



# Driving Your Own Engagement

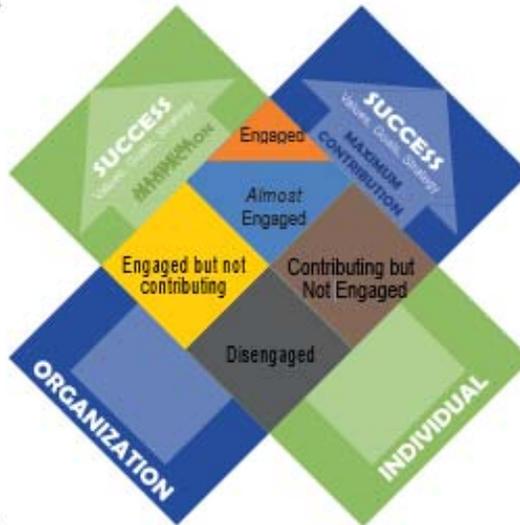
You spend thousands of hours each year on the job. It doesn't make sense to plod through them feeling miserable or undervalued. Sooner or later dissatisfaction at work will spill over to affect your personal life!

When you are engaged you have more great days at work. Your interests and those of the organization are aligned. The hours spent on the job build your skills and knowledge, use your talents, provide meaning, further your personal goals, and deliver on the organization's mission. It's a win-win.

But no one can *make* you engaged. Sure, leaders can create an inclusive, supportive workplace and act in a fair, trustworthy, and competent manner. They can be crystal clear on the organization's mission, values, and strategy — plus what type of contribution they need from you. But **your engagement, ultimately, is a personal equation.** It reflects your values, your talents, and your aspirations.

Taking control of your engagement requires insights, a plan, and action. This guide will help you with all three.

## 5 Levels of Engagement



Level	What this territory of the model feels like...
<b>Engaged:</b> High contribution and high satisfaction	You are at the apex, where the interests of the organization and you align. You are delivering peak performance <i>and</i> are finding great satisfaction at work. You are known for your discretionary effort (“giving 110 percent”) and commitment. This is where great days happen!
<b>Almost Engaged:</b> Medium to high contribution and satisfaction	You’re a high performer most of the time, and you’re reasonably satisfied with your job. You may not have consistent Great Days at Work, but you know what they look like. You’re probably content with the way things are, but might pursue another opportunity if it came up.
<b>Engaged but not Contributing</b> High satisfaction but low contribution	<p>You may be new to the organization or in a new role. It feels like a good fit, and you’re excited about the possibilities. You may not, however, clearly understand how you can best contribute to the organization’s goals. You have yet to hit your stride to deliver results.</p> <p>If you’re not new, then you may be coasting, enjoying your job but not working very hard. Sometimes that’s called “retired in place.” Another possibility: You are actually working hard but on the wrong things, in effect “spinning your wheels.” The demands of your job may have changed. In any of these situations, you’re not contributing fully.</p>
<b>Contributing but not Engaged</b> High contribution but low satisfaction	You are giving the organization what it needs but not achieving your personal definition of success. You may feel disillusioned with leadership decisions, stuck in a career rut, or just plain tired. You may even think that you’re working harder than everyone else. This can be a painful place, where it is hard to maintain peak performance.
<b>Disengaged:</b> Low satisfaction and contribution	When you are Disengaged: You’re clearly not getting what you want from work. The organization isn’t getting what it needs either. You are disconnected from organizational priorities and may feel underutilized. You may have “quit and stayed.” You don’t wake up with the intent of being a lackluster employee. Something is wrong with your engagement equation.

## Who Owns Engagement?

Engagement is part of everyone's job year-round. But it's not an easy job, because engagement is an individualized equation. We all come to work with a unique blend of values, talents, interests, and ambitions.

### Individuals: Ownership, Clarity, and Action

You need to know what you want — and what the organization needs — and then take initiative to achieve both sets of goals.

### Managers: Coaching, Relationships, and Dialogue

Managers must understand each employee's talents, interests, and needs — and then match those with the business priorities. At the same time, they need to create personal, trusting relationships, and discuss engagement often. If you are a manager, you need to be accountable for your own engagement as well as your team's!

### Executives: Trust, Communication, and Culture

Executives have to demonstrate consistency in words and actions, communicate a lot (and with a lot of depth), and align organizational practices and behaviors to achieve business results and employee engagement. If you are an executive, you have to master all three roles! Your own engagement is particularly important.

A dead battery cannot jump start another.

Fully engaged employees are committed, passionate, and proud. They have a clear understanding of your organization's mission and goals and a line of sight to their own careers. They are empowered to use their strengths, talents, and discretionary effort to make a difference in your organization's future.



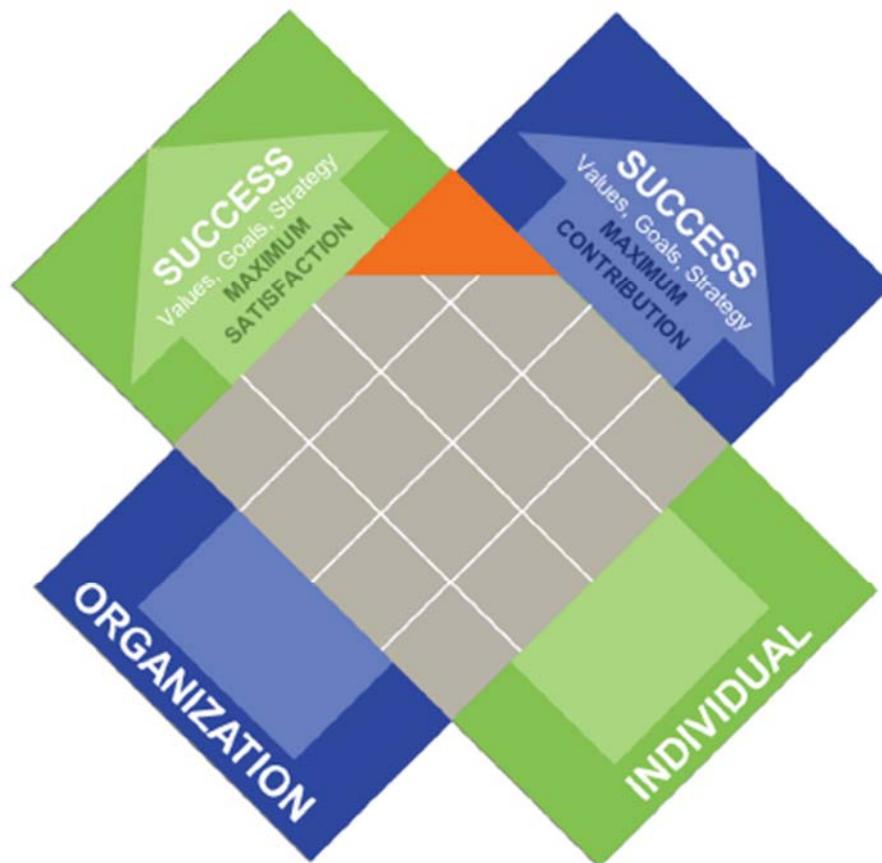
## Individual Assessment

Complete the exercise below to identify your starting point for taking control of your engagement.

### Where Are You?

Many factors influence whether you're engaged at any given time: events in your personal life, challenges in your job, changes within the organization, even world events. It's possible to feel fully engaged one day and disengaged a week later. Don't expect full engagement to just happen without you doing anything. But before you can take control, you need to assess where you are today. Think about the following questions and then plot yourself on the model below.

Work is the place where what *you* want and what the *organization* wants come together. For both, that intersection is most powerful at the peak of the model below — when you **achieve maximum satisfaction** and **deliver maximum contribution**. That's full engagement.



Explore the questions on page 6, then plot yourself on the model above.

## How is your Satisfaction?

Consider your **satisfaction** level, *mark yourself in the grid on the green arrow:*

- How did you feel about coming to work today?
- How well are your most important values being satisfied by what you do?
- Are you getting to do what you do best each day?
- Does your work **work** for you?

## How is your Contribution?

Consider your **contribution** level, *mark yourself in the grid on the blue arrow:*

- How clear are you on organizational priorities?
- Are you focused on what matters most to the organization?
- What stands in the way of maximum contribution?
- Does your work **work** for the organization?

## *Success: Identify Your Purpose*

### **What Is Your Purpose?**

Purpose does not have to be big; it can be simple, treasured moments in life. Think about what fuels you; what makes you feel good, and brings you natural joy (relationships, helping others, accomplishments, leading, etc.) What can you do to make an impact (even in a small way) each day? What gift do you have that you can share with others (knowledge, time, consideration, skill, empathy, hospitality, experience—all?)

## *What are your core values?*

### Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest

Find examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers.

- What were you doing?
- Were you with other people? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your happiness?

### Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud

Use examples from your career and personal life.

- Why were you proud?
- Did other people share your pride? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

### Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied

Again, use both work and personal examples.

- What need or desire was fulfilled?
- How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfillment?

## Step 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfillment

Why is each experience truly important and memorable? Use the following list of common personal values to help you get started – and aim for about 10 top values. (As you work through, you may find that some of these naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your top values.)

Accountability	Creativity	Fitness	Loyalty	Service
Accuracy	Curiosity	Fluency	Making a difference	Shrewdness
Achievement	Decisiveness	Focus	Mastery	Simplicity
Adventurousness	Democraticness	Freedom	Merit	Soundness
Altruism	Dependability	Fun Goodness	Obedience	Speed
Ambition	Determination	Grace	Openness	Spontaneity
Assertiveness	Devoutness	Generosity	Order	Stability
Balance	Diligence	Growth	Originality	Strategic
Being the best	Discipline	Happiness	Patriotism	Strength
Belonging	Discretion	Hard Work	Perfection	Structure
Boldness	Diversity	Health - Physical	Piety	Success
Calmness	Dynamism	Health - Emotional	Positivity	Support
Carefulness	Economy	Helping Society	Practicality	Teamwork
Challenge	Effectiveness	Holiness	Preparedness	Temperance
Cheerfulness	Efficiency	Honesty	Professionalism	Thankfulness
Clear-mindedness	Elegance	Honor	Prudence	Thoroughness
Commitment	Empathy	Humility	Quality-orientation	Thoughtfulness
Community	Enjoyment	Independence	Reliability	Timeliness
Compassion	Enthusiasm	Ingenuity	Resourcefulness	Tolerance
Competitiveness	Equality	Inner Harmony	Restraint	Traditionalism
Consistency	Excellence	Inquisitiveness	Results-oriented	Trustworthiness
Contentment	Excitement	Insightfulness	Rigor	Truth-seeking
Continuous	Expertise	Intelligence	Security	Understanding
Improvement	Exploration	Intellectual Status	Self-actualization	Uniqueness
Contribution	Expressiveness	Intuition	Self-control	Unity
Control	Fairness	Joy	Selflessness	Usefulness
Cooperation	Faith	Justice	Self-reliance	Vision
Correctness	Family-orientedness	Leadership	Sensitivity	Vitality
Courtesy	Fidelity	Legacy	Serenity	
		Love		

## Step 5: Prioritize your top values

This step is probably the most difficult, because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also the most important step, because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must know which value is more important to you.

Write down your top values, not in any particular order.

Look at the first two values and ask yourself, "If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?" It might help to visualize a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do valuable foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home. Keep working through the list, by comparing each value with each other value, until your list is in the correct order.

Tip: If you have a tough time doing this, consider using [Paired Comparison Analysis](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_85.htm) to help you. With this method, you decide which of two options is most important, and then assign a score to show how much more important it is. Since it's so important to identify and prioritize your values, investing your time in this step is definitely worth it.

[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED\\_85.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_85.htm)

## Step 6: Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself.

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular, and it puts you in the minority?

## Assess and Reshape Job Conditions

Complete this exercise to reflect on your job fit and determine changes that might increase your satisfaction and contribution. Periodically come back to this exercise to take a look at what you like and don't like about your job. Decide what you'd like to change. Then take action.

### Do Your Job Conditions Support Your Best Work?

Jobs in themselves are neither satisfying nor dissatisfying. Two people in identical jobs can feel very differently about them because they have different values, interests, and talents. Ideally, your job should offer conditions under which you do your best work—and thrive. There may be some things that you will never be able to change. Other aspects of your job may represent low-hanging fruit that, if altered, can increase your satisfaction and contribution.

1. Create a current job profile by selecting the appropriate option in each pair of statements to describe your current job. For example, if your job has some flexibility in terms of hours, you would put an X in the middle of the continuum.

	Highly Describ					Highly Describ	
1. Flexible work hours							Well-defined work hours
2. Attention to detail required							Big picture, conceptual focus required
3. High level of decision-making authority							Limited decision-making authority
4. Considerable contact with external customers							Little contact with external customers
5. Frequent communication with manager							Infrequent communication with manager
6. Work closely with others; teamwork and collaboration needed							Work mostly alone; independence needed
7. Low risk, low likelihood of failure							High risk, high challenge
8. Lots of travel, overnights							Little travel, rarely out of the local area
9. Frequent new assignments; quick turnarounds							Projects with long time frames
10. High visibility to senior management							Low visibility to senior management
11. High structure; goals and procedures established by others							Low structure; I establish my own goals and methods
12. Manage people; team leader							Does not manage people; independent contributor

2. Star (\*) up to 2 conditions that most support your satisfaction and contribution.

3. Circle up to 2 conditions that most interfere with your satisfaction and contribution.

What do you need to maintain or change to create an environment in which you do your best work?

What do you want to maintain or change to ensure job satisfaction?

What can you do tomorrow to maintain the conditions you starred or change the conditions you circled?

What can you do on your own?

What do you need to tell your manager? (For example, does he or she know which conditions support your best work? If not, your manager might make a decision that inadvertently hurts your job satisfaction and contribution.)

What kind of help do you need from your managers or others?

## *Are you working on the most important priorities?*

Complete this exercise to make sure that you are focusing on what matters most to the organization. Do this once a quarter, especially if organizational priorities seem to have shifted or your to-do list is over-flowing and you aren't sure which tasks are most critical.

### **Where Is Your Focus?**

Your job is the place where your interests and the organization's intersect. It's not enough to be clear on what you want. Full engagement and great days at work are about getting the most that you can while giving the most of what the organization needs.

Your contribution depends on:

- Knowing where your team and the organization are headed
- Understanding how your role fits in
- Having the resources and support you need
- Understanding what is most important now

Answer the questions below and follow up with your manager to make sure your perception matches his or hers.

What are your top 3 priorities for the next 3 months? Are you clear on how they support the overall organizational strategy?

What additional information do you need about where you should focus?

What stands in the way of success in accomplishing your priorities? What else do you need?

## *Use and Build on Your Talents to Increase Engagement*

Complete this exercise to increase your awareness of your talents and ensure that you are using – and developing them – as much as possible.

### **What Do You Have to Offer?**

Your organization needs your skills, knowledge, and experience to help reach its goals. If you're like many people, you benefit from using your talents as well. Research indicates that being able to do what you do best on the job increases job satisfaction. And successful careers are built on talents.

Some skills and knowledge, however, are more important than others to achieving the results that the organization needs.

List your talents below. As you do, consider what expertise sets you apart from the rest.

Job-specific skills and knowledge (i.e., what you can do and what you know, like technical skills and industry knowledge).

Common work skills and competencies (i.e., how you get your work done — through communication, personal leadership, customer focus, project management).

 **Star** the talents above that are being *fully utilized* in support of your work priorities.  **Circle** those that are *underutilized*. This is a good topic to talk to your manager about.

## How Can You Build Your Talents?

Pick one skill or area of knowledge that you'd like to build. Choose a skill or area of knowledge that:

- Is most critical to the achievement of your work priorities
- Has the greatest potential for increasing your satisfaction
- Will become increasingly important for the organization
- Will, if developed further, increase your effectiveness or equip you for future roles

List all the things that you might do to develop this skill or increase this knowledge. Review the development ideas below if you aren't sure where to begin. Brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Things You Can Do to Build Any Skill		
<p><b><i>Get Additional Ideas</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss techniques with someone who excels in the skill; ask him or her to coach you.</li> <li>• Ask your manager, a mentor, or trusted colleague for specific feedback on areas for development.</li> <li>• Review past events; ask yourself and those around you what you should do differently going forward to achieve a better result.</li> <li>• Read. Business books and articles abound on “how-to’s” and personal development.</li> <li>• Network. Most professional organizations have regular meetings for members to share best practices and learn about relevant, interesting topics.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Practice</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply newly acquired skills or knowledge as soon as possible.</li> <li>• When mistakes happen, focus on the lessons learned and what you can do differently next time.</li> <li>• Try out your new skill in a “safe” or low-risk environment first, perhaps outside of work with family or friends or in social organizations.</li> <li>• Volunteer for projects or accept stretch goals that will challenge you to master the skill.</li> <li>• Volunteer for projects outside of work where you can apply new skills.</li> <li>• Role play using the skill with a colleague and provide each other with constructive feedback.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Use It More</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach or mentor others in this area.</li> <li>• Give a presentation at new-hire orientation sessions or professional association meetings.</li> <li>• Lead a workshop or an informal brown-bag lunch session for colleagues.</li> <li>• Write an article on the topic for your organization’s newsletter or an industry magazine.</li> <li>• Volunteer to take over a problem area or project that will benefit from your talent.</li> </ul>

## Engagement Conversation Planner

Make notes on the questions you want to ask or the information you want to share. During the discussion, you can add notes or comments.

### Opening

Begin by expressing appreciation for your manager's time and explaining the purpose of the discussion. You might say something like:

*"Thanks for meeting with me today. I know you're really busy. This conversation is a chance for me to clarify my top priorities and ensure that my work supports your overall goals for our team. I also want to share a bit about what energizes me, what challenges me, and aspects of my work that, if altered, would help me do my best work. I have some ideas about how to increase my contribution and also my satisfaction on the job. I look forward to hearing your ideas, too."*

### Contribution

Select a few questions below to help clarify what maximum contribution looks like. If you need help in delivering results, this is the time to bring up the subject. If you have ideas for how to approach your work more effectively, make sure to share them.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you talk a bit about how our work fits with the current company (or department) goals?</li><li>• Where do you think I should focus my efforts in the next few months (or weeks)?</li><li>• What challenges do you anticipate we'll have?</li><li>• What else do you need me to do to support you?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your understanding of your top 3 short-term priorities.</li><li>• Key milestones or measures that may need clarification.</li><li>• Upcoming challenges you anticipate.</li><li>• Ideas about how your manager might coach or support you in increasing your contribution.</li></ul>

## Satisfaction

Select a few questions and comments below. Don't make this a data dump on everything you wish to have in your job! Be strategic – and selective. Clarify any vague manager comments with questions like: "Can you give me an example of 'too much'?" "When you say 'often', do you mean every day? Every week?"

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When, in your opinion, do I look most satisfied?</li> <li>• What kind of conditions do you think favor my best work?</li> <li>• When do you worry about my engagement? (What is it that I do or say?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The type of assignment that energizes you most</li> <li>• What you like most about your job</li> <li>• What drags you down</li> <li>• What change in your job would most improve your satisfaction</li> <li>• Additional ideas you have for increasing your satisfaction</li> <li>• What coaching or support you need from your manager to increase your satisfaction</li> </ul>

## Talent Utilization and Development

This is not the time to ask for performance feedback or debate skill level. It's unlikely you will have the time to discuss your development in depth. Your goal here is to plant the seed for future development or career conversations. Select a few questions below to understand your manager's perspective. Share your observations as well.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What knowledge or skills do you think are most important for achieving my current priorities?</li> <li>• What strengths do you think I tend to overlook?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those of your talents may be under-utilized.</li> <li>• Where you would like to grow this year?</li> <li>• Where you think you need to develop to achieve your priorities?</li> <li>• What ideas you have for development?</li> <li>• What kind of coaching or support you need from your manager?</li> </ul>

## Working Together

Select a few questions below to make sure that you have all the information you need to build an even stronger partnership with your manager.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How would you describe your work style?</li><li>• What challenges do you face as a manager?</li><li>• What would you like me to do more of?</li><li>• What would you like me to do less of?</li><li>• What else should I know about how you like to work – or how you like work to get done?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Challenges you have faced.</li><li>• Your understanding of your manager's work style (to confirm).</li><li>• Any questions you've been wondering about for a long time now.</li><li>• Your one or two "hot buttons" – things that upset or stress you at work (which your manager probably doesn't know).</li><li>• Suggestions you have for improving efficiency and/or effectiveness.</li></ul>

## Closing

- Thank your manager for his or her honesty, especially if you uncovered differences or heard unwelcome information.
- Summarize agreements made and any areas that need to be discussed more.
- Review next steps: Who does what by when? (You should have more to-do's! It's your engagement. However, your manager should be supporting you.)
- Schedule another conversation if appropriate.
- Express appreciation for the manager's time.
- Articulate your commitment to working together to achieve great days at work.

## Tips for a successful conversation

- Prepare.
- Have patience.
- Project a positive attitude.
- Listen actively.
- Be open to feedback.
- Position your ideas in a way that is “win-win.”
- Show that although this is your meeting, you’ve considered your manager’s issues. Think about what’s in it for your manager. (Get what you need by giving your manager what he or she needs.)
- Paraphrase your manager’s statements to ensure understanding. If necessary, ask for specific examples or use clarifying questions to make sure you really understand your manager’s point of view.
- Stay on track. Do not let the discussion drift into unrelated topics.
- Have a strategy for the session. Strategy is all about how you align what you want (personal goals, satisfaction, meaningful work, growth, feeling valued) with what your manager wants (results, engaged team members, fewer headaches). This conversation should be good for both of you.
- Be clear about what you want to accomplish. What’s the one most important outcome you want to achieve? What one clear message do you want to convey?
- Anticipate possible challenges and how to handle them.

### Nervous? 5 Reasons to Talk to Your Manager Anyway

Are you concerned that you don’t have an effective coaching relationship with your manager? Here are a few reasons for talking to him or her anyway:

- Your manager benefits when team members like you are more engaged and is likely to welcome the conversation.
- Your manager isn’t a mind reader. He or she may not know what you need.
- Some managers are uncomfortable with coaching conversations. Your manager might appreciate your taking the first step in clarifying what he or she needs from you and what you need from him.
- The Resource Guide on the engagement home page contains tips and tools for managers to use in talking about engagement. You can refer your manager to this resource to increase his or her comfort level.
- You will never get what you want if you don’t ask.

## *Talking About Engagement on the Run*

If you have 5-10 minutes for a quick check-in, choose one of the topics below to discuss with your manager. Regular dialogue creates a common language, a short-hand for discussing engagement while at the same time staying focused on the work that needs to be done.

### *Share Information*

#### **Satisfaction**

- What aspect of this project (or type of assignment) energizes you most?
- What you like most about this project or your job?
- What drags you down?

#### **Contribution**

- Confirmation of how your job fits with the organization's current strategy.
- Confirmation of where you should focus your time and effort.
- Update on your challenges.

#### **Talent Utilization and Development**

- What skills and knowledge you would like to use more?
- Where you would like to grow?
- Where you think you need to grow to do your job better?

#### **Working Together**

- Ideas you have for increasing your satisfaction and contribution.
- Ideas you have for increasing the team's overall satisfaction and contribution.
- Ideas on what you think you can start doing, stop doing, continue doing.
- Suggestions for your manager on what he or she might start doing, stop doing, continue doing.
- A special quality or recent accomplishment can you recognize in your manager.

### *Don't Forget to Ask Questions*

- How have organizational and team priorities shifted?
- What opportunities exist for development?
- What is your manager most excited about?
- What are your manager's biggest challenges or concerns?

## *Commit to Action: What You Can Do*

Complete this exercise after you have finished the previous exercises and whenever you are feeling less engaged and feel the need to regain control. Everyone can do something to achieve more great days at work — no matter what others do or don't do. What are you waiting for?

Once you assess where you are, consider:

- What do you need to sustain if you think you are engaged now?
- What's getting in the way of maximum satisfaction and contribution if you are not fully engaged? A project? Lack of resources? Lack of information? Other employees? Your manager? Your personal life? Your health? Organizational changes?
- Have you really considered what you are doing to support or sabotage great days?

Next consider:

- What do you have control over?
- What can you influence?

Finally make a plan. List ideas for what you can start, stop, or continue doing to:

- Respond to things out of your control or influence
- Change your own words and actions
- Change aspects of your job
- Gain or maintain support from your manager, employees, or friends and family