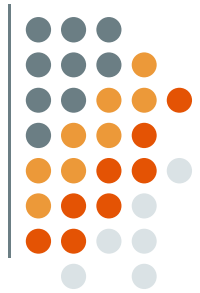


# Competing Commitments

## Worksheet

A simple but revealing thought process for uncovering competing commitments that may be inhibiting action on desired outcomes. Adapted from Kegan & Lahey's, "How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work.", 2001 and their HBR article, [The Real Reason People Won't Change](#).



Commitment	Observed Behavior	Competing Commitment	Big Assumption
<b>I/we are committed to the value or importance of...</b>	<b>Yet there are things we are doing or not doing that prevent that commitment from being fully realized, such as....</b>	<b>Therefore, I/we may also be committed to...</b>	<b>Because I assume that...</b>
<i>Example: I am committed to accountability and clear priorities for my staff</i>	<i>I find I am often too busy to have goal-setting conversations</i>	<i>Keeping expectations flexible and a little vague</i>	<i>If everything were spelled out, my staff might only do the minimum and not stretch</i>

### Using the Worksheet:

**1. Commitment:** List one or several commitments you have made but have not been able to execute as effectively or consistently as you want.

**2. Behavior:** Identify the behavior that seems to be getting in the way. Be as honest and nonjudgmental as you can – solicit frank input from others, recall actual experiences or feedback.

**3. Competing Commitment:** Ask yourself what hidden competing commitment might be reflected by your behavior. Without judging, consider that on some level your behavior is accomplishing something you need or want.

**4. Big Assumption:** Ask yourself what assumptions about yourself or the world support your competing commitment. In what way does your commitment actually make perfect sense?

**5. Working with Assumptions:** Re-consider your assumption. Don't throw it out, just observe how it guides your decisions or actions. See whether it needs refining. You might try:

- Reflecting on experiences that taught you that the assumption was true. Is there a better interpretation? Have you had other experiences that imply other conclusions?
- Conduct experiments or tests to see whether it holds true. For example, try clarifying expectations with one employee and see the impact on flexibility.
- Ask yourself – How might I refine the assumption to allow for both/and? Eg, how might one achieve clear expectations AND flexibility? What would it take?