

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



62 Where You Goin'?

Today's commentary is an article in *Directions* magazine written by Bill Gibson, then executive director of The Employers' Council, dated August 2001. I'm Jerry Roberts, the following is a solid resource for young workers who want to get ahead with their organization. That's next on The Extra Point.

Read this only if you hope to get to the top of the pay plan someday. You might be surprised to learn that 55 percent of what others perceive about you is based on your clothing and appearance. Fair or not, your outward appearance is the very first (and sometimes the only criteria) that employers, customers, and coworkers have to judge your competence and ability.

Creating a positive impression

Proper appearance and grooming isn't just for senior executives. It's for all of us, no matter what kind of work we do or what we wear on the job. Here are ways to do that.

- Be well-groomed and appropriately dressed when you are at work.
- Choose clothing that creates a positive, reliable image and make sure they fit properly.
- Keep your clothing clean and pressed.
- Build a wardrobe containing fewer items of better value and higher quality.
- Stretch your clothing dollar with outfits that will still be in style next week.
- Buy accessories to add diversity.
- Wear the appropriate amount of jewelry, makeup and fragrance.
- Avoid extremes in hair styles and accessories — no one is going to buy a \$40,000 car from someone with purple hair and three nose rings.

Your company spends considerable money on employee development training. Yet most of the skill it takes to succeed doesn't come from

seminars or management programs, but on the job. Experience is still the best teacher, especially adverse experience.

Good lessons to learn: stay cool, remain calm, be sensitive, and be thankful for mistake-tolerant supervisors and managers. Next time you make a mistake, large or small, chalk it up as a good lesson and move on to the next challenge. The chances are excellent that you'll never take that particular wrong turn again.

Successful companies accept the fact that mistakes occur as part of dynamic business growth. Mistakes come with the territory. Remember the old saying, "If you don't make any mistakes, you're not taking enough risks."

Skills to master for success

Listening is one of the most critical workplace skills required in today's workplace. Most people listen at about 25 percent of their potential. There are three basic steps to listen at 100 percent efficiency — STOP, THINK, and LISTEN. Refine your listening skills and avoid potential problems in the future.

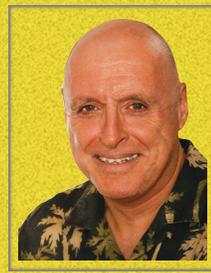
Writing is another important skill. Poorly written communications tend to bury good ideas, confuse your boss, frustrate your coworkers and make your customers angry. As you communicate with colleagues and customers through e-mail, letters, memos and reports, be natural. Skip all the legal-ese, government-ese and fancy words — just write the way you talk. Better yet, write the way your grade school teacher taught you: using simple, declarative sentences.

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62 Where You Goin'? (continued)

Learning to lead

Leading, communicating, supervising, motivating and team building depends on the right style for the occasion and the people involved.

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Center your leadership somewhere between your authority and your ability to persuade. Your leadership style should be appropriate to the needs of the people in your work group and the actual work to be done.

Remember, your leadership style is like the measles — good or bad — it will be passed down the line. You can influence employee behavior without even knowing it.

The best place to learn to lead is on the job. You'll be a good leader, a good supervisor if you once had a supervisor who was a good leader. Think back to when you worked for someone who was a really good boss.

That person was firm, fair, not afraid to criticize or to give compliments. That boss was a good communicator and a persuasive leader who treated you with dignity and respect. Now where does it say you can't be like that?

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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Bill Gibson wrote some 50 articles for Directions from 1996 to 2010. His career titles included broadcast journalist, governmental spokesperson, and executive director of The Employer's Council for three decades.

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