

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



125 A Lost Opportunity With a Former Customer

A former customer calls you on the phone, with a small need that you can easily handle, and it wouldn't cost you much, if anything. What will you do? I'm Jerry Roberts and come along as we walk the path of lost opportunities, today, on The Extra Point.

Surprises can go both ways. We can be excited and delighted, and it can also go in the other direction and leave us confused, disappointed, maybe both.

I was asked to speak at a luncheon and, rather than put together a 20-minute talk, I decided to facilitate a brainstorming session for them. I've done a lot of these for businesses. They're fun, interactive, and always generate useful ideas the organization can factor into their plans.

I use a simple mindmapping technique and lay a big piece of paper on the table, the kind people use for flipcharts, and everybody writes whatever comes to mind. So, I'm heading out the door and I've got everything I need — except for the flipchart paper.

Figuring the hotel would have flipchart pads I call and get the food and beverage manager on the line. "Is it possible that I can get four pieces of flipchart paper for the luncheon today? I might need six, but I think I can get by with four." The F&B manager tells me that will be \$25. I answered that I didn't need the easel and a whole pad of the paper, just a few sheets. It would be \$25.

Six dollars and 25 cents each? So I politely declined, saying I'd just buy a pad at an office supply store. Ten minutes later I'm walking out of National Office Supply with said pad, 50 sheets, \$17.21, About 35 cents per sheet.

There's more to the story. I have a history with this hotel. I've conducted a number of workshops there, but not for a long time. The

reason is that they're more expensive than most others, and this particular F&B manager is extremely rigid in terms of pricing. The \$25 for four sheets of paper reminded me of that.

Here's the confusion and disappointment. I'll be in their facility for the first time in years. I'm a former customer and we'd always gotten along okay. I paid my bills and didn't break anything, so you'd think they might recognize an opportunity to say, "Hey, got any training coming up where you'll need a banquet room?"

A tuned in seller would say, "Look, I have rules I have to live with and I have to charge you something for the four sheets of paper. How about a buck a sheet?" I have paid it. Now, someone on the top of their game adds a sweetener. Four bucks for the paper because I have to, but stop at our coffee and snack outlet and grab a cookie and a drink on me — because I can. It's a simple gesture but an attention grabber, and could jumpstart new talks about doing business.

Surprise former customers in a good way. It doesn't have to be expensive, and you might be surprised at where it leads.

The final tally was nothing for the hotel. I spent \$17.21 and was able to give my kid a big pad of the 46 remaining sheets to draw on, which scored a big "ooohh" and some good dad points. So it was a great investment.

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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