

# Getting Past “But We’ve Always Done It That Way”

Hon. Michael York  
Justice of the Peace, Lee County

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## THE ROAST STORY

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It is important to recognize the mindset of WADITW can be in your personal life as well as in your career.

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### What's Wrong with "We've Always Done it That Way?"

- Might have been doing it wrong from the beginning
- Laws or rules may have changed since the policy or procedure was implemented
- May be keeping people from thinking outside of the box for better, more innovative solutions to problems or issues

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There are two different points of view when it comes to “WADITW”

1. The asker

2. The person being asked

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Put yourself in the role of asking a coworker or supervisor a question because you need clarification or support. The answer you get is we always have done it this way.

What are some thoughts you would be left with?

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1. My opinion doesn't matter
2. I am not part of this team.
3. I still don't understand how to resolve the problem
4. What am I doing here if I am not getting the training needed
5. Why the attitude?

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The top ten things people who say WADITW are really saying.

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•10. **I haven't got a clue** why we do it this way and I never thought about it before. But I'm not going to admit that to you.

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•9. Your question is a good one. But I never asked it and wish that I had. As much as your question disturbs me **I won't admit that out loud.**

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•8. You're new aren't you?

You new people just want to change our perfect little world. **We like it the way it is.** We can outlast you.

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•7. **How dare you question** the wisdom of your predecessors? It was good enough for them why isn't it good enough for you? Have you no blind respect and subservience to those who were here before you?

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•6. **You clearly don't know how we do things around here.** It has nothing to do with logic, fairness and openness.

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•5. If you are a team player **you will go along** with us without asking embarrassing questions like that.

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•4. **We don't like questions** like that. And right now I don't like you for asking it.

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•3. Perhaps you believe that you have the right to ask questions... but you're wrong. Shut up and **go with the flow.**

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- 2. It's working the way it is. **Leave it alone.** Can we go now?

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- 1. Despite what you were told, this is not a democracy. **We don't care about your ideas.** Just do what you are told to do. And do it the way that you are told to do it.

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- When you try to change things or ask questions you may hear the response “But we’ve always done it this way.” Don’t hate people for that response.

- “But we’ve always done it this way” is likely the response of a person who feels threatened.

What are some other reasons people resort to WADITW?

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- **Comfort**

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- Control

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- Fear of change, or the unknown
- Being disengaged
- Anything else?

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What are some other examples you can think of where people or companies were worse off by sticking to old, outdated ways instead of adapting with the times?

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**Blockbuster**

**Netflix**

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## How to combat WADITW

- If anyone utters these dreaded words, speak up!
- Tell them WADITW is never, never, never a good reason for taking some action or performing some process at work or at home

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- When in meetings, planning sessions, brainstorming exercises, etc., you should APPOINT a Devil's Advocate.
- Why do you need to appoint one?

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- Because if you give that responsibility to a person in front of everyone else, that eliminates the personal nature of it.
- He/she can offer resistance and/or alternatives without offending those who suggested them because for that meeting, it's just their job. (This is a good tip in general, but is great to fight WADITW)

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- Challenge yourself.
- Anytime you are ready to give the excuse WADITW STOP!
- And look at it as a challenge to reevaluate and investigate new methods or procedures.

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Have a “process-cleaning” party. Pick a slower week/month for your organization (maybe right around now?) and declare that it will be the annual time to reevaluate all processes and procedures, and of course add that WADITW is NOT an acceptable answer to approve a process for another year. A little housecleaning, if you will. I’ve seen this in action and it’s truly effective.

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Now is a great time for a “Process Party”!

Think of the things that have changed in the last year:

- Magistration (Damon Allen Act)
- Garnishment and Receivership Process and Forms
- Eviction Processes During COVID and the Many, Many, Many Supreme Court Emergency Orders

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In a world where change is the only constant, to rest on the platform of “this is how we’ve always done it” is shortsighted and lazy. To be a leader is not merely to guide others through change, or even to embrace change.

- Leaders pursue change.
- Leaders disrupting their status quo.
- Leaders seek a better way.
- Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.
  
- *Will you drive the change, or will you be taken along for the ride?*