas the other direction suggests decline.

Additionally, over the longer term, one can move beyond this constrained initial set of two types. For instance, for the Type 1 that grows to Type 7, further growth to Type 5 is possible, as is disintegration back to Type 1. Symmetrically, for the Type 1 that stresses to Type 4, further stress to Type 2 is possible, as is reintegration back to Type 1. Through this process, and over a comparatively long period of time, one can move from nearly any type to nearly any other. (The Enneagram exhibits considerably greater complexity than discussed here [e.g., Wings, Triads, Levels], but that is well beyond the scope of this article.)

### 3.2 Organization Mapping

As noted above, the Enneagram characterizes human personality types and provides insight into different kinds of people and avenues they have for growth and integration vs. stress and disintegration. It also describes dynamic potential and constraints associated with movement within the system. Through analogic reasoning, we map the basics of the Enneagram to the organization, aware fully of both strengths and limitations associated with analogies: they can promote insight and creativity, but every analogy breaks when stretched too far (Nissen, 2017).

Organization typologies are common in the Organization Studies literature. For two instances, Mintzberg (1979) identifies five fundamental organization types (e.g., Simple Structure, Machine Bureaucracy, Adhocracy); and Miles et al. (1978) identify four types pertaining to organization strategy, structure and process (e.g., Prospector, Defender, Analyzer, Reactor). Moreover, some such typologies can map to one another. For instance, Alberts and Nissen (2009) map five “command and control” archetypes (e.g., Coordinated, Collaborative, Edge) to the Mintzberg types.

Further, Enneagram authors map each of the nine types to countries, colors, animals and other analogies (Rohr and Ebert, 2020). Figure 2 reflects one such

mapping to country, for instance. As above, it is beyond the purpose of this article to detail the rationale for each mapping. The key point centers on analogy between each of the nine human personality types and stereotypical characteristics of different (mostly European) countries.

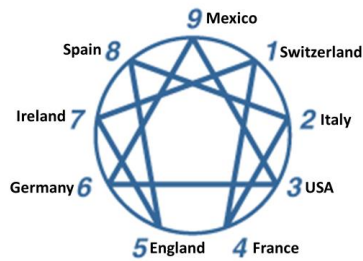


Figure 2 Country Mapping

In this same manner, we attempt a rough mapping to organization types as shown in Figure 3. Were the Enneagramics of human personality movements to map across to this organization domain, then one could envision a similar set of possible organization changes and associated constraints, and one could characterize such movements in terms of vectors as above.

Using Type 1 as an example again, recall that Enneagramics are delineated by the lines connecting the nine types: each type can transition only to one of its two direct connections over the short term. For instance, Type 1 is connected to Type 4 and 7: over the short term, these are the only two types available to Type 1. For a manufacturing organization, for instance, to undergo change and transition to another type, its short term possibilities are limited to Philanthropy (growth:  $1 \rightarrow 7$ ) and Art (stress:  $1 \rightarrow 4$ ).

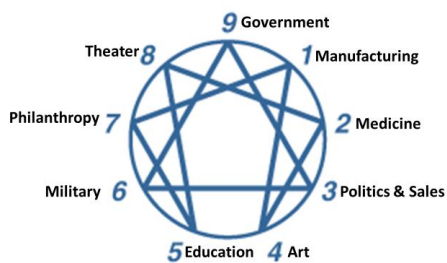


Figure 3 Organization Mapping

Recall further how, over the longer term, an organization can move beyond this constrained initial set of two types. For instance, for the Type 1 that grows to Type 7, further growth to Type 5 is possible, as is disintegration back to Type 1. Symmetrically, for the Type 1 that stresses to Type 4, further stress to Type 2 is possible, as is reintegration back to Type 1. Through this process, and over a comparatively long

period of time, an organization can move from nearly any type to nearly any other. (Stress or disintegration from Type 4 – Art to Type 2 – Medicine may seem strange, but think from the perspective of an artistic organization [e.g., artists collective] what it would be like to be bound by all of the rules and standards associated with [esp. Western] medicine.)

### 3.3 Individual-Organization Mapping

Connecting these concepts, types and dynamics, our first proposition suggests that an employee’s individual personality type should match the analogic type of organization for which he or she works. A Type 1 (“Reformer”) individual, for instance, may feel most satisfied and fulfilled in a Type 1 (“Manufacturing”) organization, for instance; as the former is highly attuned to rules, and the latter reflects standardized processes often. Conversely, as a contrasting instance, such Type 1 individual may feel dissatisfied and unfulfilled in a Type 4 (“Art”) organization. Similar propositions regarding the other individual and organization types would follow accordingly. This is clearly rough and theoretic, but it may help us to link individual and organization KM, especially regarding essential knowledge.

## 4. Integration

In this section, we work to integrate the key ideas and concepts from above. We begin with the distinction between essential and existential knowledge. Then we summarize the central elements of knowledge flow, before proposing our scheme for conceptual integration and elaborating via practical illustration.

### 4.1 Essential and Existential Knowledge

If we look at the two pillars discussed so far in our paper (coaching and Enneagramics) from a KM perspective, we notice that it is primarily about the generation and usage of very specific types of knowledge. Knowledge about essential needs, values, basic desires and wishes; knowledge about talents, skills, strengths and resources; knowledge about personality types as well as knowledge about organization typologies. Furthermore, we have already briefly addressed the interplay between the individual and organizational level, which can be referred to as the reach dimension in terms of knowledge flow. In this section we not only try to integrate all these aspects and ideas, but also to explore to what extent systemic and Vocation-coaching and Enneagramics could enhance and improve the bidirectional knowledge flow between individuals and organizations and how this could work in practice.



If we try to summarize all the mentioned types of knowledge, we could characterize them as *essential knowledge* which we define as knowledge that helps and enables one to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, again in a bidirectional meaning - individual and organizational. This should be distinguished from *existential knowledge* which can be defined as knowledge that is necessary for survival (e.g., knowing where to get food to survive, knowing which doctor can help with medical issues).

Also on the organizational level there is, of course, both essential knowledge, which refers to desired employee behavior (e.g., attending meetings, meeting organization objectives), and existential knowledge, which is essential for survival (e.g., knowledge about legal issues, knowledge about basic functionalities in the IT area of the organization).

The key is to distinguish between a life that just ensures survival and a life that is meaningful, enjoyable and fulfilling. This is in line with several authors who make this distinction in a similar way and at the same time link this to the development and shaping of the self and identity (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Scharmer, 2001; Rohr & Ebert, 2020; Nonaka, 1994). In the following, we distinguish these two different forms of life by a corresponding notation, namely life and Life.

Therefore, our approach is about this bidirectional knowledge flow between individuals and organizations of *essential knowledge* in order to enable Life.

## 4.2 Knowledge Flow

The concept *knowledge flow* derives from Knowledge Flow Theory (KFT; see Grant, 1996; Spender, 1996; Preiss, 1999; Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Nonaka, 1994; Nissen, 2006), which addresses the dynamics of knowledge as it “moves” through the organization. For several instances, knowledge can flow across people (e.g., expert and novice), places (e.g., Floor 1 & 2 in a building), organizations (e.g., East Coast and West Coast office), times (e.g., Day and Swing Shift), and forms (e.g., tacit and explicit knowledge).

Although *knowledge* as a concept is ancient, philosophers continue to struggle over and argue about how to define it (Gettier, 1963). Moreover, knowledge is inherently invisible, intangible, indefinite and dynamic (Nissen 2014). Hence it is very difficult to characterize the dynamics of something that resists definition and cannot be observed directly.

KFT offers an approach to obviating such difficulty in the organization context: instead of trying to define *knowledge*, it is operationalized simply, *knowledge enables action* (Nissen, 2006). Such action can be viewed in terms of decisions made, work

performed, statements articulated, behaviors exhibited, and myriad more: anything that someone *does*.

Thus, where organization action takes place, knowledge must be present to enable it. In other words, for someone in an organization to perform an action, he or she must know how to do so, and one can make inferences regarding a person’s (or organization’s) knowledge from his or her (or its) actions (e.g., number of correct answers on a test; number of quality defects on an assembly line).

This approach is powerful and entirely parallel to consideration of personal motivation and behavior: one cannot observe a person’s motivation directly, but we make inferences about motivation all the time by observing an employee’s behavior (e.g., arriving to work on time; working late; completing assignments). Organization knowledge flows can be analyzed, visualized and even measured through the actions that they enable (Nissen, 2017).

With this, and as noted above, clearly knowledge can flow from one person to another (e.g., expert to novice) and from one organization to another (e.g., East Coast to West Coast office), but it can also flow from a person to an organization (e.g., developing a patentable idea), and vice versa (e.g., communicating expectations through an employee handbook).

Returning to Enneagramics, recall that a person can move only between specific types in the short term, and that moving to one type reflects personal growth and integration (e.g.,  $1 \rightarrow 7$ ), whereas movement to the other reflects stress and disintegration (e.g.,  $1 \rightarrow 4$ ) instead. Clearly a person’s behavior—the actions that he or she takes—will differ when a person reaches one type vs. another (Riso & Hudson, 1999). In the case of growth and integration, for instance, the person learns a set of actions that are viewed as more positive, which implies a knowledge flow. Likewise in the case of stress and disintegration, the person learns a set of actions that are viewed as more negative, which implies a knowledge flow also. The same applies to organizations that learn actions leading to more positive or negative behaviors and results.

## 4.3 Conceptual Integration Scheme

Since the primary objective of knowledge flow is to enable the transfer of capability and expertise from where it resides to where it is needed—across time, space and organizations as necessary (Nissen, 2002), our aim is to transfer *essential knowledge* to where it is needed. In our case, this essential knowledge needs the individual as well as the organization. Therefore, we require a bidirectional knowledge flow of essential knowledge to ensure Life for both.

According to an approach of Nonaka (1995), a bidirectional knowledge flow could be realized with an adapted middle-up-down approach. Nonaka states that knowledge is created at the middle organization level through a spiral conversion process involving both the top and the bottom level. The process puts the middle level at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal flows of information within the company (Nonaka, 1988).

Following this idea, the middle level represents the interplay between the individual (employee) and the organization in learning and developing the best version of oneself (employee) and the best version of the organization. At this middle level, the best version of an employee is shaped and developed by the organizational influence and, at the same time, the best version of the organization is shaped and developed by the influence of the employees. This is in line with the system theory on which the Vocation-coaching as well as the systemic coaching is based.

Along with this, we have argued in previous work that the process of creating a shared vision in organizations can be interpreted as a knowledge-creating process if and only if the two ends, individual (bottom) and organization (top), mutually shape and clarify their visions along a learning process (Kaiser et al., 2021, Kaiser et al., 2013).

Returning now to our original research question, how coaching and the Enneagram can foster organizational knowledge flow, we argue that the Enneagram serves as the important middle level just outlined. While Vocation-coaching can identify very efficiently key aspects of essential knowledge (needs, desires, talents, resources) especially at the individual level, it is the Enneagram that enables a connection from the individual level to the organization.

#### **4.4 Practical Illustration**

Elaboration via practical illustration should help to elucidate the key ideas and interrelationships. Say for illustration that an employee has gone through a complete Vocation-coaching process and has written his personal vision. During this process, he has learned a lot about his essential needs, desires and strengths and is able to explicate them and put them into words. Only this gathering of a huge body of essential knowledge enabled him to write a genuinely attractive and sustainable vision of his (professional) future. This learning-outcome of the Vocation-coaching process has enabled him to realize that he is Type 1 (“Reformer” or “Perfectionist”). Drawing from Riso and Hudson (1999), the basic desire of a Type 1 centers on having integrity; with the basic fear of being bad, corrupt, evil or defective.

This type identifies powerfully with the capacity to evaluate, compare, measure and discern experiences

or things; and it resists recognizing anger based tension. They tend to emphasize being correct, organized and sensible; and they tend to focus on standards and rules; striving relentlessly to work within the system and to be “good” in terms of what the organization (or Life) expects. The knowledge required to effect such identification and emphasis enables actions that are reasonable, sensible, objective, moderate, prudent, moral, rational and viewed contextually as “good.” Type 1s can become very irritated with people that disregard the rules.

In terms of dynamics, a Type 1 can become frustrated through stress and experience disintegration to Type 4, with irrational actions and repressed anger often. Conversely, this type can become more spontaneous and accepting through growth and integration to Type 7.

The kind of work environment most suitable for a Type 1 reflects order, rules and clarity; with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, well-planned deliverables and deadlines, efficient procedures and processes, and a clear code of conduct. They do best in a role where they can influence standards, manage quality, offer solutions, and work as part of a team to make things happen. They derive great satisfaction from a job well done (Rouso, 2023).

Conversely, Type 1s struggle in professional environments that are chaotic, with ever-changing goals and priorities; that reflect a lack of consistent direction, clear delineation of duties or excessive workloads, especially when they feel that work quality is suffering; and where organization demands contrast with personal values or ethics.

Presume for this illustration that a Type 1 employee lacks the knowledge to grow into a Type 7; that is, he or she is static at Type 1 and lacks the knowledge required to grow and integrate into a more positive type. Likewise, such person is also stable and unlikely to disintegrate into a more negative type with considerable stress. Were the organization to place such person in a work environment most suitable to his or her type, then he or she would likely have a good chance of finding meaning and fulfillment through work.

Were the organization to develop the essential knowledge required to understand this employee’s Type and the kind of work environment corresponding best to his or her disposition, then leadership and management could help to facilitate such environment, or even work to move the employee to a different job that he or she would find more suitable. Likewise, were the employee to become aware of his or her Type and understand the most appropriate work environment, then he or she would have a good chance to find meaning and fulfillment, or seek alternate jobs. Thus, the Enneagram could serve both the top and

bottom organization layers through essential knowledge flows enabling good employee-job fit.

Moreover, either or both the employee or the organization could understand the Enneagramics associated with growth and integration to a more positive Type (e.g., 7), and either or both could seek to drive such growth, say in advance of a promotion or substantial job change. Likewise, either or both the employee or the organization could understand the Enneagramics associated with stress and disintegration to a more negative Type (e.g., 4), and either or both could seek to overcome such stress, say resulting from a promotion or substantial job change.

Further, Enneagramics represents a body of knowledge that could be highly beneficial for Coaches. The kinds of vocational and other systematic coaching techniques discussed above could be expanded to integrate Enneagramics into the conversations.

Additionally, this discussion could be expanded analogically to address the Enneagramics at the organization level. For instance, were organization leaders and managers able to identify their *organization* Enneagram Type (e.g., Type 4 – Art), they may develop the knowledge required to realize that Manufacturing may not represent the most suitable kind of activity for such Type. They may also develop the knowledge required to grow and integrate into Type 1 – Manufacturing, which would be highly suitable.

## 5. Conclusion

Problems emerge when employees feel that their jobs are meaningless and unfulfilling. To solve this problem, a professional knowledge flow of essential knowledge can significantly help. As this also represents a knowledge management problem we outlined in this paper an approach that fosters essential knowledge flow through two complementary techniques: 1) Vocation-coaching and 2) Enneagram dynamics. Given that coaching is an interactive person-centered counseling process in a professional context, which is limited in time and defined thematically (goal-oriented), it clearly involved interaction between client and coach, each of which is an expert in his or her domain. This is the case in particular with systemic coaching, which prioritizes the system and is informed by an understanding of the organizing principles and deep patterns consistently observed in them. Moreover, Vocation-coaching explicitly focuses on the main dimensions of essential knowledge, as it is highly specialized in developing an attractive, meaningful and at the same time sustainable vision for individuals.

In a complementary way, the Enneagram represents an ancient system for understanding people

in terms of nine Types, and it defines the dynamics of possible movements between Types, which we refer to as Enneagramics. The Enneagram applies principally to individuals and their personalities, but one can extend its application to organizations through analogic reasoning.

Differentiating between essential and existential knowledge, one can view both coaching and Vocation-coaching on the one hand and Enneagramics on the other hand in terms of knowledge flows, not only between people *or* organizations, but between people *and* organizations. Indeed, vocation coaching can identify very efficiently key aspects of essential knowledge (needs, desires, talents, resources) especially at the individual level. The Enneagram enables a connection from the individual level to the organization, as it serves as an important enabler of middle-up-down knowledge flow, where the middle level represents the interplay between the individual (employee) and the organization in learning and developing the best version of oneself (employee) and the best version of the organization.

In summary, the finding of our work can be presented as follows: The bidirectional flow of essential knowledge between individuals and the organization takes place in a multilevel way. Vocation-coaching generates explicit essential knowledge. This enables the identification of the proper type in the Enneagram. This Type allows the company to gain deeper insights and make better decisions about the optimal workplace and the employee's area of operation within the company. This also helps to know better how leadership and management could help to facilitate such environment, or even work to move the employee to a different job that he or she would find more suitable. At the same time it helps an employee become aware of his or her Type and understand the most appropriate work environment and how he or she would have a good chance to find meaning and fulfillment, or seek alternate jobs. Thus, the Enneagram could serve both the top and bottom organization layers through essential knowledge flows enabling good employee-job fit.

However, this knowledge flow of essential knowledge also works in the other direction. Organizations can be seen as complex living systems, that permanently (re)produce and maintain themselves, which requires them to engage in a lifelong organizational learning process. This learning process includes also (but not only) interactions with the employees of the organization. Both areas (individual and organization) influence each other through and along the knowledge flow of essential knowledge. Through these interaction mechanisms, each organization builds its own self by shaping its



employees and at the same time being shaped by them in an ongoing feedback loop. Figure 4 shows this bidirectional flow of knowledge in an illustrative way.

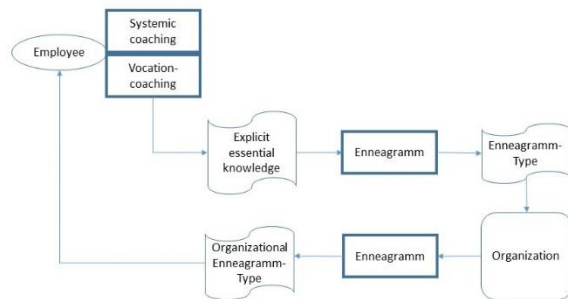


Figure 4 Bidirectional essential knowledge flow

In addition to the knowledge flow aspect that we have focused on in this paper, it should be noted that Enneagramics represents a body of knowledge that can be of great benefit to coaches in the application of systemic coaching and Vocation-coaching.

With our paper we contribute to the currently emerging future-oriented fields within knowledge management, namely Responsible KM (Rocha et al., 2022; Durst, 2021), Spiritual KM (Kaiser, 2023) and Spiritual knowledge (Bratianu, 2016). There are many possible avenues for further development of our ideas. Indeed, we have presented only relatively concise summaries of the key concepts, ideas and interrelationships associated with coaching and Enneagramics. There is abundant room to delve much more deeply into either. Likewise, we have presented only very high level thoughts regarding how to integrate such techniques, both with one another and with KM. There is much work to do. We welcome the opportunity to do so with others.

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