

If you ever really want to get me mad, just bring up this phrase or something comparable in a business conversation. "That's the way we have always done it." Could there ever be a worse reason for doing something.

Do it because it's the right thing. Do it because it's the only thing. Do it because it's all you know how to do or because it's all you can afford. But please, don't do it because it's the way you have always done it.

Reading reviews and having conversations about our films and others here in Toronto lead to a discussion about reporting on budgets of movies. The amount of money spent to develop a movie is no one's business but the people involved. Once the movie is completed, either the viewer is going to like it or not. How much people got paid is irrelevant.

Yet for some reason, coverage of entertainment has gotten so difficult for those who write about it that they have to play the "salary card" or "boxoffice card". Want to say something derogatory about a player but don't want to actually have to write something of substance, just mention their salary. Want to chastise a movie that you haven't seen? Just mention the box office.

If making salaries public is so important, why don't reporters disclose their salaries? If weekly box office is so important, why don't newspapers report daily sales and subscription numbers? If box office is the ultimate reflection of the quality of a movie, shouldn't a newspaper, or magazines' daily or by issue sales be a reflection of the quality of that issue?

It's not hypocritical is it?

Which leads me to the stupidest of all financial disclosures.

Why in the world do sports teams disclose our attendance for games? Does it make even a little bit of difference to anyone at all? Do people bet on the number? No. Does it change the outcome of the game? No. So Yogi Berra knows it's too crowded and no one goes there anymore?

Does it help competitive entertainment outlets know how our business is doing? Yes. Could it give them an incentive to spend more money on promotion to compete with us if attendance is good? Yes. Could it give them more incentive to reference our attendance if it's down? Yes. I know I read the attendance figures of the other Dallas teams and it certainly impacts the marketing decisions we make in our market.

What's more, since teams do report attendance, it gives media something more to analyze. They want to dissect how we get to the number. Is it paid attendance? If the number was X, why were there so many empty seats? Which in turn allows them to speculate even further about what they think is impacting attendance. How stupid are we for reporting attendance?

So why do the Mavs report attendance?

I think it was 2 years ago that I told the management at the Mavericks not to report our attendance for a game. After each game, we turn in the boxscore, and I told them to leave the attendance blank. The league got all upset. They called us. They threatened to fine us. I told them I was of course going to report the numbers to the league, but I didn't want the media to report it because it was competitive information.

Sorry they said, you have to report your attendance after every game.

Why?

Because that's the way we have always done it.