

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today I want to talk about a phrase that I bet I hear certainly on a monthly basis, if not a weekly basis. And that phrase is, the way we've always done it. That's the way we've always done it. "So why do you do that?" "Oh, that's the way we've always done it. It's tried and true." And you've probably heard those phrases too. And you know what? It may be tried and true, but I think you need to ask the question, is it really tried and true? Because I think over time a lot of things happen. It's sort of a legend can get built around some of the things you've done and that makes them sound right or support that it's the right way to do something. But really there's always change.

So, with change is the way we've always done it. The best way to do it. One of the first tests you should have of this phrase is really to ask the question, why? Why are we doing it that way? Or, why is this happening? And if the only answer you can come up with is, that's the way we've always done it, or it's tried and true, that's probably not the best way to do it. You should be able to answer the question, why with an explanation of why that's the best way to do it, why we do it that way, why it's tried and true versus just saying, that's the way we've always done it and tried and true as the reason for doing it that way.

You should always be willing to listen also to those other ideas. I was reminded recently of a story back in the days of television. And for those of you who are old enough, you may remember those big boxes with the sort of roundish tubes in black and white and all of that. And if you ever looked in the back of one of those TVs, there were all these tubes, glass tubes with glowing things inside of them. And there might've been 15, 20, or even more tubes like that in this huge box. And now our televisions are this thin, right? But one of the major companies and I don't recall which one it was, if it was RCA or Motorola, whomever, but all of a sudden somebody came up with one of these great innovations. So those tubes were hard to work and get replaced. So, they created a sort of slide out tray so that you could slide the tray out and you could change the tube, and you could fix the TV easier and better. Right?

Well, about the same time they were doing that, there was a Japanese manufacturer coming up with solid state and eliminating all of the tubes. So, the way they had always done it, somebody came up with a better way, but that better way got bypassed very quickly. My point here is very simple that time moves on and the way we've always done it is very likely not to be the best way to do it. Technology has probably come up with a better tool, a better technology, a better solution, a better way to do it. Even management principles of how we treat people and how we organize work have changed.

And part of the reason they've changed is because people have changed. The old press down on top of people, do it this way. You got to do it that way. That way of managing doesn't work anymore either, even though it was the way we always did it. So, ask those questions about your processes, ask the why. If you can't come up with a better answer than that's the way we've always done it. That's a good indication you need change now.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.