



## The Process Enneagram™ A Tool from *The Leadership Dance* Part 2

By Richard N. Knowles

**Editor's Note:** When I spoke with Richard Knowles (who will be attending the Global MindChange Forum) last week, he mentioned that he had just come back from the Belle, WV DuPont chemical plant he used to manage.

"With the systems and principles that I described in my book, we raised plant profitability 300% and cut injuries by 98 percent."

Alone, that would be remarkable.

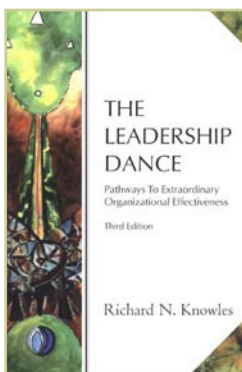
"And 10 years after I left, they are still operating at those same levels."

Deeply sustainable best business practices are rare as hen's tusks. As Richard explained it in terms of his Enneagram model, I believed his work so compelling that I want to share more of it with the Academy audience of executives and consultants.

Richard is an unusual person. An industrial chemist by training and practice, his conversation skips from Meg Wheatley's living systems to Ken Wilber's holonics to Ralph Stacey's complex responsive systems to Charles Krone's systems thinking to Gurdjieff and J.G. Bennett and beyond.

While these names do not trip off the tongues of his colleagues in industry, he has a more important message to them: "These ideas work... everywhere."

Three years after Love Canal became a national corporate and government scandal, DuPont sent Richard to run its troubled chemical plant in the same town, Niagara Falls, NY. To learn how he made it into a success, read [The Leadership Dance](#), or begin by visiting [www.centerforselforganizingleadership.com](http://www.centerforselforganizingleadership.com).



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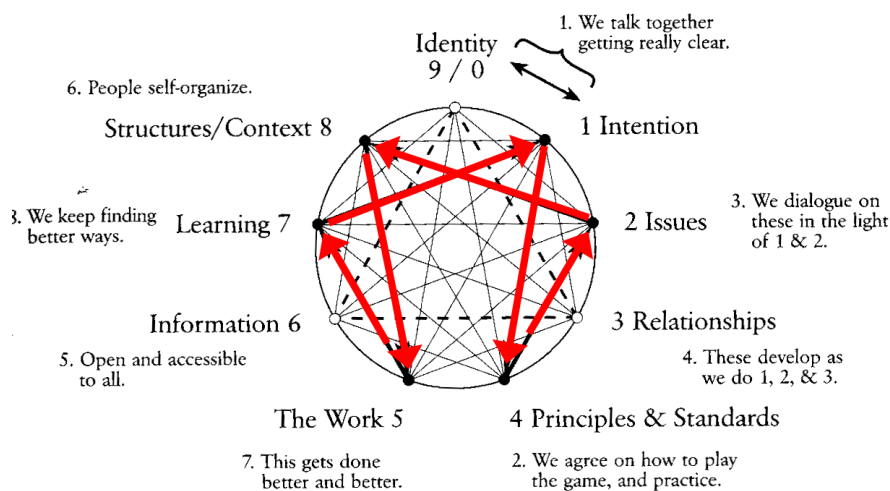
When people in an organization realize that they need and want to change, then together they must address these undiscussables and develop new Principles and Standards (new homeostatic processes). These must be put into place so the new behavior can be maintained in order to reach the new Intention. The new simple rules should be developed by the people themselves in conversation with, but not imposed by, management. In this process, Relationships strengthen. This is difficult work, so everyone must help each other through the process.

As people work together on the Issues, using the new Principles and Standards they've developed, a profound shift in Relationships occurs. Trust and interdependence begin to build as everyone learns to keep their word and commitments, to be willing and able to help each other, to do what they say they will do, to be there when they're needed, and to be dependable and reliable. This shows up at Step 4 in Figure 5.

One of the key things we agree to in our Principles and Standards is to share Information abundantly. This actual sharing of Information shows up in Step 5 in Figure 5. When the Information flows and the necessary work is done on our Identity, Intentions, Principles and Standards and Issues, people spontaneously self-organize around the needed Work. This shows up at Step 6 in Figure 5.

With this preparation, everyone can do the Work much more effectively and efficiently. This shows up at Step 7 of Figure 5. When we reflect on and re-view our Work, we Learn and find better ways to do things.

New potential and possibilities for the future open up. This shows up as Step 8 in Figure 5. Meaning and creativity emerge and performance improves enormously.



**Figure 5 ~ The Living Pattern and Process of How the Work Is Done**

The process by which we do the tasks before us in moving through the 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, 7, 1 sequence takes place in the here and now. This is the specific work before us that we need to accomplish for the organization to succeed. As we use the Process Enneagram in this way, our work tends to be of a local nature. Our tasks may be quite specific to a particular location and time or they may be of a more global nature in their potential impact. Most of the time, we do our work with only a small number of people, whether

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we're down deep in an organization or at the top. Most of my work with the Process Enneagram has been with small to medium sized groups. These have ranged from men working to make concrete bridge beams in Kansas City, to the top team of a large steel company in Australia, to the partners of a local accounting firm, to the Mayor and her leadership team in Niagara Falls, NY. In all these cases, the Process Enneagram work unfolds in similar ways with the people they are working most closely with. This is true regardless of whether the potential impact of the work of the group is quite local or quite broad. These patterns and processes apply to all levels of work, and are useful to everyone in the organization. The living systems patterns and processes are running all the time in organizations, whether people in the organizations recognize it or not. They are running in healthy as well as dying organizations. They are running in caring as well as brutal organizations, all the time.

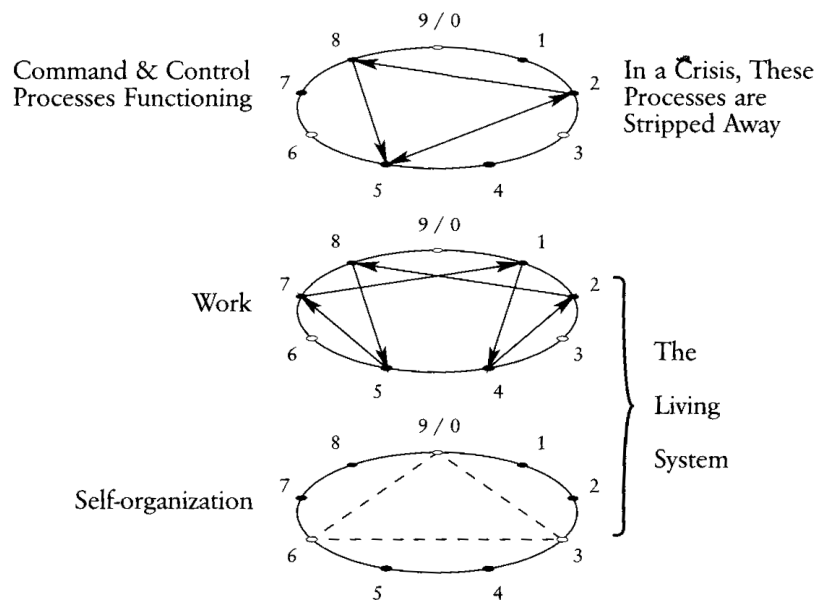
I mentioned earlier that the Process Enneagram should begin with a compelling question of importance to the group and organization. The Process Enneagram does not have much impact with very loose groups of people who do not have important issues in common. Teams and groups of people, like those I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, have many issues that are important to them. As people work closely with each other, they will have important issues that they share and on which they will want to work.

We can see what happens in a command and control organization when it is confronted with a crisis like those described in the stories in Chapter 1. We can visualize the command and control process, connecting the pattern of points 2, 8 and 5, as running on top of a set of multilayered processes which look something like a layer cake. The deeper, self-organizing processes are often invisible to those at the top. This may be what I've heard some people call "the shadow organization." It's

where the grapevines are running. It takes place in the little groups that form deep in the organization where people are trying to find refuge, to make sense of what's going on and do the work that needs to be done. Unfortunately, in many organizations, the command and control process has been pushed so far that many people become cynical, resulting in a shutdown of people's energy and creativity. Even so, the living systems processes are running, but they are weaker and more dysfunctional.

In an emergency, so many things happen so fast that management can no longer control the flow of events. Usually the command

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**Figure 6 ~ Simultaneous Processes of Living Systems: The Layer Cake**

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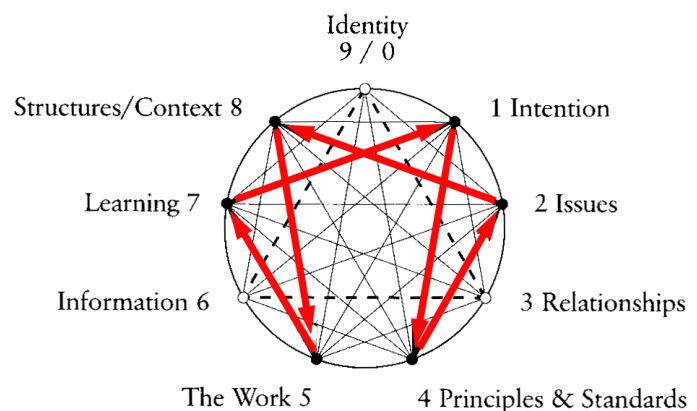
and control process is stripped away from the top of the layer cake, and the deeper, living systems patterns and processes emerge spontaneously. This profoundly influences the way people work together; they become much more focused and productive. In a real emergency, everyone knows who they are—we're flat on our backs (Identity at point 0), and what they need to do—get up and running again (Intention at point 1). The need to get up and running transcends their differences and people pull together in ways that no one imagined possible (Principles and Standards at point 4).

Everyone plows into all the issues facing him or her (Issues at point 2). Trust and interdependence build quickly (Relationship at point 3). Since all the information about the situation is visible (Information at point 6), people spontaneously self-organize (Structure and Context at point 8), do the work (Work at point 5), learn how to do it better (Learning at point 7) and keep going until the emergency is over (the new Identity at point 9). Everyone feels really good about how the work was done and how everyone came together, but as the flow of the events of the crisis slow down, management reasserts itself and the organization goes back to the old command and control paradigm.

If we can learn how to stay in the living systems processes, we don't have to go back to the old way. The shift away from command and control systems into living systems is illustrated in Figure 6.

With living systems patterns and processes, we can achieve superior results and people will feel better at the same time. We can have it all. These processes open up the flow of energy and creativity. The system (the people and the processes in the organization) becomes more coherent. Figure 7 shows the combined patterns of all 9 parts for both the processes of Self-Organization and for doing the Work. This is called the Process Enneagram; it describes the processes for living systems.

As we look at these figures, other important patterns emerge and inform us about what's happening in our organizations. These patterns are summarized in Figure 8 which shows the Self-Organizing Leadership processes that lead to coherence in the central column. It also shows the necessary balance between, and the interplay with, operational management processes on the left side and the strategic leadership processes on the right side. These patterns and processes are all within the Web. The Web is a way of seeing organizations as a whole. In the unity of the Web, we can see all the multiplicity of the leadership processes.



**Figure 7 ~ The Living Systems Patterns and Processes: The Process Enneagram**

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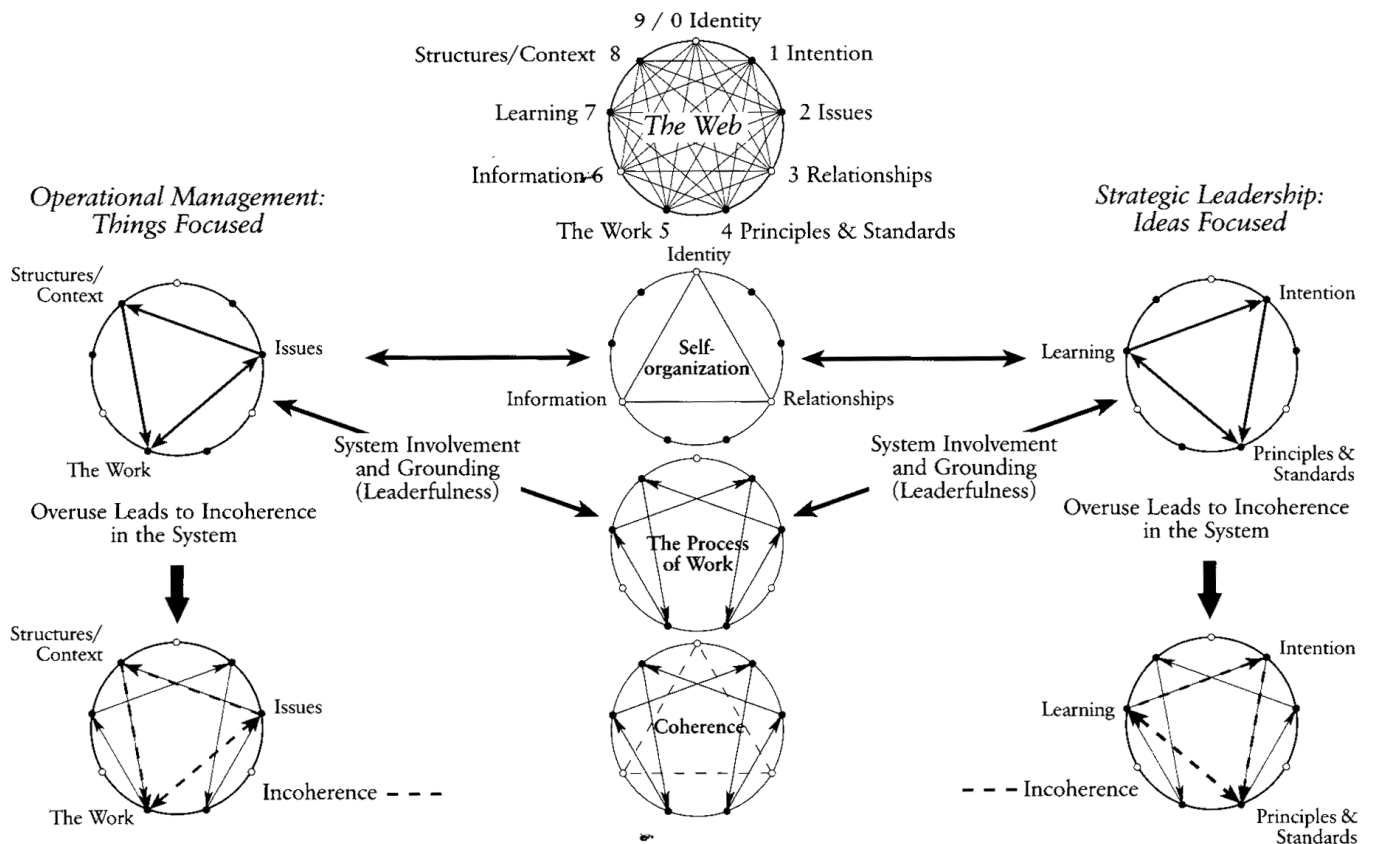
In this book, the term operational management speaks to working with specific things and events whether they are happening now or in the future. Strategic leadership relates to working on future possibilities. When I decide to work on one of the many possibilities and select one or two, I move from strategic leadership process into operational management and implementation. For example, when I'm playing around with the idea of traveling to new places, that would be strategic leadership. When I decide on a particular trip and begin the detailed planning, I've moved into operational management.

In actual practice, strategic and operational distinctions become blurred because of their endless interaction in the constantly changing world in which we live. Complexity theory teaches us that the old ways of strategic planning break down because of these complex interactions. Operational management, that is, working with things and events to make sure that things get done, and operational leadership, stepping out and taking the initiative to get things done (just get up, get going and do it) are intertwined. In this book, it's best to keep both these ideas in mind because operational work requires that both of them happen.

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## The Leadership Dance

In the complexity in which we live and work, it is necessary to constantly use both operational management and strategic leadership processes in



**Figure 8 ~ Overview of Living Systems Patterns and Processes: The Leadership Dance**

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dynamic balance with the central Self-Organizing Leadership processes for the organization to be coherent and to function well. In the center column of Figure 8 is the pattern for Self-Organization, Work and the Process Enneagram. If we overuse either the operational management or the strategic leadership processes, however, or fail to connect the self-organizing processes to real work of importance to the organization, we begin to create problems and drive the organization into incoherence.

Incoherence, caused by command and control or imposed processes, usually emerges around the Issues. It happens when what the management is saying doesn't make sense to those doing the Work. Incoherence in strategic leadership processes occurs when the leaders are restrictive, closed and exclusive. It shows up around Learning when the new Principles and Standards the leaders are preaching don't make sense to the people actually living in the system and trying to do the Work. The failure to connect self-organizing processes to work important to the organization leads to an excessive amount of time being spent going ever more deeply into the esoteric aspects of Identity, Relationship and Information. People take their eye off what the organization needs to do, so the work of the organization starts to degrade.

In these situations, the espoused values and principles of behavior the leaders preach, and those actually in use—the invisible undiscussables—are in deep conflict. This is the Management Trap as Chris Argyris describes it in his book, [\*Flawed Advice and the Management Trap\*](#). The defective practices described above show up in what he calls Model I organizations, and they are filled with all the problems and incoherence he describes.

Some of the characteristics of Model I organizations identified by Argyris are:

- management issues injunctions (the basic guidelines);
- they define goals and try to achieve them;
- they try to maximize winning and minimize losing;
- they want to minimize the generation or expression of negative feelings; and
- they want to be rational, objective and intellectual, suppressing feelings.

The managers in the organization seek to:

- design and manage the environment unilaterally;
- own and control the task;
- unilaterally protect themselves;
- unilaterally protect others from being hurt; and
- control others and prevent being controlled by them.

This results in managers running the risk of being seen as defensive and willing to have relationships with others colored by mistrust and rigidity; and having an organization where long-term learning and effectiveness are reduced.

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Many managers move into defensive routines where:

- they craft messages that contain ambiguities and/or inconsistencies;
- they act as if the messages are not inconsistent;
- they make ambiguity and inconsistency in the message undiscussable; and
- they make the undiscussability undiscussable.

So, as a result:

- it's impossible for the people in the organization to deal effectively with any subject; and
- the people feel it's unrealistic or dangerous to confront these patterns and do much about them...

... so many people become cynical.

A dynamic, healthy balance of the Strategic Leadership and Operational Management patterns and processes, centered on the Self-Organizing Leadership patterns and processes, needs to be our goal. The use of this dynamic, healthy interplay of these processes is what I've called the Leadership Dance.

The use of the Process Enneagram, as discussed here, is an effective way for the organization to become coherent. We begin to be more like what Argyris would describe as Model II organizations, where the espoused theory and the theories-in-use are more nearly the same. Model II organizations are characterized by having:

- valid information, informed choice, internal commitment, public testing of theories-in-use;
- clarity and the invitation to confront views and emotions, learning through confronting assumptions;
- respect;
- help and support;
- honesty—public verification; and
- integrity—the courage to invite the testing of ideas.

In order for the systems in our organizations to be healthy and vibrant, they must be centered in the Self-Organizing Leadership processes while simultaneously using the operational management and strategic leadership processes as the dynamic situations demand. In this way of leading, the organization is alive, vibrant and far from equilibrium with energy and creativity bubbling forth. Moving among Self-Organizing, Operational and Strategic modes of leadership is a dance. As our conditions and environmental context keep changing, the balance keeps shifting; it's the Leadership Dance. This places a demand on the leaders and all the other people in the organization to be more conscious and to pay careful attention to what's happening around them, both inside and outside the organization. Effective leaders engage the people in the organization to address the challenges they face, so this is not a case of dancing around the serious issues they face. Highly effective leaders know the Leadership Dance.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Dick Knowles**, a new member of the World Business Academy, worked in the DuPont Company for 37 years in many different leadership positions, including Plant Manager and Director of Community Outreach. He has had outstanding success in leading organizational change and making other leadership improvements while in DuPont and now as a world-known guide and teacher. He's worked extensively with people in steel mills, sugar mills, chemical plants, brick and tile factories, pipe and beam factories, wall board factories and quarries, an accounting firm, with the City of Niagara Falls, NY, with school boards, with children's homes and homes for the homeless, and in many other community efforts. His focus is helping people and their organizations achieve more effectively what they want to become. Over the six years, his work has carried him from the USA to Australia, New Zealand, China, Canada and the United Kingdom.

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