



# Are You Engaged?

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At times during your career, things may not go your way. You may be struggling to find a new job, or you may be dissatisfied with your current job or with the way your career is developing. When your professional expectations go unmet like this, there's a natural tendency to disengage, to unplug. You go through the motions, but part of your mind is elsewhere, unfocused.

## Why Your Head Should Be in the Game

When you aren't fully engaged, your efforts are scattered. You don't do your best, which hurts you, your employer, your colleagues and your clients. Your personal life suffers. You're not using your talents to their fullest. You're wasting time and are unproductive. You aren't making a difference. In short, you're sabotaging your career.

We all have days when our motors don't run at full speed. That's fine. However, you should be concerned with identifying if you are habitually disengaged, and if so, resolve to snap out of it.

## Diagnose Yourself

Here are some statements to test whether your head is really in the game or not:

- I am dissatisfied with my work situation, and I haven't done anything concrete to resolve it.
- I tend to complain, put the blame on others or have a cynical attitude.
- I have one foot out the door, keeping my options open, but never acting on them.
- I jump from job to job or assignment to assignment without really settling or making a difference.
- My performance barely meets expectations, or worse.
- My mind wanders during my workday, and I have trouble focusing and delivering on projects and responsibilities.
- I feel bested or outclassed by colleagues or customers when I'm discussing work-related things. I don't have a lot to say.
- My presentation is weak, sloppy or lacking direction.
- I don't have a plan as to what my next steps are.

## Change and Engage

If you answered yes to one or more of the above statements, you can take some immediate steps to correct the situation. Here are some things you can do today to get engaged:

- Change your attitude. A reality check can do wonders in changing behavior.
- Throw yourself into your work or job search. Do your best. Immerse yourself and see what happens.
- Identify what motivates you and see if you can inject more of those motivations into what you do.



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- Find the good in your situation. What can you identify about your job or situation that is positive? Be thankful for what you have.
  - Identify the key success criteria for you, your employer, your colleagues and your customers. Focus on how you can be successful in the current environment.

### **Strategies for Lasting Change**

Here are some ideas to build on the change you've put into motion so you can turn yourself into a rousing success story.

- If you make a change, do it with determination, passion and focus.
- Adjust your expectations. Goals can be energizing if we actively pursue them, or a real drag on our energy when we keep them alive without making progress toward fulfilling them. Resolve to pursue those goals that mean something to you and dump the rest.
- Get help. If you recognize a long-standing pattern of behavior and believe that its roots run deeper than career-management issues, seek qualified, professional help.

### **Special Advice for Job Seekers**

As a job seeker, you need to be engaged on at least two levels. Obviously, the first level is applying focused determination to the job search process. The second level is less obvious. You must demonstrate that you are fully engaged in your industry, profession or particular specialty.

People who are engaged are focused and committed. Being engaged requires consistent, daily resolve to back it up. Not being engaged is self-sabotage. You need to get in the game.

*By Ian Christie*

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*[Ian Christie founded [BoldCareer.com](http://BoldCareer.com) to help individuals build bold, fulfilling careers and help organizations attract, develop and retain talent. A career coach, consultant, three-time entrepreneur, former senior director at Monster and former retained executive search consultant, Ian is an expert in the fields of careers and recruitment. He believes that career management is a central theme to both personal and organizational effectiveness. BoldCareer.com offers career services to companies and individuals as well as free career resources.]*

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