

PROCESS FAILURE



By Scott Sedam, Contributing Editor



Sometimes life—and work—would be easier if you could forget some things you’ve learned. Blissful ignorance has its appeal, not just for individuals but for companies, schools, churches, governments, and organizations of all kinds. Just keep on doing what you’re doing, even if it’s not working so well. Blame the suppliers, blame the trades, blame your people, blame the other builders, blame the market, blame the press, and blame the government at every level. No worries, you have a long road to travel before you get to blaming yourself.

Yet, for most of us—and I suggest for everyone who has any bent toward process improvement—once you have that piece of knowledge, know its consequences, and are banged over the head with continual reminders, you just can’t let it go.

Even more difficult is willful ignorance whereby an individual or company makes the choice to ignore what Jim Collins termed, “Objective Current Reality.” I don’t have the temper I

had when I was young, and some now even describe me as patient, but encountering willful ignorance can push me right to the edge. Many times I have counseled—talked down, in effect—younger builder associates who decided to “face the brutal facts,” (another Collins saying) on difficult issues while their colleagues and bosses willfully refused. I could be the only author in history to quote Jim Collins and Cat Stevens in the same article, but during these talks, Cat’s old song “Father & Son” comes to mind with the line, “It’s not easy to be calm, when you’ve found something going on.”

This is the sixth in a series of articles in *Professional Builder* about process waste, how to identify and understand it, and awakening to the reality that the majority of product waste has its roots in bad process. There are hundreds of examples of process failure that seriously impede productivity and profit for builders, suppliers, and trades alike, yet there is significant resistance to tackling process obstacles head on. Going after product waste is comparatively simple. You can see it, touch it, measure it, test it. Process waste is a far bigger challenge.