

The Collector Chronicle

NORTH AMERICAN RECOVERY

April 2023

America's Collection Authority

LAST MONTH'S LUCKY WINNER

The lucky winner of our client prize for March is Chartway Federal Credit Union. They have been using our agency since 2021! We will be sending them a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Enjoy!



THIS MONTH'S PRIZE

This month we will be giving away a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Each client who sends new accounts during the month of April will have their name entered into a drawing. At the end of the month, we'll draw a name, and if it's yours, you'll win the gift basket!

*Don't miss out on your chance to win!
Send new accounts before the
end of the month!
Good luck!!*



**CHOCOLATE
COVERED
WAGON**

Why Or: "That's Just the Way Things Are Done Around Here"

By David J. Saxton

President, North American Recovery

I have a deep-rooted belief that everyone in our organization should always know the reason why we do things the way we do. It helps our employees' performance and empowers them with the knowledge to be experts at what they do; and hence, they get it right most of the time, if not always. On the flip side, if someone doesn't know the "why" when it comes to performing a task, it has the opposite effect: lower performance and more mistakes. That's never the scenario we want.

How do you identify a scenario when someone doesn't know the "why"? You'll hear comments like this:

Other examples include:

Employee 1: "Hey, why do we set our follow-up like this?"

Employee 2: "That's the way I was trained, I don't know why."

Employee 1: "Hey, why do we set up XYZ with a date of so and so?"

Employee 2: "I don't know. That's just what I was told to do."

Employee 1: "Hey, why can't we do such and such right now instead of having to wait X number of days?"

Employee 2: "I don't know. Somebody told me we have to wait, but I don't know why."

Employee 1: "Why do we always handle this situation in this manner?"

Employee 2: "That's just the way things are done around here."

Fortunately, we don't hear these phrases very often in our organization. But if we do, we stop what we're doing and take the time to provide as

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much background as necessary so the person knows the reason why moving forward. Regardless of the words they use, the problem remains: the person responding doesn't know why they are doing something a certain way; they were just told to do it that way.

If someone is making these statements, it's not entirely their fault. Some of the blame, as with most systemic problems, lies with management. If we didn't train our trainers to always explain the "why" behind every task, they may create bad habits that perpetuate this problem. Also, it's easier and quicker to just tell someone what to do instead of taking the time to explain in great detail why we're doing something a certain way. As with everything, the best way of doing something is almost always the most time-consuming and requires the most effort.

As with most situations in my company, I try to find an upbeat and fun way to address things. For this scenario, I found the following story that helps us do this. The story isn't meant to offend anyone. It's simply used to prove a point—and to help people remember that point. I hope you enjoy it. And feel free to use it in your organization if you believe it would be helpful.

***Special Note: The following story is fiction. No such experiment ever actually happened. It's a fable made up to illustrate a point. It's not mine. I don't remember where I first read it, but it works for our purposes.**

You start with a cage containing five monkeys. Inside the cage, hang a banana on a string and place a set of stairs under it. Before long, a monkey will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, cold water is sprayed on all of the other monkeys. After a while, another monkey makes an attempt with the same result. A while later, a different monkey will try but experience the same thing: a spray of cold water. One by one, each monkey tries for the banana, and each one gets sprayed. Pretty soon, whenever any monkey

tries to climb the stairs, the other monkeys prevent it by holding him back and even beating him if necessary.

Now, put away the cold water. Remove one monkey from the cage and replace it with a new one. When the new monkey sees the banana and attempts to climb the stairs, to his surprise and horror, all of the other monkeys attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five monkeys and replace it with a new one. When the newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked, the previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm! Likewise, replace a third original monkey with a new one, then a fourth, then the fifth. Every time the newest monkey takes to the stairs, he is attacked.

Most of the monkeys have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs or why they are participating in the beating of the newest monkey because none of the remaining monkeys have ever been sprayed with cold water. Nevertheless, no monkey ever again approaches the stairs to try for the banana. Why? Because as far as they know, "That's just the way things are done around here."

If we continue to be okay with saying, "That's just the way things are done around here." We are supporting a culture that undertrains our people, and most certainly, this results in mistakes and misunderstandings. We make a concerted effort in our organization to make sure people know the dangers associated with this statement, and we do whatever it takes to ensure that we don't accept that as an answer.

Thanks for reading and have a great month.

— Dave



The Collector Chronicle is published monthly by NORTH AMERICAN RECOVERY for prospective and current clients. Please direct questions or comments to the editor, Dave Saxton, at DaveSaxton@North-American-Recovery.com

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