

The Collector Chronicle

NORTH AMERICAN RECOVERY

June 2023

America's Collection Authority

Trouble

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When I was a kid:

My mom: "DAVID JOSEPH SAXTON!!!"

Me: "Oh no, I'm in trouble..."

I've always liked my name. Where I grew up, David was a solid, traditional name. Joseph is my father's first name, and his father's first name, and it's been the first or middle name of countless great-grandfathers of mine for generations. Saxton is a traditional English name with a lot of history. So, when you put them all together, it's a combination I've always been proud of. However, there were times when I didn't like hearing it.

Mostly when it was loudly and forcefully called, or should I say screamed, by my mother in that certain tone only she had. When that happened, I knew I was in trouble. There was no getting around it; No running from it. I might as well slump my shoulders, droop my head, and slowly walk toward her voice. The verdict was certain: trouble. I learned over the years that it was better to face the music right away, find out what I was in trouble for, then start my penance. I hated being in trouble...

So much so that when I started my company, I promised myself that none of my employees would ever be in "trouble." Not with me, and not with my managers. Now, don't get me wrong; people make mistakes. We are all human, and there will always be mistakes. If the mistakes are honestly made without malicious intent, no worries. We will work through them, and all will be well—usually. I'll explain more about this later.

Since being in "trouble" was so traumatic for me, I didn't want to ever put an employee in the same position and have them experience the same

LAST MONTH'S LUCKY WINNER

The lucky winner of our client prize for May is Deseret First Federal Credit Union. They have been using our agency since 2019! We will be sending them a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Enjoy!



THIS MONTH'S PRIZE

This month we will be giving away a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Each client who sends new accounts during the month of June will have their name entered into a drawing. At the end of the month, we'll draw a name, and if it's yours, you'll win the gift basket!

***Don't miss out on your chance to win!
Send new accounts before the
end of the month!
Good luck!!***



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trauma. (It's a different story if your name is Jordan Nicole Saxton, Chase Alexander Saxton, or Breeanne Camile Saxton. But that's a different story for another day.)

So, if you work for my company, you don't get in trouble. That doesn't mean you aren't held to a very high standard of performance—just the opposite. It's just that we go about dealing with mistakes a little differently. At least that's what I'm told by new employees.

For a newly hired employee, the idea that they aren't going to "get in trouble" if they make a mistake is a difficult notion to grasp. It's because with most other jobs they've had, they only hear from their supervisor or manager when they did something wrong, and they already were in trouble. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say, "Oh no, I'm in trouble." Or "Uh-oh, what am I in trouble for?" when they walk into a meeting with me and their senior manager for the first time.

I always respond with a big smile on my face and a comforting, reassuring tone of voice, and say: "You're not in trouble. People don't 'get in trouble' in my company." (And I actually do the air quotes with my fingers and pronounce trouble with a sarcastic tone.) They always look at me with disbelief and a little bit of shock, but by the end of the meeting, they have come around, and when they leave, it's with a renewed excitement for doing their job. We've usually established a high degree of trust and mutual respect with that employee, which greatly improves their confidence and performance. Most of the time. More on that later.

How do we go about doing this? Well, it starts by first telling the employee how much we like them, how glad we are that they are part of our team, what a great employee they are, and how much we like their demeanor, attitude, and work ethic. We find specific, unique positive things to point out about that employee as an individual. It's

important that we are genuine and focus on the uniquely good qualities they exhibit.

Next, we tell them about the mistake. But we do so from an entirely factual point of view—we don't make it about them personally—we make it about the process and the expected result. We discuss what should have happened as opposed to what actually did happen. Next, we apologize and take 100% responsibility for the mistake by stating something like, "I'm really sorry if we didn't fully train you on this. My bad." We do this to show them that we have skin in the game. And while I'm confident that we do train every employee thoroughly and completely on all tasks, the amount of information a new employee is expected to learn is significant. Maybe they forgot their training, or perhaps we actually did miss training them on that specific process. Regardless, we take the blame, and it helps.

After doing that, we pull up the training manual that applies to the task they were performing, and go over it together in excruciating detail to make sure they fully understand why the mistake happened—and to ensure that it won't happen again. This works in the vast majority of our interactions for a first-time mistake. Taking the time to retrain someone like this the moment we inform them of a mistake also helps with retention and positive employee morale.

As mentioned earlier, that's what happens most of the time. But sometimes it doesn't work that way, and they make the exact same mistake again. Now it's time for a different conversation. We still start this second conversation by telling them how much we like them and how glad we are that they are part of the team. We point out their great work ethic, their great attitude, and how much we enjoy working with them.

But this time, we don't take the blame for the mistake. We remind them of how we've already discussed this issue and how we spent time with them providing retraining and making sure they

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understood the process, and we confirm they knew what needed to be done in order to prevent another mistake. At this point, I reassure them that I believe they can do the job, but that sometimes, regardless of how much someone wants a position or a job, they might not be the right fit. When I tell them this, I usually share a story that illustrates my point. The last time I did this, I told the following story:

I made the freshman basketball team in high school. I was one of the starting five as the shooting guard. I made the team again my sophomore year and was again one of the starting five. However, the summer before my junior year, I got a part-time job because I wanted some spending money. Being one of eight siblings meant that my parents didn't have a lot of disposable income to hand out to us kids. So, I got a job. My job meant that I didn't have time for basketball anymore, which was a big change from previous years.

You see, ever since my seventh-grade year in school, I spent most every night shooting hoops in my driveway with my brother Willy and my dad. If I wasn't playing ball at home, I was at Backman Elementary (because they had 8-foot-high rims so I could dunk the ball) participating in pickup games with the best players in the neighborhood. The time on the playground those two years helped me develop the skills I needed to make the team in 9th and 10th grade. But getting that job before my junior year meant an end to my basketball career. I didn't even try out my junior year. But when tryouts came around my senior year, I really wanted to be on the team again. I went to every tryout and played my hardest, but since my development as a player stopped at the end of my sophomore year, I didn't have the skills to compete any longer. I didn't make the team.

I was devastated. But I learned a few good lessons. The most difficult one was that no matter how much I wanted to make the team, the fact that

I didn't put in the time and effort meant that I didn't deserve it. The other harsh reality I took away from that experience is that I probably wouldn't have made the team anyway, even if I had kept playing. You see, as a junior in high school I was only five feet nine and three-quarter inches tall (I'm still only 5' 9 & 3/4" tall). I can't jump very high, and while I had a decent jump shot and a few moves, I'm not very fast.

So, while I could hang with my peers when we were all freshmen and sophomores (and they were still smaller, like me), their genetic disposition allowed them to keep growing, getting taller and faster, while I kind of stopped at about 16 years old. The lesson from this? No matter how much I wanted to play basketball, it wasn't the right fit for me. I didn't have the tools needed to do the job.

I use this example to help people understand that no matter how much they may like a job, if they are constantly making the same mistake on the same process or just not "getting it," the job may not be the right fit for them.

When I finish my story, I continue by again telling them how much we like them, how great it is to work with them, how much we appreciate their work ethic and dedication, and that we like them as an employee, but again, some jobs just aren't the right fit for some people.

After these conversations, we see things go one of two ways. Option one: the employee refocuses, recommits, puts in the time and effort, does the hard work, and stays on the team. Success! This is our goal, and we are elated when it's the result. Fortunately, most employees figure it out and make it. However, if the employee doesn't make the necessary changes, put in the work, and another mistake happens, it's a different story. They still aren't in trouble, but it's time for a change.

Fortunately, because of the time we've invested, these final conversations are drama-free. The employee isn't surprised and agrees that the

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job is not the right fit, and that moving on is the best for both of us. No hard feelings. No harsh words. Just mutual respect and good wishes. Trouble? Nah, no trouble here. Just finding the best solutions for both parties.

It takes a lot of time and effort to work with employees this way. But like I always say (since I learned my lesson from not making the team my Senior year), anything worthwhile is going to take a lot of time, and a lot of hard work. I'm willing to put in the necessary time and work because it's important to me that every person who works for my company, no matter how long they are here, knows that I appreciate them. I am thankful they chose to work for me. Thankful for their efforts and dedication. Regardless of whether or not we were a good fit for them, I'm sincerely honored they would want to be part of our team.

I must admit, I haven't always gotten it right, but I've always meant it right, and I'm going to keep trying. Because each day is another opportunity to do things better than the day before. So that's what I'm going to do. And that's what our team is going to do. And hopefully we'll all do so without getting into trouble. Okay, Mom?

Thanks for reading. Have a great month.

Dave welcomes your comments and feedback.

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The Collector Chronicle is published monthly by NORTH AMERICAN RECOVERY for prospective and current clients. Please direct questions or comments to the editor, Dave Saxton, at DaveSaxton@North-American-Recovery.com

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