

Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long an ape will go up the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as the ape touches the banana, spray all apes with cold water. After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result - all the apes are sprayed with cold water. Then turn off the cold water.

Now if another ape tries to climb the stairs for the banana the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them. Now remove one of the five apes from the cage and replace with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and tries to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the apes attack him. After another attempt he is again attacked. He knows now that if he attempts to climb the stairs he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm. Again, replace a third of the original five apes with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him up have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape. After replacing the fourth and fifth of the original apes there are no longer any apes that have been sprayed with cold water. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the banana. Why not ?? Because that's the way it's always been around here.

That is how behavior creates culture - and even how some organizations establish policy...