

I know that the last time we were together I talked about my driving adventures in the snow. If you are not totally sick of the snow (I know I am) and you can stand me talking about snow one more time, I will tell you about a snowy quirk in my personality.

This quirk has not been a lifelong problem, just since I have become a homeowner. Correction: a homeowner with an attached garage. I have labeled my affliction CDS or Clean Driveway Syndrome. Not a condition you will find in any medical dictionary, but real to me none the less. You see all winter long I want my driveway to look like it does in summer, clean and clear. If it snows overnight, I am out in my driveway before work, clearing snow. Depending on how much time I have before work, I will either clean the entire driveway or just two paths for my tires to follow.

One of my major stresses is when it snows during the day, and I can't come home to make sure other people don't drive on my precious driveway. Coming home from work after a day of snow, I have been known to park in the street, walk to the driveway and shovel a path in so I won't pack down the snow with my tires. When it snowed this Christmas Eve, I quickly shoveled two wide paths so that when we went to Mass, I wouldn't leave tracks on my driveway. Unfortunately I didn't hit the paths as I backed out, much to the delight of the family inside the minivan.

I do not own a snow blower, much to the chagrin of most of my family. 12 year old son Ben, seems to understand my non-snow blower ideal, but I fear I might have infected him with CDS. He is often offering to help me shovel. I also have been lucky because we have been blessed with great neighbors who sometimes (very often this year) help clear the snow off of our sidewalks. But they seem to sense my CDS and leave the driveway to me.

I think the reasons why having a clean driveway is important are several. First of all, it is much more difficult to shovel around tire tracks. More often than not I will get a good head of steam moving with my shovel and hit a track and about flip head over heels or my shovel will attempt to pierce a body part below my chest. Secondly it seems to me that every drop of that great white stuff ends up in my garage, which then gets tracked into the house.

As we look at our small businesses, there are little things that we want handled exactly our own way. Our employees might think we are one step away from being committed to the Looney Bin, but there is probably logic associated with why we ask them to do things. I like to have everyone answer the phone using a certain script and a tone of voice. Unless I took the time to explain, step by step, they just think I am an overbearing ogre.

Take the time to explain not just your company policies, but why the policies are your policies. What might seem obvious to you might not seem obvious to someone else, anyone else. When you hire new people, it is a perfect time to explain. Long term employees will also need a refresher course in "management logic" now and then as well. Everyone might not agree with your logic, but at least they will respect the fact you took the time to explain.

If you are ever in my neighborhood and would like to help make my driveway look like it does in the middle of July, feel free! And if you want me to remind you why I think it is important, I will be happy to try to infect you with my Clean Driveway Syndrome.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.*