

## Why Apathy Affects Us All — and What We Can Do About It!

***Apathy can trip you up! The first step to overcoming it is recognizing it.***

By David Byrd

The word *apathy* is an unfriendly and threatening word to most people, and that is probably the reason I never hear executives use the word to describe problems within their organizations. Instead, I hear the listing of symptoms such as the following:

- burnout
- stagnation
- indecision
- lack of creativity
- lack of motivation
- lack of productivity
- and so on

***“...apathy: a natural, human instinct, common to us all, that consistently encourages us to seek a comfort zone in which nothing ever changes.”***

But symptoms, if worked on exclusively, lead an organization on a wild goose chase, fixing symptoms but never solving real problems. Until a person gains an awareness of how the forces of apathy work to impede effectiveness, behavioral change and improvement are out of the question.

Usually when someone is called apathetic, he or she is being accused of indifference. But the working definition I am using for apathy has little to do with indifference. It has everything to do with describing the relationship between the basic motivation of security and the natural, human instinct described as apathy. Take a close look at my working definition of apathy: a natural, human instinct, common to us all, that consistently encourages us to seek a comfort zone in which nothing ever changes.

Now ask yourself this question: “What is one of humankind’s basic, motivational drives?” Most human behavior can be traced back to the basic motivation of self-preservation and security. This process of seeking security and building unproductive comfort zones, if left unchecked, leads to behaviors that cause people problems and ineffectiveness.

Without an awareness of the forces of apathy, people become stuck in ineffective and unproductive comfort zones of their own design, while ineffective leaders focus on the symptoms of their people problems. Effective leadership begins with an awareness of how the forces of apathy affect the organization and its people.

Apathy, as a natural, human instinct, is counterbalanced with certain personal powers — including choice, vision, attraction, and courage — that were strategically included in our creative, human design. These personal powers are available to everyone, but without some understanding of why these personal powers are important, they are usually ignored as motivational fluff or insignificant soft skills.

An awareness and understanding of these counterbalancing personal powers can serve as a future foundation for a consistent leadership development model that makes good common sense. ***You can overcome the negative forces of apathy!***

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David Byrd is president of Leadership Management, Inc. and is a master executive and trainer, with more than 28 years of experience working with top business executives and their organizations. To gain more of David’s insights on overcoming apathy, order *The Tripping Point in Leadership — Overcoming Organizational Apathy* today, available at [www.thetrippingpointinleadership.com](http://www.thetrippingpointinleadership.com).

