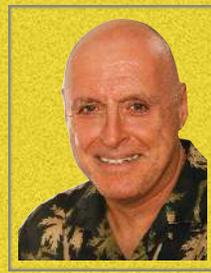


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



146 The Appropriate Send-off

When people leave the organization, what is the appropriate way to bid them farewell? A certain morning talkshow host brought up this question a couple of days ago and it's worthy of nibbling at. I'm Jerry Roberts and let's talk about good workplace ways to say goodbye, next, on The Extra Point.

When a valued coworker decides to retire or move on to another opportunity, it's common for us to want to celebrate. Sometimes the boss opens up the corporate wallet and brings in food, or takes the individual and a selected number of others to a restaurant. Quite often, everybody just brings in a dish of food and lunch is in the office.

Let's get beyond food. There's more to the goodbye, and everybody is the winner if you do it right.

First, if the departing worker has been with the organization for many years, and they give us a lot of advance notice, I want to do something to add value to them while they add value back to us. Let's say that notice is six months. In the case of someone retiring, this isn't out of the question. I've heard of workers pegging their departure a year or longer in advance. No, you won't always get that much time, but it's great when you do.

My question is, can I turn this experienced worker into a formal mentor for others in the department? Maybe that's already happening in an informal manner. Maybe he/she won't mentor everyone, and instead will focus on one person who will become their replacement. If handled well this can be of great importance to the organization, not to mention the person being mentored.

When it comes time to celebrate our departing worker, we'll talk about their contribution to the career of the one taking over for them. For

many workers, this is a nice way to add an exclamation point to their professionalism.

The next thing I want to do is spend some time in the exit process. If the worker has been with our organization for a long time, you can guess they have some strong opinions about the operation, what they like and don't like. Well, I want to know how they feel. So, along with the HR manager's interview on their way out, I want to buy them lunch and ask their advice on what we can do better.

The important thing is not to let the opportunity pass you by. Long time workers have both a lot of technical or job-related knowledge to pass along, as well as organizational info that can be of help. Letting experienced people just walk out the door without enlisting their help just doesn't make sense.

As for the celebration itself I've heard of some fun things. One guy was an avid golfer. The employer connected with his buddies and put a light-hearted "tournament" together, which included his regular golf crew, plus coworkers, and even some of the customers and vendors the man had worked with. There were special games and prizes, and everybody won something.

I've heard of other events with bowling, fishing, and even karaoke as the theme. The main thing is just to have fun and show them how much you care. It also sends a message to the whole organization on how you value people.

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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