



## **That's the Way We've Always Done It**

As an airline pilot, we had the privilege of riding on the jump-seat in cockpits of other airliners from other companies. It was always interesting to see how another group of professional aviators solved the same problems we saw on the same aircraft.

I was jump-seating back home and one of the crew members happened to be a good friend of mine. As a crew, they did some very peculiar things. Finally, I couldn't resist any longer and asked why they did a very simple procedure in such a convoluted way. The answer came back as "That's the way we did it on the DC-6".

When I travel around the country to and visit different soaring operations, I get to see how other clubs do business. I talk with the club leadership and CFG's and ask how they operate. It is remarkable how many times the answer to why they do something is that is the way they've always done it.

Many times, the club leadership does not even realize this is a potential problem. They have never asked themselves the question or even thought to ask WHY?

The reasons your operation does something because that's the way "we've always done it" are many and varied. Sometimes the reasons are obvious and easy to understand. Other times, the reasons are not as obvious or not easy to solve.

What should you do when you think that the way you do business is becoming institutionalized?

You need to start asking questions yourself. You need to begin to critically evaluate how you do business and how your operation conducts itself. You need to be willing to admit to yourself that maybe, just maybe, there is a better way to do things.

Are you the new guy or are you a member of the old guard? Are you a CFG or a student pilot? Are you the kind of pilot who likes to turn circles over the field, or is cross-country required to have fun?

Once you begin to feel that things can or should be done differently, you need to get a wingman or two. Start slow and begin to bounce your concerns off of someone else. See if you have a valid concern. This begins with a review process. A process that can evaluate how you do things.

Do not be afraid to question any part of your operation. Evaluate the specific steps and parts of each procedure.





Elicit the opinions of other pilots to determine how they believe the operation should be run. Begin to ask yourself if there is a better way.

If you think there may be a better way, start to formulate how you can do it better. Develop the procedure and then start getting feedback from other members.

You are on your way to a better operation.

But what about someone who is in leadership, or an influential CFG, or a racing pilot who takes your questions personally?

That is a very tough situation. Getting someone who is emotionally vested in how the operation is run to think that there may be a better way is hard. You have to get them to understand that their way may not be grounded in objective and established guidelines. You have to break each step down and demonstrate that what you are proposing as another way is based upon best practices and other criteria.

So good luck. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Who knows, you may know a better way than how it was done in a SGU 2-22.

