

Get Your Money

A Newsletter by Assegai Communications

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Dear Reader

Reading time: 4 minutes

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GIVE THE DEBTOR THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Have you noticed how often a debtor fails to pay the first instalment? It is a common occurrence, but sometimes it can have an innocent explanation.

Just as the debtors who plead, "I did not receive the invoice" are not always lying, so there might be an explanation for a debtor that fails to pay the first in a series of instalments. Perhaps the fault was not that of the debtor - it might have arisen in your own office! Maybe data was incorrectly captured, or possibly notice of acceptance of the debtor's offer - or, in the case of a new order the invoice, actually went to the wrong address, or not at all. There are many things that can go wrong to cause a delay in receiving money. If it comes to that, perhaps the money was paid, but it was incorrectly allocated. Don't tell me that this has never happened to you!

The bottom line is this - because the debtor might be innocent on this occasion and because we would rather have his co-operation than confrontation, we should give a 'first time defaulter' the benefit of the doubt. This does not mean we permit a lapse of time before we call - of course not. We call at the first possible opportunity, but we ask the question very politely, without rancour. Just in case.

DEBTORS MARRIED IN COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY

When you are dealing with individuals, you must always check to see whether they are married in community of property. When a debtor is married in this way, any negotiation for the payment of debt amounts to a negotiation that will have an effect on the joint estate. You may need to obtain the consent of the other spouse. Even though the original contract was entered into with the assistance of the other spouse (check - are you certain?), the new arrangement may also need consent. If you are ever in doubt, always ask for the consent and signature of the other spouse. It is better to be sure and your thoroughness will impress the debtor, adding to his conviction that he must pay.

WELCOME TECHNOLOGY, BUT DON'T FORGET THE PEOPLE!

Every few weeks it seems, another computer program is being developed to diarise, monitor and record contact with the debtor. Properly used, these systems ensure that no stone is left unturned, no debtor or obligation forgotten. Progress like this, enables individual credit controllers to deal with more debtors than ever before.

I believe in technology. I welcome the efficiency that it introduces. Still, it seems to me that we must never forget the "people factor". Credit controllers, like the debtors themselves, are people. Both sides respond to treatment that recognises the dignity and uniqueness of individuals.

"He who is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else."

Benjamin Franklin
