

The Benefits of Anabolic Energy Leadership: Understanding Your Employees' Level of Engagement (Part 1)

By Eileen P. Monesson

Imagine that everyone at your firm is working at their optimum level, that your firm has a solid reputation for always delivering projects before their due date, and that the work product is consistently exceptional. Imagine that clients are so thrilled with your work that they refer you to all of their associates without being asked. Business is booming, and the firm has double-digit growth year over year.

Taking it a step further, envision a work environment where all of your employees are truly engaged and energetic. Everyone works together as a team. Employees respect one another, as well as firm management. Team members freely express their opinions without criticism or judgment. As a result, the firm is continuously improving. The professional and personal lives of its staff and clients are enriched by being associated with the firm.

This sounds like the perfect situation. Even so, few firms are in this position. Although managing partners and other firm leaders have the best intentions, most are not able to inspire their teams to function at this level. Instead, employees operate at a much lower level of energy.

Level of engagement

Gallup's 2011 Employee Engagement Index reported that 71 percent of American workers are "not engaged" or "actively disengaged" in their work. In other words, nearly three quarters of the U.S. workforce is emotionally disconnected from their workplaces and are less likely to be productive. That leaves a small fraction of employees that are truly enthusiastic and working at a highly productive and energized level.

Business and psychological researchers—including Gallup—have found a direct correlation between an employee's workplace engagement and a company's overall performance. Organizations with fully engaged employees are more likely to experience positive business performance than those whose employees are not engaged. Profitability, productivity, quality, and client satisfaction are all affected by an employee's level of engagement.

Power of energy

In his book, *ENERGY LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMING YOUR WORKPLACE AND YOUR LIFE FROM THE CORE*, Bruce D. Schneider (founder and CEO of the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC)) defines two types of energy: anabolic and catabolic. Anabolic energy is constructive, rejuvenating, and sustainable, while catabolic energy is destructive and draining. Catabolic energy causes stress, burn-out, anger, and fear. People in a catabolic state complain, worry, and are full of self-doubt. They are emotionally attached to misfortune and are stuck in a problem instead of a solution mindset. Anabolic people are passionate, creative, and focused on working together to find opportunity in a challenge.

An individual's energy level has an influence on his or her success. Leaders with positive energy receive a positive reaction to that energy. Just look at the results achieved by a partner that manages by empowerment vs. one that manages by fear. Even though both partners might get the job done to the client's satisfaction, the service team that is empowered will have a more positive and productive experience working on the project. Less time and energy will be wasted on defending ones actions, gossiping about injustices, and feeling underutilized.

Anabolic energy creates an environment where employees are engaged and work in collaboration with one another. In an anabolic culture, challenges are not considered a negative. Instead, challenges are viewed as opportunities. Having an anabolic culture is a competitive advantage for a firm. New ideas are constantly being generated to improve client service, attract new clients, and retain employees.

A study conducted by Karen Buck, M.S., and Diana Galer, Ph.D., CPC, ACC, in 2011, entitled *Key Factors Reveled for Determining Success in Work and Life*, showed that shifting from a catabolic to an anabolic mindset can increase an employee's engagement at work by 51 percent. The study also determined that an employee's satisfaction with his or her level work/life balance increased by 70 percent and working relationships by 44 percent.

Furthermore, the study determined that “highly anabolic” individuals, compared to “highly catabolic” individuals showed the following differential in their level of satisfaction in several areas:

- communication skills (230 percent higher);
- health and wellness (240 percent higher);
- work/life balance (290 percent higher);
- working relationships (320 percent higher);
- engagement at work (340 percent higher);
- productivity (420 percent higher);
- time management (520 percent higher);
- leadership ability (680 percent higher); and
- energy (2040 percent higher).

Energy/action model

Energy has a major influence on engagement. Bruce Schneider sums it up in iPEC’s Energy/Action Model. As shown in Exhibit 1, people with a low level of catabolic energy demonstrate a low level of engagement, while those

with a high level of anabolic energy demonstrate a high level of engagement.

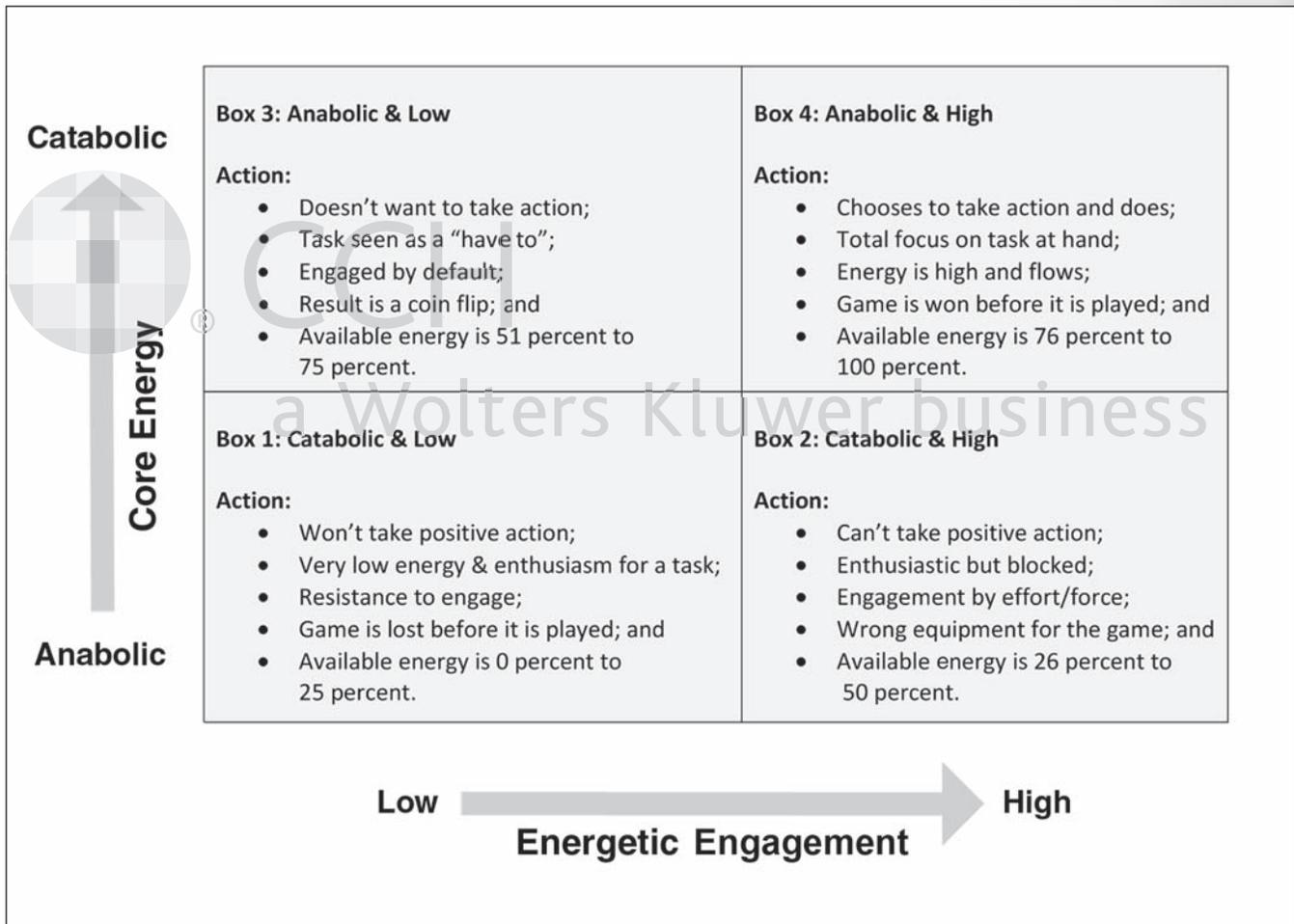
Energetic self-perception levels

A person’s self-perception is influenced by his or her thoughts and energy. Individuals functioning at a high level of energy have better outcomes than those that do not. What people believe affects what will happen to them. People’s thoughts determine their feelings and emotions, and their feelings and emotions shape their actions.

According to Bruce Schneider, a person’s energy level is similar to a stock price in that it fluctuates throughout the day. Thoughts and feelings, such as being nonjudgmental and joyful increase the value of the stock. Their counterparts, such as victimization and anger, lower the stock’s value. At any given point in the day, a person is functioning at one or more of the following seven levels of consciousness:

1. *Level One: I lose (victim).* This person believes he or she is a victim of circumstance. Functioning in Level

Exhibit 1: Energy/Action Model



- One causes a person to avoid taking action because it does not matter anyway. He or she has a low level of energy and goes through the motions just to survive.
2. *Level Two: I win, you lose.* Everything is black and white; good or bad to this person. An individual functioning at Level Two has to be right. He or she has trust issues. They are controlling and insist that everything is done their way. A Level Two person is judgmental, tends to blame others for his or her mistakes, and is frequently involved in conflicts.
 3. *Level Three: I win and you do too.* This person is starting to move from a catabolic to an anabolic state. He or she takes responsibility for his or her actions and can see another's point of view. This individual knows that he or she has a choice in how he or she reacts to a situation. Although this person still judges and blames others when something goes wrong, the individual is beginning to forgive others and stop playing the blame game. This person is willing to work with the people he or she likes and tolerates the people he or she does not like. The result is cooperation.
 4. *Level Four: You win.* This individual is focused on service. Judgment, anger, guilt, resentment, and other self-directed thoughts and feelings begin to fade and are replaced with a genuine desire to help others. He or she is compassionate, concerned, and caring. This person cares more about giving to another than receiving something in return. Actions and words are not taken personally. Time is not wasted on worrying about what others might have or will do.
 5. *Level Five: We all win or none of us win.* This person is a team player and sees everything as an opportunity. He or she is focused on a positive outcome for everyone. Blaming, criticizing, and taking control is not a part of the game. Work is done and completed for the benefit of all. There is no good or bad, right or wrong. The core belief behind Level Five is reconciliation. An individual at this level finds acceptance and inner peace. They are driven by opportunity instead

of fear and know that they have choices.

6. *Level Six: We all win.* For this individual, the experience is the reward. Both wisdom and joy is experienced. A person functioning at Level Six is confident, knowledgeable, and intuitive.
7. *Level Seven: Winning and losing are illusions.* This person has absolute passion for all of life's experiences. He or she has the ability to see multiple perspectives at once and can tap into his or her creative talents. At this level, the individual knows who he or she truly is.

Anabolic leader

The anabolic leader demonstrates his or her ability to engage employees on an individual, social, and organizational level. The way that a leader interacts with his or her team has a tremendous effect on building anabolic energy and engagement. Partners that participate in meetings, respond to situations, and socialize with employees with anabolic energy will establish a highly functional firm culture. It is important for firm leadership to acknowledge that these interactions must be authentic. If you say one thing and do another, you will lose the respect and trust of your team.

The key is for leaders to channel the energy of their team to an anabolic level so that each member is using his or her strengths for the benefit of the firm and its clients. Leaders that can shift their team's energy to function at a higher level will have more opportunities, successful results, and a positive effect on the firm.

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