

# Workplace Wellness

## “THE COMFORT ZONE CAN BE A DANGER”



Leslie Rose McDonald  
President, Pathfinders CTS, Inc.

A very successful business professional admitted that he had been resisting the way that technology had impacted his profession. His rationale was that he was accomplished and recognized in his field, and that there are a lot of people who are using technology applications to do his kind of work who are not nearly as knowledgeable as he. While this might be true, this was still a rationale – an excuse for not getting out of his comfort zone and learning a new way to apply his seasoned knowledge.

In another situation, a recently downsized professional admitted that she had been “too comfortable” at her job and that having her position eliminated was the “kick in the pants” that she probably needed to pursue something more challenging. She was very competent in her work, and she was paid well for it. Daily requirements were something that she admitted she could do in her sleep. But her position was comfortable, and the company was comfortable, and so she stayed - even when she knew she was capable of contributing much more.

In years gone by, the worst that would happen by staying in your comfort zone was having a boring but predictable job day in and day out, year after year until retirement. Today, however, keeping yourself in the comfort zone can have a much greater consequence, from being passed by for a promotion, up to losing your job.

Jack Canfield, co-author of the phenomenally successful Chicken Soup for the Soul book series, has a quote that is worthy of consideration. It goes like this: “Winners are those people who make a habit of doing the things losers are uncomfortable doing.”

Think about the people you admire and respect for their accomplishments or achievements. In almost all cases, these people chose to put themselves in a situation or position that was decidedly uncomfortable. They embraced the opportunity for the rewards that come with stretching and challenging yourself. They know that comfort breeds not only boredom, but mediocrity as well.

In career considerations, there are many ways that people keep themselves in the comfort zone, missing out on many wonderful opportunities and benefits. How many of the following “out of the comfort zone” situations have you avoided to continue the illusion of feeling safe and comfortable?

**Networking:** A necessary part of a healthy career is developing and maintaining relationships through networking. But there are many people who are uncomfortable seeking out these new relationships, so they stay within their existing circle of people that they already know.

**Being assertive:** It is sometimes uncomfortable initiating a conversation that challenges someone else. But this is frequently necessary in order to address issues that need resolution. Rather than let things fester, you can get out of your comfort zone and put the issue out for an honest discussion. Temporary discomfort may be rewarded with the comfort that comes from having the issue resolved.

**Learning a new skill:** whether it is technology or another set of skills, some people will resist learning. Learning a new skill means being less-than-competent until it is practiced and mastered. There is discomfort in not being competent and masterful at what you do, and so to stay in the comfort of existing competency, you might avoid learning the new skills.

**Making a presentation or speaking in front of a group:** To some, this is a catapult out of the comfort zone. Many people feel vulnerable and are resistant about trying or developing this basic business skill, but it is becoming more of an expectation for employees by their employers.

**Pursuing a new job or promotion:** It is sometimes more comfortable to stay where you are than to risk the discomfort of going after something and not getting it. Or of going after it, getting it, and not being as competent or successful as you had hoped.

In today’s business environments, the reality is this: if we don’t take the initiative to push ourselves out of the comfort zone, we can be assured that inevitably something or someone else will initiate it for us.