



ADVISORY

HOG-TIE YOUR OPERATION WITH KILLER PHRASES & NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

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Have you ever noticed how many organizations cannot seem to move forward? They always seem stuck in the past. These are the companies that you point to when discussing how the only people who like change are wet babies.

The truth is much different. People, for the most part, love change. Just ask Change Guru **Peter DeJager**. As long as someone has a reason to change, they will go after it with gusto. The only time someone will fight change is if it's forced upon them, without sufficient education or explanation. But, that's for another article.

As we travel the world, working with companies of all sizes, we see many that are truly stuck in the past. It doesn't matter if we are working on a pure technology problem or a more general management issue. There are two self-inflicted roadblocks we see all the time. Each one reinforces the other. It's a continuous loop.

Killer Phrases: Why are so many people afraid of new ideas? Because a new idea might be used to change a comfortable situation. It's the old devil we know as "opposed the one we don't know." But there are more reasons. Some people cannot stand for anyone else to have a good idea. Or they find it easier to say "no" than to figure out how to say "yes."

We have so many sayings in our heads. They all help us shoot down new ideas before they can take hold. There are the two classics: "We have never done it that way;" and "We have always done it this way." If you are doing everything possible to keep up in your work environment, the last thing you want is something to change. You may be behind, but you know how to work the system. It may not always be efficient, but you get out on time and do not want anyone to screw up your life.

Then there are those who say: "We've tried that before." Talk about the past! The last time it was tried may have been five or 10 years ago. In technology, it could be as little as six months ago. The world is changing rapidly. Do not accept that what failed last time will fail again. Be willing to examine the situation. Don't stand in the way of progress because of something that is ancient history.

The Brown Smith Wallace Consulting Group is a St. Louis-based technology consulting firm. They are recognized experts in distribution and have been serving STAFDA members for over 25 years. From companies with IT budgets in the thousands of dollars to Fortune 500 giants, they help clients implement specific programs to protect information assets and computing environments. As a member of STAFDA, you may call **Steve Epner** (314/983-1214) sepner@bswllc.com; **Jeff Gusdorf** (314/983-1208); or Network Security Specialist, **Tony Munns** (314/983-1297) for a free 30-minute consulting session.

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OVER

Many organizations are sure they know what the boss will approve or not. Many times, we hear John (or Sue or Mary or Bill) will not let us do it that way. But no one asks John, Sue, Mary, or Bill. Again it is easier to say "no" than take a chance and ask.

In order to grow and prosper, organizations need to be open minded. They need to nurture ideas, not kill them. When working with companies who want to lead their industries through innovation, we always list the killer phrases (those listed above and any others the group can think of) on flip charts. We post them around the room. Then, if anyone in the discussion uses one of the banned phrases, it costs them a dollar in the pot. At the end of the day, we usually have a nice donation for a charity and a better outlook to the future.

Attitudes are the biases that each of us carries. It is the way we, as individuals, look at the world. Everyone brings a certain amount of prejudice to any situation. The best leaders recognize it, understand it, and make sure it does not interfere with good business.

One of the biggest attitude problems is ego. Some people just cannot stand to have someone else come up with a better or different idea that they didn't think of first. Every idea that is proposed, they will find a reason to reject it. They will find a way to kill it before it can get traction. Later, they may revive it as their own, but usually the ideas are so dead, nothing can help them.

A second attitude is that we are so good, we do not need, nor can we use, things that help the rest of the world. When suggesting any accepted practices that are not being used, we constantly hear: "But we are different." In over 30 years in the field, there are very few real differences that would keep anyone from benefiting from best practices.

In tough economic times, the idea that change costs money and we don't have any to spend has assured more businesses of failure than any other attitude. Of course things are tough. If everything were easy and guaranteed, it would have been done by someone else.

The old saying about "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" is true. They know this may be the best time to change. React to and take advantage of the situation. Turn a negative into a positive. Implement a new technology. Gain a competitive advantage and survive.

The last one is the feeling that "what we don't know is not important." How foolish. Most people do not know what is available or even possible with technology. I chuckle when I hear people talk about waiting for voice recognition to be ready for business use. When they find out I was installing voice capabilities in the early 70s, they are very surprised.

This is the time: We are facing strange economic times. There is new competition everywhere. Price fluctuations make it difficult to forecast or plan. New regulations can strangle a business. Broken procedures make our processes slow, expensive, and error prone.

There are many ideas out there that are tried and true. It is just that many distributors don't know they exist. Some give lip service to things like Internet sales or collaborative computing (computer-to-computer communications between trading partners), but few implement. This means there are opportunities for anyone willing to challenge the old way of doing things.

This is a good time to look for new options and opportunities. Especially with technology, there are many ways to improve business. At STAFDA's Denver Convention, I will be presenting a short list of ideas that can have a dramatic impact on the bottom line. Do not miss the Technology & Consultants' Fair on Sunday, November 9. It will be a good opportunity to look beyond the killer phrases and attitudes that keep you stuck in the past.