

# Should you engage with your company beyond your job description?

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Benefits abound when organizations fully engage their employees. Deeply involved employees are more efficient—working longer hours and going beyond what is asked— and, organization-wide, engaged personnel directly impact financial results. A Towers Perrin study found a 6% higher profit margin in companies with engaged staff, while Gallup reported higher employee engagement scores positively correlate with increased earnings per share.

So, while organizations clearly benefit from more involved employees, as an employee, you might question what you get out of it by getting more deeply engaged with your employer.

Should you do it? Why should you? And when?

Well, yes, I believe you should. Let me first define what I mean by being engaged. Then I can show you what has to be in place before you can experience deeper engagement.

By engagement, I mean an emotional commitment you make to your organization and its objectives. Your job description does not include this. No one can impose it on you, and, typically, you cannot be fooled into it. This is what makes you go that extra mile. Be quicker. Think company. Think clients. This commitment definitely means better customer service, higher client satisfaction, and ultimately higher profits for your organization.



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## But what is in it for you?

As with all emotional commitments, your rewards are typically also emotional and sometimes material, like when you share in your company's profits or it has a scheme to incentivize you to get more involved. Essentially, your employer needs to promote initiatives leading to better service to clients and creating more visibility for employees who go that extra mile. While you cannot be fooled into engagement, your company can reach out to you, transparently, to incentivize deeper commitment.

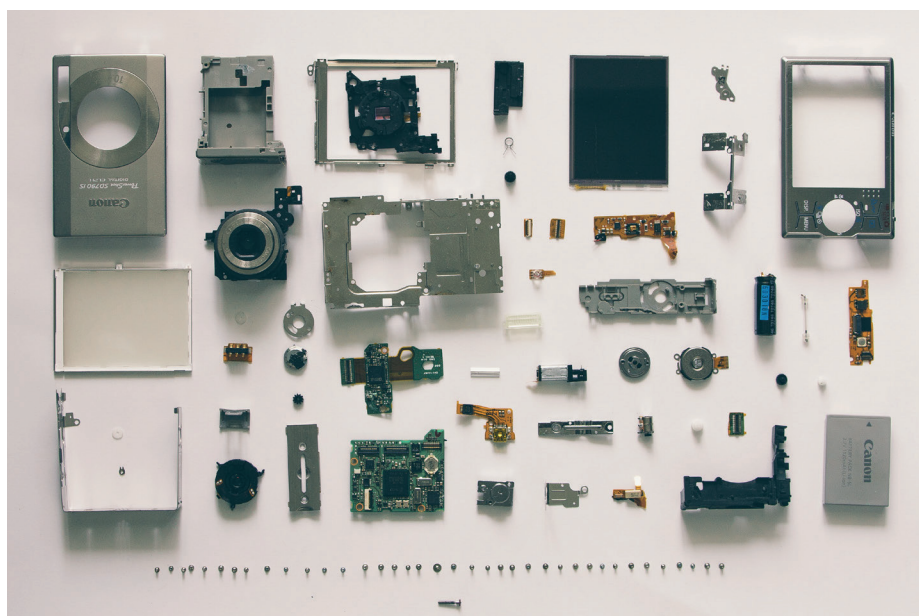
So, if you actively espouse your company's mission and values and it has plans in place to recognize your commitment, then

you can actually find a lot in it for you. More happiness at work. More visibility. New discussion forums and relationships. More visibility among management and peers. New career opportunities. Work becomes fun and rewarding.

## More than “doing your job”

What I am suggesting is this: while it is great if you selflessly engage beyond the call of duty, your company cannot expect you to get involved (commit emotionally) unless they develop schemes to incentivize your engagement.

How you espouse your company’s goals has to match your personality and preferences and the people you work with, including management and corporate culture. Without this, you can move from one job to the other—looking for a place that offers more fulfilling projects than just “doing your job.” Typically, you cannot control these factors, except by looking for another job in another company. But once you have made a choice, your company can further motivate you to show your commitment—through tools and incentives.



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## Management tools to make engagement truly rewarding

Here are some management tools that I suggest have to be in place before your engagement can truly be rewarding:

**Access** | Someone has to care, and you need to know you can make a difference. For this, you have to see that you gain visibility, that you can have an impact, and that your company makes decisions transparently. If this is not in place, then your commitment cannot really be significantly rewarded or recognized. You need to find online forums, company events, and other internal communication initiatives that celebrate engaged employees.

**Contribute** | If you believe your company cares, then you need to start contributing. You have to find a way to do this—by identifying specific problems that should be resolved, suggesting ways to meet known challenges, and sharing experiences of what has and has not worked for specific project, which benefits similar projects elsewhere in the organization. The more geographically dispersed and international your company is, the greater the value generated from this sharing of experiences. Contributing is a reward in itself, but you know you contribute more if the right incentives are in place.

**Work collaboratively** | You need to have some way to make things actually happen. Work collaboratively to build an idea or project. Dedicate some of your extra time to projects you believe make a difference and where you can make a difference. You need to show you want to work on projects, prefer certain tasks, and have a way of making things happen. For this, you most likely need an online collaboration tool and engagement processes in place, with plenty of leeway to get involved outside your usual circles and dedicate some of your time to other groups in the organization.

For each collaborative effort you join, the company has to make the objective clear—through internal communication, leadership examples and “C-level” commitment and sponsorship.

Your organization needs to devise incentives for the behaviors being promoted. Perhaps you can use virtual currency to track your participation. Your company karma can be publicized. You need to win prizes that make a difference to you, or you can give them to someone else you choose. And it should be fun. Your company can gamify processes and allow employees to face challenges like winning a game, completing a puzzle, or reaching a leaderboard.

You cannot commit emotionally to an organization if you do not share its values and culture. Companies cannot expect more commitment from you, unless they first put in place mechanisms that incentivize your commitment.

You choose the company you work for, but your company chooses if they really want to keep you fully engaged.