



## THE ROAD FROM APATHY TO COMMITMENT

In these economic times, companies must be capable of adjusting quickly. It is leadership's job to rally their organizations to commit to these adjustments. Achieving that commitment is rarely instantaneous. People progress along a road that leads from apathy to anger to resistance, and finally to commitment. This road is predictable, productive, and emotional. However, to progress along the road and to produce results, people must be allowed to work through each of these emotional stages.

Think about your last change that resulted in an emotional reaction from the people affected. What was the worst reaction that they had? The worst possible response is one of pure apathy. When people look back at you with no expression and no reaction, you know you are in real trouble. Many times apathy is mistaken for commitment. Quite the contrary, apathy is the opposite of commitment. You must keep communicating to progress through this phase to anger. People must understand how the change will affect them personally so that they can see the possibilities in the change. This phase often takes some time and is when leaders must listen with real skill. This doesn't mean listening just long enough to tell people why they are wrong. This does mean listening in a way that hears the words as well as the emotions. Helping people get their anger out is essential to getting them through to the resistance phase.

Once people express and complete their anger, they may resist the change. They may feel it is their duty to tell you everything wrong with the change and every reason why it won't work. At this point, stay focused, you almost have them! The key now is involvement. If a leader is skilled in listening, and in involving people, the trip from resistance to commitment is short.

Once a leader recognizes this road, they can be energized by the progression and less frustrated. They can recognize apathy, anger, and resistance for what they are -- necessary stepping-stones on the road to commitment.



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