

The Sentry and the Rosebush

An ancient story tells of a sentry standing day after day at his post with no apparent reason for his being there.

One day, a passerby asked him why he was standing in that particular place. "I don't know," the sentry replied. "I'm just following orders."



The passerby then went to the captain of the guard and asked him why the sentry was posted in that place. "I don't know," the captain replied. "We're just following orders."

This prompted the captain of the guard to pose the question to higher authority. "Why do we post a sentry at that particular spot?" he asked the king. But the king didn't know. So he summoned his wise men and asked them the question. The answer came back that 100 years before, Catherine the Great had planted a rosebush and had ordered a sentry placed there to protect it.

The rosebush had been dead for 80 years, but the sentry still stood guard.

Before we laugh at or criticize this scenario, let us consider some questions:

1. Are we resistant to change? The answer is yes, for most of us. Change tends to make us uncomfortable.
2. For those of us who are supervisors, do we always evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the orders we give? Or are we guilty of asking our associates to perform certain tasks "just because they have always been done that way?"

As is true in this story, oftentimes routines and traditions are started – and continued – for the strangest of reasons.

In today's world, more than ever, we need to be creative and thinking outside the box to make the most of the work we are called to do.

– Beecher Hunter