A CALL TO APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ENNEAGRAM IN ORGANIZATIONS TO ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES

R. Karl Hebenstreit, Ph.D.

Abstract

Organizations, as a whole, have traditionally faced serious challenges and have incurred tremendous costs in recruiting, motivating, and retaining employees. The retention literature outlines seven major themes of factors that contribute to employees staying with a company. Motivation theory has also been applied to work settings and provides business examples of different motivators for employees. Furthermore, Enneagram theory may provide additional insights into what contributes to different employees' joining, staying with, or leaving organizations. This study used an online survey of International Enneagram Association members and affiliates to evaluate various hypotheses around differences in employment-related decisions to join, stay with, or leave an organization being explained by differences in Enneagram type.

A Business Context

Employee retention is a significant concern and expense for every organization, with the expense of recruiting and retraining a new worker costing anywhere from half to 200% of the departing employee's annual salary, depending on employee level and factoring in separation processing, coworker burden, overtime costs, recruitment and training costs, lost productivity, loss of clients, loss of intellectual capital, etc. (US Dept. of Labor). Corporations have implemented traditional solutions to address the challenge of employee turnover, focusing on:

- Career development opportunities
- Challenging and meaningful work in alignment with employees' career interests
- Employer's culture and reputation
- The organization's commitment to the employee and employee level of job involvement
- Organizational and supervisory support (including relationship with supervisor)
- Honest and truthful recruitment processes
- Compensation- and rewards-related retention mechanisms

The above categories are obvious generalizations that may not appeal or apply to all individuals and their particular situations and personal motivations. Since employee motivation is not just innate, but also linked to the work environment and work relationships (a concept brought to light by the famous Hawthorne experiments), the Enneagram, as a personality and motivation typing system, is a perfect instrument to provide further insight and explanation to the challenge of employee retention and motivation.

To be clear, Enneatyping candidates for selection purposes is not what is being advocated here. What is being recommended is the creation of a variety of options and alternatives for a total employee retention system to address areas that matter to all employees as well as focusing on certain others that may be being ignored, unconsidered, or underutilized. Based on a recent research study, several differences were noted between certain Enneagram types that suggest integrating or focusing on these Enneagram-based areas of interest and import into corporate reward and compensation strategies and systems (Hebenstreit, 2007).

Methodology

This study used an online survey (managed through SurveyMonkey) of International Enneagram Association (IEA) members and affiliates to evaluate various hypotheses pertaining to differences in employment-related decisions to join, stay with, or leave companies and their possible explanation by differences in Enneagram type (please see Table 1). This population was selected in an attempt to obtain data from a wide range of respondents who would already know their Enneagram type and subtype and who spanned a multitude of geographies, industries, disciplines, and work experiences. Enneagram theory-related hypotheses and current business foci were evaluated. Out of 1887 potential participants, the survey was accessed 211 times, resulting in 147 full and partial responses. The complete and distinct data from 87 different respondents were able to be used for analysis, after eliminating partials, multiples, and respondents who were uncertain of their Enneagram type. Please refer to Table 3 for demographic details of the respondents. Cronbach's alpha tests were performed to verify reliability, while analysis of variance and Tukey tests were conducted to confirm that statistical differences identified between Enneagram types were not attributable to chance.

Table 1

The Hypotheses

ENNEAGRAM CORRELATE	HYPOTHESIS
Overarching	Respondents self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations consistent with the factors identified in the retention literature review.
1	Enneatype Ones self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of how ethical and reputable those organizations and their supervisors within them are.
2	Enneatype Twos self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether they are valued/needed/respected by those organizations.
3	Enneatype Threes self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether those organizations are able to provide them with the titles, positions, and rewards they seek.
4	Enneatype Fours self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of the uniqueness and innovation of their work within those organizations.
5	Enneatype Fives self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether personal privacy, time off, and educational opportunities exist for them within those organizations.
6	Enneatype Sixes self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether their jobs are secure within those organizations and their level of trust in their supervisors and leaders.
7	Enneatype Sevens self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether fun and variety are available for them in those organizations, especially manifest in innovative and interesting work.

8	Enneatype Eights self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/ experience of the extent of autonomy and control they have in their positions within those organizations and whether there is fairness and justice in the use of power in those organizations.
9	Enneatype Nines self-report a pattern of joining, staying with, and leaving organizations based on their perception/experience of whether their work, role, and goals, are clearly defined within the organization and their experience of a collaborative work environment.

Results

The "Honestly Significant Differences" (as defined by the Tukey Tests performed on the variables with analyses of variance below 0.05) identified are presented by factor below in Table 2:

Table 2

Significant Relationships in Study Results, where p < 0.05

P < 0.05

DECISION POINT	FACTOR / VARIABLE	MORE IMPORTANT FOR	LESS IMPORTANT FOR
Attraction	Supervisor's Integrity	1	8, 4
Attraction	Trust in Leadership	1, 5, 6, 7, 9	4
Attraction	Fair and Just Use of Power	1	4
Attraction	Collaborative Work Environment	9	4
Retention (P)	Supervisor's Integrity	1	4, 3
Retention (P)	Sufficient Time Off	6, 5	3
Retention (P)	Trust in Leadership	6, 1, 2	4
Retention (P)	Literature Review Variables	1	3
Retention (C)	Competitive Skill-Based Pay	1	3

Table 2, continued

DECISION POINT	FACTOR / VARIABLE	MORE IMPORTANT FOR	LESS IMPORTANT FOR
Attraction	Innovative Work	Social	Sexual
Retention (P)	Innovative Work	Social	Sexual
Retention (P)	Collaborative Work Environment	Social	Self-Preservation
Retention (P)	Supervisory Support	Sexual	Social
Retention (P)	Interesting Work	Sexual	Social Self-Preservation

(P) = Past employer; (C) = Current employer

Discussion by Variable

The variables selected to be evaluated in the survey were identified, developed, and extrapolated from existing literature focusing on the Enneagram at work (i.e., Palmer & Brown, 1997; Bast & Thomson, 2003) as well as taking into account the underlying primary motivations of each Enneagram type.

Supervisor's Integrity

Enneatype 1s differed significantly from Enneatypes 4 and 8 by valuing supervisory integrity more in deciding to join past organizations. They also differed significantly from Enneatypes 3 and 4 in considering that dimension when choosing to stay with their current company.

Trust in Leadership

Enneatype 6s were found to differ significantly from Enneatype 4s in their higher valuation of trust in leadership as a factor in deciding to join an organization (as did Enneatypes 1, 5, 7, and 9). Also, Enneatype 6s, 1s, and 2s valued trust in leadership more than Enneatype 4s when having chosen to stay with past organizations.

Fair and Just Use of Power

Enneatype 1s differed significantly from Enneatype 4s in the former's higher valuation of fair and just use of power in deciding to join past organizations.

Collaborative Work Environment

A collaborative work environment was significantly more important for Enneatype 9s than Enneatype 4s in having decided to remain with past

employers. Also, social subtypes differed from their self-preservation peers when having chosen to stay with a past employer based on a collaborative work environment.

Sufficient Time Off

Sufficient time off was valued significantly more by Enneatype 5s and 6s than Enneatype 3s in having chosen to stay with a past employer.

Competitive, Skill-based Pay and Literature Review Variables

Enneatype 1s differed significantly from Enneatype 3s in two areas. Enneatype 1s placed higher value than Enneatype 3s on competitive, skill-based pay in deciding to stay with their current employers. The same scenario played out when Enneatype 1s valued the entire suite of variables identified in the literature review (which included pay) more highly than Enneatype 3s in having decided to stay with past employers.

Innovative Work

Social subtypes differed significantly from their sexual counterparts in the former's higher valuation of innovative work when having chosen to join and remain with past organizations.

Supervisory Support

Sexual subtypes differed significantly from social subtypes in their valuation of supervisory support when having decided to stay with past employers.

Interesting Work

Sexual subtypes differed significantly from both other subtypes when factoring in interesting work in decisions to remain with past employers.

Possible Enneagram-Based Explanations and Implications by Enneatype

Type 1

Trust in leadership, fair and just use of power, and competitive, skills-based pay (along with all the traditional components identified in the literature review) are all factors relating to "doing the right thing" and equitable treatment, which would fall neatly within the domain of Enneatype 1 values and morals. The consistency exhibited in the Enneatype 1 versus Enneatype 4 dichotomy is of particular interest, especially considering that the 4 is the stress type of Enneatype 1s (and that the 1 is the security type of Enneatype 4s). This could

imply that all Enneatypes may have ideological conflict with Enneatypes of their stress arrow. More research needs to be conducted in this arena. (This scenario also plays out with the Enneatype 6 versus Enneatype 3 dichotomy seen in "sufficient time off.")

Type 2

The only significant difference noted involving the Enneatype 2 compared to other Enneatype responses was for trust in leadership as a factor in staying with past employers. This was in comparison to Enneatype 4s. This may be explained by drawing upon the Enneatype 2s relationship-orientation and organizational tendency to support leaders (Palmer & Brown, 1997). Building relationships with and being supported by leaders would infer a trust in that leadership (otherwise cognitive dissonance would occur). That trust in leadership could be a result of feeling valued and needed, which are all elements of the Enneatype 2 schema.

Type 3

Similar to Enneatype 4s, 3s exhibited the second highest instances of significant differences when compared to Enneatype 1s (in not valuing supervisory integrity or the literature review-identified variables as highly when having decided to remain with past employers and in not valuing competitive skills-based pay as highly when deciding to stay with current companies). Enneatype 3s also differed from 5s and 6s in not valuing sufficient time off as highly in having made decisions to leave past employers. This latter finding may be explainable by the results focus typical of Enneatype 3s, which often precludes an emphasis on time off in favor of work. The dichotomy against Enneatype 1s is noteworthy in that these two types may clash in their ideologies, 1s being more moral- and value-centric and 3s being more result-focused.

Type 4

Enneatype 4s exhibited the most significant differences when compared to the other Enneatypes. The factors being asked about mattered less to them than the other Enneatypes, specifically Enneatypes 1, 2, 6, and 9. This difference in value structure hints at the unique nature of the Enneatype 4s and may contribute to their feeling different from others. This is the only respondent group that differed significantly against so many other different Enneatype groups. Note that, in comparison to their other Enneatype counterparts, Enneatype 4s were more likely to have worked for 6 or more industries during their 25+ year careers (68% of respondents have worked for more than 25 years). One third (4) of Enneatype 4 respondents reported this, whereas 75% of all the other types (65 non-Enneatype 4 respondents) reported that their careers have spanned 5 industries or less. This anomaly may be attributable to the Enneatype 4 tendency to long for something different, which, in this case, might manifest itself in changes in the type of industry in which they work in an attempt to achieve this. Another

possible explanation is that Enneatype 4s reference primarily their own internal authority and are generally not interested enough in external authority to have that be a factor in their career decisions (J. Kroll, personal communication, May 19, 2008).

Type 5

"Sufficient time off" was selected as a factor that would be of probable importance to Enneatype 5s due to their generally reserved nature and affinity for educational pursuits. As predicted, Enneatype 5s differed significantly from Enneatype 3s in this regard, valuing their time away from work more highly than their stereotypically workaholic counterparts when having decided to stay with past employers.

Type 6

The statistically significant emphasis on trusting leadership in decisions to join past organizations by the Head Triad (Enneatypes 5, 6, and 7) and Enneatype 9 (when compared to Enneatype 4s) could be attributed to all of these Enneatypes' commonality at the Enneatype 6 – both Enneatypes 5 and 7 have a 6 wing and Enneatype 9s go to 6 under stress.

A trustworthy leader would probably contribute to a work environment that would feel more safe and secure and allay this primary concern of Enneatype 6s. Furthermore, a trustworthy leader would probably be more likely to create a harmonious and fair environment, further appealing to these Enneatype 9 sensibilities. Keep in mind, too, that Enneatype 9s have a 1 wing which can also come into play to explain the emphasis on this Enneatype 1 quality (assuming leadership trustworthiness is related to supervisory integrity).

Enneatype 6s differed significantly from Enneatype 4s in both having decided to join and stay with past employers based on their evaluation of their organization's leadership. There was also a difference noted in their higher valuation of paid time off of work versus their Enneatype 3 counterparts (which was not predicted). Perhaps this could be attributed to the Enneatype 6 respondents' exhibition of a strong 5 wing tendency (the hypothesis related to which was supported). As discussed in the Enneatype 1 section, this could also be evidence of discord with one's stressor, where the Enneatype 6s differ from their Enneatype 3 stress point.

Type 7

The only significant difference involving Enneatype 7s was in comparison to the Enneatype 4s in the former's higher valuation of trust in leadership in joining an organization. In the hypotheses, this factor was selected for Enneatype 6s due to their "skeptic" nature. This finding could be attributed to Enneatype 7s with strong 6 wings factoring into the decision-making process.

Type 8

The only significant differences involving Enneatype 8s were found in comparison to Enneatype 1s in their lower emphasis on supervisory integrity as a factor in deciding to join past organizations. Could this be due to an Enneatype 8 belief that they will be able to gain control of a situation, regardless of their supervisor's integrity?

Type 9

Traditionally harmony-seeking Enneatype 9s differed significantly from Enneatype 4s in their higher valuation of a collaborative work environment when having decided to join an organization. This difference could be attributed to Enneatype 4s feeling unique and that their special contributions are more individually-oriented than team-focused. This would have to be studied further for validation. Enneatype 9s also manifested a significant difference from their Enneatype 4 counterparts in their past decisions to join organizations based on their valuation of trustworthiness of leadership (which could contribute to a collaborative work environment). Note that the significant differences were only found for Enneatype 9s seeking a collaborative working environment when joining an organization and that a collaborative working environment was not found to be a statistically significantly different factor for Enneatype 9s deciding to stay with or leave a company. This could be due to the purported tendency of Enneatype 9s to "go with the flow" and seek to create harmony in whichever situation they find themselves. This quality might then help explain why Enneatype 9s may try to make the best of a situation that may not be as collaborative as they had initially hoped. Enneatype 9s were the only type with any survey respondents whose careers consisted of working in just one company (for more than 15 years each), lending some more anecdotal evidence (at the very least) from the two respondents who replied as such. Or, Enneatype 9s may have been able to make a correct up-front evaluation of their prospective work environment when deciding to join the organization that proved to meet their expectations of collaboration; therefore, this may not be an issue in their decision to leave the desired environment. Further research needs to be conducted to verify these suppositions.

So What Does This Mean for Employers?

Organizational implications of these findings are to ensure inclusion of the following factors into existing corporate culture, management expectations and training, and reward and compensation systems:

- Supervisory integrity
- Trust in leadership
- Collaborative work environment

- Sufficient time off
- Innovative work
- Supervisory support
- Fair & just use of power

Inclusion of and focus on these factors, in addition to the other factors already being addressed, will maximize the engagement of the Enneatypes and subtypes who find these more important than other employees. It can create a work environment conducive to the retention of a diverse employee base with varying motivations. The obvious implication of this inclusiveness of diversity is that organizations will benefit from the advantages of retaining and capitalizing on a workforce with diverse ideas mirroring their diverse customer bases.

The seven factors identified above can be all largely can all be influenced, controlled, and affected by individual managers and supervisors who have the power and authority to affect the work environment and organizational climate. Department managers have direct control over their own reputation and integrity by keeping their promises to their employees and "walking the talk." Their behavior in alignment with their stated values and promises, their truthful answers to difficult questions, their ability to address difficult issues, and their open and honest communications, will lead their employees to trust in them and their leadership. So, too, will their ability to manifest support to employees, by backing them, sticking up for them in challenging times, and supporting their organizational, career, and educational aspirations.

Collaboration and innovation are both elements of organizational climate, which is impacted to the tune of 50 – 60% by a manager's style (controlled by the manager). The work climate, in turn, has been shown to have a 20 – 30% impact on the attainment of business results (refer to the Hay Acquisition Group's Four Circle Model), further underscoring a business case for focusing on these factors raised through the analysis of different Enneatypes' experiences and needs.

Somewhat out of a manager's direct scope of control is the ability to provide creative paid time off options. To accomplish this, managers will need to apply some of their innovation skills, problem-solving abilities, and influence on Human Resources policies to create satisfactory alternatives for employees.

In addition to the corporate focus on ensuring systems are in place to address these employee needs, organizations will also be tasked with developing and implementing selection and assessment criteria for supervisors, managers, and leaders emphasizing personal integrity, ability to be trusted, fair and just use of power, the ability to create and nurture a collaborative work environment, the ability to structure innovative and interesting work, and the capacity to support their employees.

Summary and Conclusion

Although the 2007 study did not yield support for all of its hypotheses, the statistically significant differences discovered among the various Enneagram types (and subsequent support of some of the hypotheses) reveal that some factors contributing to employee decisions to join, stay with, and leave their places of employment are not valued equally by all employees and that some of these variations in importance can be attributed to individual Enneagram type. The study also found that individuals do not value the same factors equally when having decided to join, remain with, or leave organizations. All the variables evaluated in this study were held in relatively high regard by all the study participants as being at least somewhat important in factoring into their decisions to join, stay with, or leave an organization, indicating employers should strive to ensure that these factors are as present as possible in their organizations. This is an important finding because it shows that people, regardless of Enneagram type, hold similar values when it comes to employment decisions; differences in Enneagram type do not mean that people differ in their perceptions and valuations of everything. However, the findings show that some Enneatypes value certain factors more than other Enneatypes when it comes to employment decisions.

The statistically significant differences found in several of the factors suggest that special attention should be paid by employers to these factors in order to ensure that they are attracting, retaining, and motivating the employees who are placing more value on them (and infer that, since they have been called out, organizations may not be doing a good job in ensuring that they are providing or nurturing these types of work environments).

Further research is called for, recruiting a larger sample size from corporate populations, to replicate these results and determine if and how the hypotheses are supported in a different realm. Also, the potential explanations provided for some of the phenomena reported need to be tested (i.e., the reasons for the statistically significant differences in the subtype attraction and retention experiences).

The study has shown that the Enneagram can help to explain some of the differences in employee work experiences and decisions to join, remain with, and leave organizations; its power must be tapped to create better, more satisfying, more productive, and more meaningful employment experiences for our organizations' "greatest assets" which will, in turn, translate into tremendous ROI dividends to employers who want to experience reduced turnover and all of its related benefits.
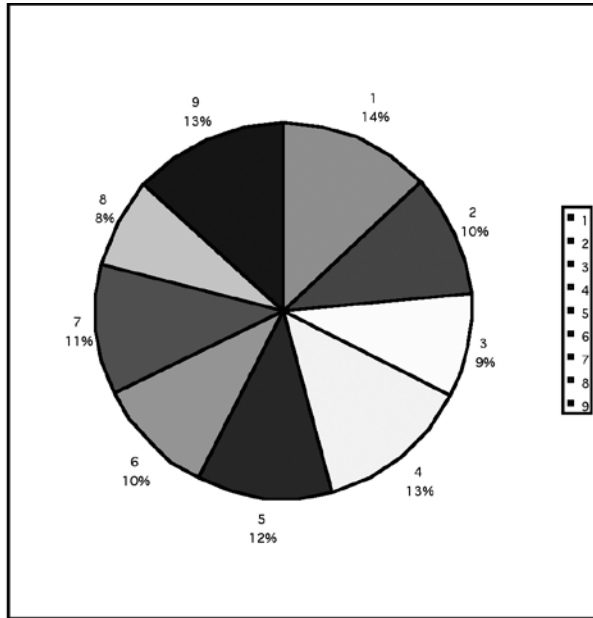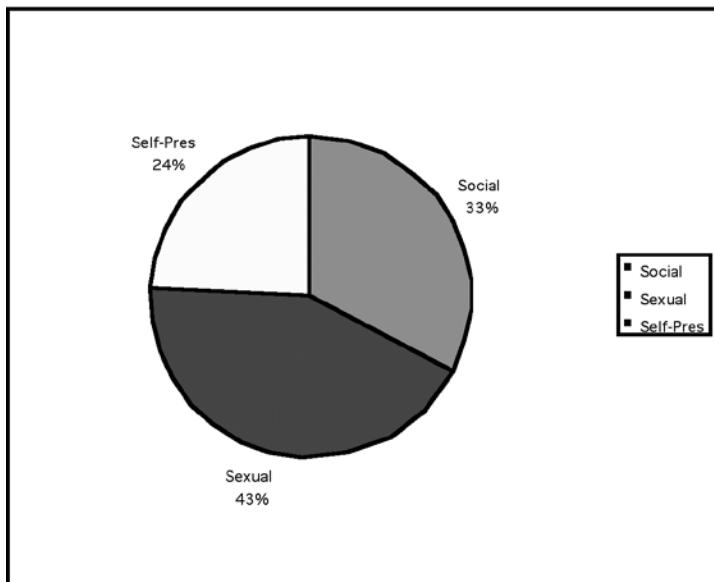
Table 3

Select Respondent Demographics

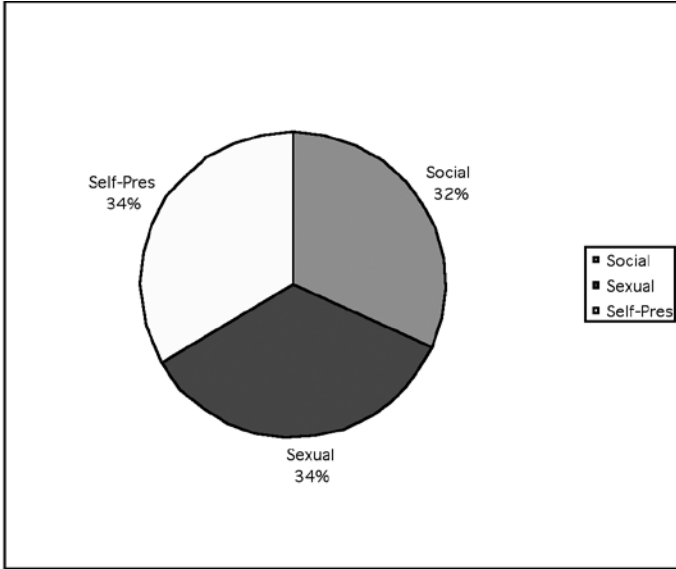| ENNEA-TYPE	# COLLECTED	# COMPLETE	% OF TOTAL	COMPLETION RATE	MEN	WOMEN
1	14	8	9.2%	57.1%	2	6
2	14	9	10.3%	64.3%	0	9
3	6	5	5.7%	83.3%	0	5
4	16	12	13.8%	75.0%	2	10
5	14	10	11.5%	71.4%	3	7
6	15	8	9.2%	53.3%	2	6
7	11	10	11.5%	90.9%	1	9
8	11	10	11.5%	90.9%	2	8
9	16	15	17.2%	93.8%	5	10
Unknown	2					
Unreported	26					
TOTAL	**145**	**87**	**100.0%**	**75.6%**	**17**	**70**
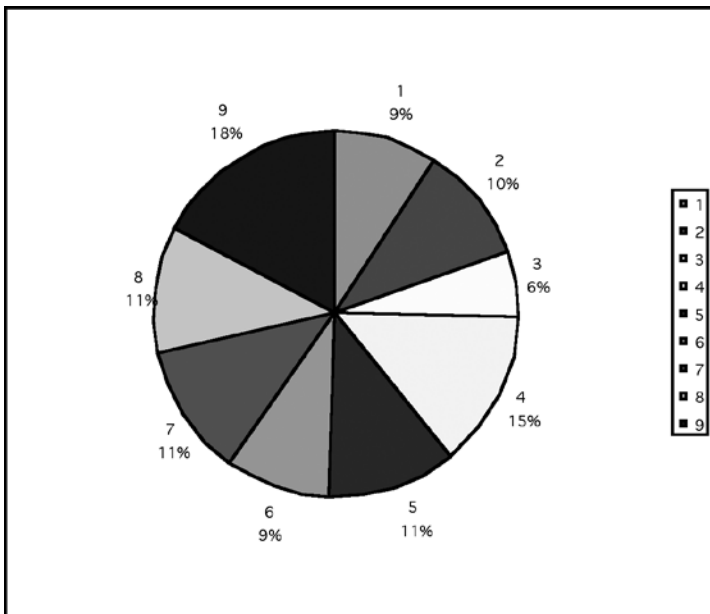
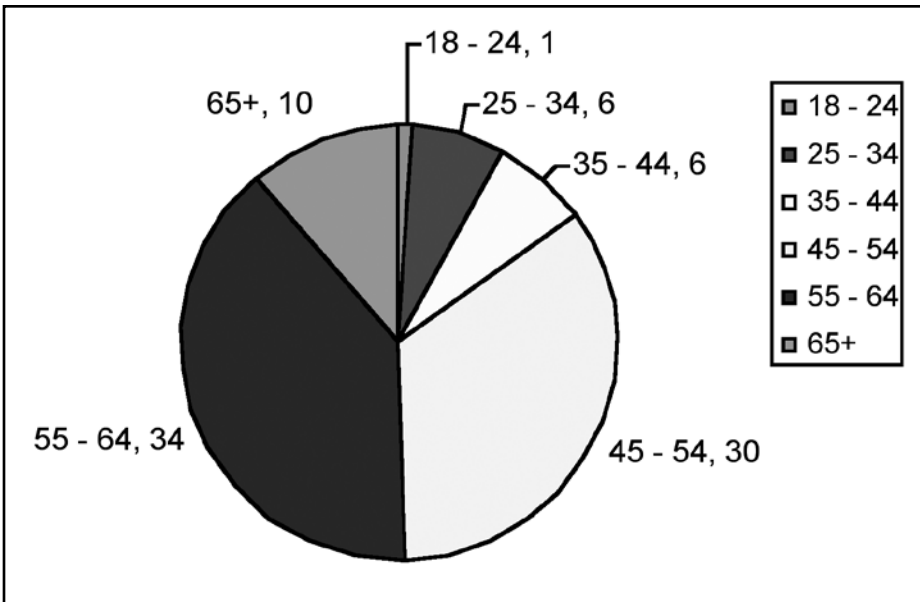*Survey Respondents*
Enneagram Type

**IEA Membership
Enneagram Type**

**Survey Respondents
Subtype**

***IEA Membership
Subtype***

***Age Range of
Survey Respondents***

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