

# 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.



Commitment	Behavior	Competing Commitment	Big Assumption
<b>I am committed to the value or importance of...</b>	<b>What I am doing or not doing that prevents my commitment from being fully realized</b>	<b>I may also be committed to...</b>	<b>I assume that if...</b>
Example: <i>I am committed to clearer contracting with my employees, so they know what I expect.</i>	<i>I often find I'm too busy to have developmental meetings, or there are more pressing topics for discussion than clarifying roles and expectations.</i>	<i>Keeping expectations ambiguous.</i>	<i>If expectations were specified in detail, it would reduce flexibility and freedom to innovate.</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?