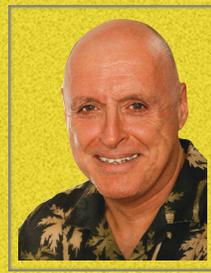


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



70 Success at the Speed of Trust

Every once in a while I get an idea for a commentary that has the potential to make some people want to yell at me...I'm Jerry Roberts and I've got a feeling today might be one of those days, next on The Extra Point.

How much do you trust your workers?

What kind of decisions do you let them make and which do you not trust them to make, reserving them for yourself?

This last question could generate a broad response and I've only got a couple of minutes here so let me narrow the focus: this kind of trust usually relates to how much money we're talking about — right?

When I first came to Guam the joke was that most workers had to get their manager involved if they needed to buy anything for the business, including paper clips. Any purchase had to be approved, no matter how little the amount.

All discounts had to be run by the manager. The clerk or salesperson had little or no authority to get creative. If a sale was for any price other than the regular price, the boss had to be called in. If they weren't available the transaction would have to wait.

As a customer this was frustrating. As an employee of a company I can imagine it was all that and embarrassing, too.

I came to learn that many business owners felt that employees either weren't qualified to make those types of decisions, or worse, they feared the workers would flat out steal from them.

In my experience there is more freedom for workers to make decisions today. That said, those old worries still exist for many. I routinely encounter frontline workers who aren't allowed to make changes.

In my humble opinion every restaurant server should have the authority to give a free meal or discount when something has gone wrong for a customer. No manager need be in the mix. Make the call right there, right now. Don't make the customer wait.

It's the same with every other business I can think of. If you're worried over giving this level of authority, here's a rule you might consider:

If you have an otherwise good worker who makes decisions you're not comfortable with, then school them until they make better decisions. And if you have a worker who you discover is stealing from you, get rid of them. Then, tighten up your hiring practices.

Look, this isn't a perfect science and there could be bumps along the road. However, the potential advantages are worth a try.

Frontline workers will be encouraged that you trust them more, and that could be a real game changer in how they look at your company. In fact, you might find that given the opportunity, they jealously guard your pricing and only go off the rate sheet when it's totally justified.

The more the frontline is trained to handle most situations, the less their supervisor needs to be a watchdog. Managers can spend more time coaching your workers and building a far stronger team...and it all starts with trust.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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