



REAL LIFE OPTIMIZATION TRAINING WHITE PAPER

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WHITE PAPER

First revealed in the 1999 bestseller *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* (by Marcus Buckingham and Curtis Coffman), Gallop Consulting identified 12 questions that measure **employee engagement** and its ability to predict relevant business outcomes, including productivity, profitability, retention, and customer satisfaction.

The instrument (now known as the Q¹²)¹ was the result of hundreds of focus groups and interviews, and its validity has continued to be tested and confirmed (as of 2008) against data collected in 45 languages from:

- 6.1 million employees
- 759,000 workgroups
- 542 organizations
- 17 major industries
- 7 major world regions
- 163 countries

Comparisons of employee engagement scores reveal that those organizations with high Q¹² scores exhibit higher sales growth, better productivity, lower turnover, better customer loyalty and other indicators of superior performance.

Gallop's research concludes that most workers are not engaged in *or are actively disengaged from* their work. Comparing the three alternative classes:

- **ENGAGED** employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their companies. They drive innovation and move their organizations forward.
- **PASSIVELY DISENGAGED** employees are just "going through the motions" rather than directing energy or passion into their work. They essentially "clock-in and clock-out" and accept a check for maintaining their positions.
- **ACTIVELY DISENGAGED** employees are unhappy with their work and actively undermine organizational performance. It may be blatant, but many times, it is done in a surreptitious manner.

Recent surveys indicate that approximately 28% of employees are Engaged, 54% are Passively Disengaged; and 17% are Actively Disengaged. As a result, 71% of the workforce is either under-performing or actively undermining their work.² The problem is that organizations are ill-equipped to accurately identify which employees fit which class, and they are even more challenged to effect changes that can significantly expand the class of Engaged employees while weeding out the Actively Disengaged. As a result, cost containment initiatives take precedence over performance optimization initiatives, and euphemistic "right-sizing" initiatives (which have a negative impact on Q¹² scores) exacerbate the problem in the long-term.

Identifying an organizational problem without providing a protocol to resolve it is similar to diagnosing an illness while failing to prescribe the cure. In either case, the results can be terminal. The Principals at EnCompass Resources, Inc. recognized this dilemma and created a program to address it.

¹ Gallup and Q¹² are registered trademarks of The Gallup Organization. All rights reserved.

² *Gallup Management Journal*, "Feedback for Real;" Author: John Thackray

THE REAL LIFE OPTIMIZATION TRAINING™

The Real Life Optimization Training™³ (“the Program”) is designed to increase self-esteem, resilience, clarity of purpose, and personal strengths while significantly reducing perceived stress. As a result, the performance of Engaged employees is enhanced, a substantive percentage of Passively Disengaged employees *re-engage* (resulting in much higher productivity and an improved operating environment), and truly Disengaged employees “opt out” of the organization.

Because this latter phenomenon (“opting out”) is driven by self-selection, it offers an element of “organizational cleansing” that is far more efficient and effective than the random “accuracy” associated with managerial discretion that abounds in “right-sizing” initiatives. Additionally, this self-selection process reduces severance exposure (which drives an additional cost benefit), and because the decision is self-directed, there is no “collateral damage” to the organization within its residual employee population (*i.e.*, the deleterious syndrome of “Am I next?,” normally associated with organizationally-determined terminations, is eliminated).

Metaphorically speaking, the Real Life Optimization Training™ is the “prescribed cure” for the Q¹²’s “diagnosis.” Its efficacy has been (and continues to be) verified by an independent expert,⁴ and its results have been extraordinary.

SELF-ESTEEM: Self-esteem is both the conscious and unconscious beliefs we have about ourselves and for ourselves. These beliefs are established early in life and are reinforced through our environment and by life events, biology, training, and happenstance. Self-esteem is the synthesis of unconscious beliefs like: “I am strong,” “I am competent,” “I am capable,” “I am loved,” “I am valued,” etc.; or the converse: “I am weak,” “I am stupid,” “I am unlovable,” “I am incapable,” and “I am unwanted.” This synthesis greatly forms our world view and the basis upon which we analyze, assess and place meaning with respect to both our internal and external experiences. Therefore, a strong, positive self-esteem is a source of personal strength that provides purpose and motivation to engage life in a welcoming manner. Research shows that self-esteem is a key component measured within the context of the Q¹² factors of productivity, profitability, retention, and customer. Said another way, high Q¹² scores are nested within employees who demonstrate strong, positive self-esteem.⁵

RESILIENCE: Resilience is the ability to maintain a presence of mind in the face of internal or external complications and distractions. Resilience and self-esteem are intertwined with each other; both supporting and impacting the other. A key component of resilience is the ability to simultaneously see and maintain focus on the big picture while being highly discerning with respect to present conditions. Moreover, emotional upset, intensity, complication, and confusion do not impair this ability and, at times, actually heighten the perceptivity and resourcefulness. A resilient person is like a great athlete whose focus, attention, and mental clarity become heightened under stress and complication. Resilience provides a motivation for action when deciding, “The job is worth doing; I am the most likely one to complete the task; and it is worth my time and energy to do it” (Kurt Wright). Resilience is the unchangeable quality that keeps motivation high even though the end goal

³ Real Life Optimization Training™ is the trademark of EnCompass resources, Inc. All rights reserved.

⁴ Dr. Gregory White (PhD in Psychology from National University and Sigma Consulting)

⁵ The Program’s impact on self-esteem is measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).⁵ This scale has been widely used in educational and psychological research with adults and adolescents for over forty years. It is regarded as an excellent measure of self-reported self-esteem. Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

may be unclear or out of sight. Employees and leadership team members who are able to improve their resilience demonstrate significant improvements in innovation and contribution to organizational productivity.⁶

Purpose and Personal Strengths: The Program directly impacts each individual's knowledge of his or hers life purpose, life meaning, and knowledge of his or her personal strengths and talents. Life purpose and meaning are abstract ideas that have specific and highly individualized meaning to each individual. Your position and current role do not describe your life's purpose and meaning (whether you are the CEO or the receptionist). How one does these activities, what motivates them, or how one fulfills these roles speaks to the basis for purpose and meaning. To quote one of EnCompass Resources' principals, Doug Carter: "Life's purpose and meaning is *what you do when you don't have to ... that makes you who you are when you can't help it.*"

Correspondingly, knowledge of personal strengths most often requires life experience and the good fortune of being seen and blessed by important and significant people in our lives. Personal strengths are qualities rather than skill sets. For example: "I see the patterns represented by numbers and intuitively see how they fit together in a variety of situations" is a *strength*; "I am good with math and numbers" is a *skill*. Talents are a slightly different variation of strengths. In his work with effortless high performance, Kurt Wright describes a talent as "consistently near perfect performance without practice." Understanding strengths and talents requires knowledge, respect for, and implementation of our natural abilities. One central idea taught and explored in the Real Life Optimization Training™ on Day 4 is that success is not arbitrary or accidental. Whenever we experience success, there is a talent involved.

The "strength-related comments" exercise on Day 2 of the Real Life Optimization Training™ and the "Compass" exercise on Day 4, which consists of a creating a "success inventory" and mentor (engrained through bi-lateral stimulation⁷), help participants build a deep, personal awareness of their individual strengths and purpose.

Perceived Stress: Stress is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful: the higher the degree, the more negative the impact on performance (unless one has a well-trained level of resilience). Stress tends to introduce distraction into our personal and professional lives. It diverts focus, which in turn reduces productivity. The Real Life Optimization Training™ helps individuals learn to reduce stress and increase personal resilience, which leads to a significant improvement in productivity and satisfaction. The questions in the PSS ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month.⁸

⁶ The Program's impact on resilience is measured by Resilience Scale (RES). This scale assesses an individual's self-perception that he or she can handle current problems or life challenges that he or she may be experiencing. Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the resilience scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement, 1*, 165-178.

⁷ Patent-pending. John Cunningham, Principal, EnCompass Resources, Inc.

⁸ The Program's impact on perceived stress is measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). This scale was developed by Cohen as a general measure of current levels of perceived stress. This is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress in adults and adolescents, with many dozens of studies reporting its use over the last twenty years. Items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. The PSS was designed for use in community samples with at least a junior high school education. The items are easy to understand, and the response alternatives are simple to grasp. Moreover, the questions are of a general nature and hence are relatively free of content specific to any subpopulation group. The scale is reprinted with permission of the American Sociological Association, from Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24*, 386-396.

To better understand how The Real Life Optimization Training™ works, it is important to understand its relationship to the Q¹². The Q¹² measures dimensions that leaders, managers, and employees can influence to attain superior workforce performance (*i.e.*, the “diagnosis”). Unfortunately, these same parties struggle to identify tools and resources that can help them influence relevant, significant and sustainable change in the related areas (*i.e.*, the “cure”). The Real Life Optimization Training™ bridges the gap.

The Q¹² questions are as follows:

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

The correlation between these questions and productivity, profitability, retention and customer satisfaction is as follows:

Q ¹² #	Question Synopsis	Productivity	Profitability	Retention	Customer Sat.
1	Know what is expected	x	x	x	x
2	Materials/ equipment	x		x	
3	Opportunity to do what I do best	x	x	x	x
4	Recognition and praise	x	x		x
5	Supervisor cares about me	x	x	x	x
6	Encourages development	x	x		
7	Opinions count	x	x		
8	Mission/purpose – job is important	x			
9	Committed to doing quality work	x	x		
10	Best friend at work	x			x
11	Talked about personal progress	x			x
12	Opportunities to learn and grow		x		

Independent research shows that the Real Life Optimization Training™ has an immediate, positive and practical impact on all sub-categories. Moreover, each of these sub-categories continues to improve over time; an effect that is rarely, if ever, demonstrated by traditional training or organizational development programs. The following provides an overview of how and why this is true with respect to each Q¹² question:

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?

On Day 1 of the Program, a full half-day is dedicated to helping participants learn, practice and understand how to gain clarity with respect to expectations. An exercise called the Expectation Conversation™⁹ helps participants gain experience in this critical skill. Correspondingly, it teaches them how to recognize and eliminate “upsets” that typically interfere with identifying and understanding expectations (both within their personal and professional lives).

2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?

People often only think about “tangible” materials when contemplating this question. Many times, the “intangible” materials are far more relevant to shifting personal and professional performance. The Program helps participants identify the intangible elements that are needed to do their job right; elements that are within their control. They learn to identifying their personal strengths and talents as such apply to their job responsibilities, and they re-establish the confidence to access those strengths and talents. This, in turn, increases their effective use of the more tangible materials and equipment associated with their jobs. Through the related exercises, the Program accomplishes dramatic positive shifts in each participant’s self-perception as well as in their perception of their relationships and the world around them.

3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?

Subsequent teaching by Marcus Buckingham states that Question 3 is directly correlated and predictive of *all* other questions in the survey and therefore all four sub-categories. Having the opportunity to do what you do best presupposes that one knows what they do best and knows how to implement it. Most of Day 2 of the Program supports the development and refinement of the participants’ ability to identify their true strengths, successes, and what they do best. Through exercises and the use of use of bi-lateral stimulation on Day 4 of the Program, participants gain clarity that within all successes there is a strength and talent at play. They learn to identify and access those strengths and talents in a complete and present manner that entirely alters their self-esteem (for the better). This, in turn, provides them with extraordinary confidence in their ability to implement these strengths and talents to other circumstances in the future. As a result, dramatic improvements in productivity and personal satisfaction are achieved, which impacts profitability and retention from an organizational perspective.

4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?

During Day 2 of the Program, participants conduct 13 two-minute exercises that allow them to experience the power of giving and receiving strength-related comments. This not only provides them with the necessary practice to integrate this behavior into their daily routine, but it also allows them to experience how their own personal perception can be significantly altered in a positive way.

⁹ Expectation Conversation™ is the trademark of R. Douglas Carter, Principal, EnCompass Resources, Inc. All rights reserved.

5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?

This question is one of only two in the Q¹² that have a correlative impact on all four sub-categories (along with Question 3). Many times, employees do not recognize the “care” that is shown by other individuals within the organization. The root cause is often because of gaps within their own self-esteem. When individuals experience improved self-esteem, they enjoy a heightened sense of self-love and self-care. Consequently, they notice more, focus more, and pay more attention to the care expressed by others. By elevating participants’ self-esteem, the Program helps individuals gain a new sense of awareness of the caring that is expressed by others. Often, no one has to manifest any additional effort to favorably change the perception of the caring nature of the workplace.

6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?

Similar to Question 5, it is often a matter of perception rather than reality that suppresses scores on this question within the Q¹². Employees may not recognize encouragement that already exists within the organization because they lack the current capacity to discern it. The entire Real Life Optimization Training™ is designed to stimulate self-development in all facets of life. This leads to self-encouragement, which in turn leads to a heightened awareness of those people and elements that do and have always encouraged us. The Program may even foster a positive change in the response to this question regardless of the behavior of supervisors. As a result of their heightened awareness, participants may even begin to recognize and experience encouragement from supervisors that had always existed in the work environment but that they had not cognitively appreciated.

7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?

A demonstrated rise in self-esteem will have a positive impact on this question. The listening and communication skills of ‘strength-related comments’, recognizing and resolving upsets, and the “what’s right” questions taught by the Program support this positive change. Data shows a consistent increase in productivity and profitability as the result of the Program even months after the conclusion of the training experience.

8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?

A substantive element of Day 3 of the Program is focused upon answering the questions, “What’s worth doing ... and who’s worth doing it with?” All of this is done within the context of clarifying a 25-year vision that engages participants in a high level of motivation guided by their intuition. Day 4 of the Program starts with the identification of “Life Purpose,” which is then supported through the development of the participants’ personal Compass. Understanding one’s personal life purpose allows new insights and recognitions of the organization’s mission and purpose and how they are in alignment with the individual’s.

9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?

As participants gain greater clarity with respect to their life goals and life purpose, they better understand the importance of their work. Correspondingly, they demonstrate a greater pride in the quality of their contribution and a higher level of commitment to achieving it. Additionally, the Program helps them refine their relationship skills based upon the premise that the quality of their lives is directly related to the quality of their relationships.

10. Do you have a best friend at work?

Improved responses to this question are an amazing phenomenon given that, in many Real Life Optimization Trainings™, participants may not have had any contact with people from their workplace during the four days of the Program. However, even in the absence of such contact, their perception of “what a best friend is” generally changes. In turn, this opens participants to expanded possibilities; particularly with respect to forming closer relationships both within their personal and professional lives.

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?

Again, a positive increase in these responses is reflective of a perception shift solely by the participant and not by any change in supervisors or co-workers behaviors. The skills sets that are learned within the Program heighten participants’ cognitive skills with respect to recognizing strength-related comments and identifying personal strengths and talents. Similarly, participants become more skilled at sharing strength-related communications with others, which helps significantly improve relationships and leads to a greater and more natural acknowledgement of actual progress both by self and by others.

12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Opportunities to learn and grow are relative. The Program establishes greater distinctions around learning, growth, goals, and personal values and identifies the innate strengths and talents that are required to actualize them. Therefore, the Program fundamentally redefines learning, growth, and opportunity from each participant’s perspective, which inherently increases positive responses to this question.

Based upon an analysis of the practical impact of the Real Life Optimization Training™ on Personal Performance Traits (*effect-size analysis*), it is possible to predict the percentage of individuals who, if they participated in the Program, would show a significant change in a Trait over baseline levels at the end of the Program. Follow-up data indicates that all of these gains would be at least maintained and probably increased (as skills become more engrained) in measured period after the conclusion of the Program.

Personal Performance Trait	Percent of individuals showing significant positive change due to participation in the Real Life Optimization Training™
Increased Productivity – Gallup Factor	75%
Increased Profitability – Gallup Factor	79%
Increased Retention – Gallup Factor	73%
Increased Customer Satisfaction – Gallup Factor	68%
Increased Self-Esteem	84%
Increased Resilience	79%
Increased Clarity of Life Purpose	77%
Increased Awareness of Personal Strengths	84%
Decreased Stress	72%

The important detail and distinction for the above effect-size analysis is that these percentages are highly predictable, and they represent an improvement that is both statistically significant and of practical significance (as measured both pre and post-Program as well as in successive periods).

Achieving statistical significance is actually quite easy in most studies. Practical significance is a stronger, clearer, more replicable measure of success than the attainment of statistical significance.¹⁰ As a result, it is a far greater challenge and, therefore, a greater accomplishment.

The Real Life Optimization Training™ was developed on the premise that by creating a life-changing experience for its participants, it could significantly enhance the participants' personal and professional lives and collaterally benefit the lives of those with whom the participants have relationships. Correspondingly, by decreasing both personal and professional stress and providing participants with the skills to function with more resilience, and by improving the participants' self-esteem, sense of personal strengths and life purpose, Q¹² scores would inherently improve as would the productivity, profitability, retention, and customer satisfaction of the organizations they serve. Independently tracked data has consistently supported this premise, and it is upon that basis that we recommend implementation of the Real Life Optimization Training™ within your organization to optimize organizational performance and enhance your corporate culture.

¹⁰ For example: If 1,000 radios in a single room were set to a poorly received station, one could slightly hear and discern the radio signal due to the large number of radios (*i.e.*, effectively demonstrating the power of statistical significance). If the signal was strong and could be heard "loud and clear" by one radio, the effect of what is being measured is stronger (*i.e.*, effectively demonstrating the power of practical significance).