

■ 6 Ways to Energize that Apathetic Colleague

by Tom Terez

Is someone's raging apathy dragging down your team? Then open your mind, roll up your sleeves, and get busy with the following strategies:

- People aren't born apathetic, and few people come to work wanting to be that way. So there's probably a reason for your co-worker's couldn't-care-less attitude. Take some time to think about it, and if you can do so diplomatically, consider asking them directly. A little bit of understanding on your part will go a long way – and might point the way to a solution.
- Many apathetic types are made that way because they're assigned to do the same work activities day after day. The solution? Try to involve them in new projects and work activities. Even a task or two away from the old routine can restart a person's pulse.
- When deciding who's best-suited for a certain job or project, look beyond knowledge, skills, and abilities. Also consider people's deep interests – the activities, pursuits, and passions that truly put a spring in their step. What about that glazed-over person in your midst? Identify their deep interests, and see if these somehow link to an upcoming project. For example, if the person is an avid writer whose job deals exclusively with numbers, look for an assignment that calls for writing skills.
- Hardcore apathetics often feel like the workplace currents are carrying them – that they have no control over things, so what the heck, they may as well go with the flow. Try changing the

dynamic by giving them some control. Instead of telling them what to do (“Send our usual feedback survey to last month's customers”), let them figure out a better way (“How do you think we should go about getting feedback from last month's customers?”).

- Similarly, if several things need to be done and it doesn't matter which is done first, let the person make his or her own decision on where to begin.
- Create more opportunities for employees to interact with customers. This is a great way to increase people's emotional investment in their work – because it shows them that those seemingly humdrum work activities actually have an impact.

NOTE: These action ideas are excerpted from the “Difficult Dozen Help Zone,” a free online tool at BetterWorkplaceNow.com. The tool takes just a minute to use and gives you a free e-mailed report full of recommendations. Use it now – and get instant advice for dealing with Gossips, Whiners, Hotheads, Schemers, and eight other challenging types. Go to <http://BetterWorkplaceNow.com/help/>

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