Danger in the supermarket

In May last year, while I was doing a quick shop in a branch of my favourite supermarket chain, I got hit on the head by one of those crates used for transporting vegetables to the shelves. The pain from the blow attested to the fact that those crates are heavy, and to the fact that it fell from quite a height and gathered some speed before nearly knocking me out. The staff were very attentive and helped stem the bleeding and managed to calm me. A bunch of flowers and a voucher also went some way to redress the hurt.

The store manager, Thabo, phoned me the next day to apologise and hear how I was. After assuring him that all was well and that I realised that these things happen, I then asked him what his plan was from here. Thabo's response was that the packer in the area would be disciplined and he was researching suitable stacking heights for crates. I asked him how he was going to prevent this from happening again in the future, he assured me that this will not happen again.

On my subsequent visits I was unsurprisingly aware of the crate stacking heights as I (carefully) walked through the store. And indeed the crate stacking height had been reduced. Until November that is. I noticed that stacking heights started increasing again after that. And in December I was compelled to take the photograph below.

Imagine if that stack toppled over and a frail person or little child got in the way. How likely is that? Probably as likely as me getting in the way...

The high stacking of the crates is one of those behaviours that seem impossible to get rid of. I have given up with Thabo on this, he doesn't really think he can do any more on this than he has already

done. The vast majority of people that I meet think like Thabo. And that is why bad habits or behaviours come back to haunt us and result in similar incidents occurring again and again.

Applied properly across the whole organisation, Root Cause Analysis will help to reduce bad work habits and the resultant recurring incidents.