

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



186 7 Ideas on Resolving Conflict

Some managers and supervisors spend as much as 60% of their time on this. No matter what else you accomplish and how good things are, if you can't handle this part of the job of being the boss, you're going to have more bad days than you can imagine. I'm Jerry Roberts and today we talk about conflict, and what to do about it, on The Extra Point.

In our courses *Dealing With Difficult People* and *The New Boss*, we discuss a wide variety of issues that relate to conflict. Sometimes that can be conflict with customers and vendors, but more often than not it's two or more of the people on your team, who get into it for some reason and you end up in the middle.

Sometimes these are mild disagreements and other times it flares up into a full blown typhoon of workplace trouble. In any case, until your people understand the principles of fighting fair and solving their own interpersonal problems, you'll be sucked into all of it.

I've only got two minutes for this but let me give you a few ideas to teach your team members.

To start, here's the fundamental premise. Handling conflict successfully requires emotional maturity, self control, and empathy. And I'm talking about you now, not the people who are having the problem getting along. It would be great if they exhibited those characteristics. Of course, if they did, you'd have fewer problems in the first place — right?

1. The relationship is the ultimate priority. We want to continue working together. Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be the goal. Workers must respect the other person's viewpoint.

2. Pick your battles. Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of an absolutely certain waste of time, energy, and emotions. If it's a small thing maybe you can just ignore it.

3. Get to the essence of the disagreement. People tend to toss all kinds of things into their argument that can cloud the issue. Peel away the layers and deal with what's important.

4. Focus on the present. If you're holding onto old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. People hate it when folks bring up negatives from the past. Stay focused on now.

5. Instruct the parties to try to resolve matters themselves, before involving you. If they can do this even a small percentage of the time, that's two wins in one. They learn a valuable skill and you can avoid some of the hassles.

6. Be willing to forgive. I didn't say forget as that's not really possible — but forgiveness is your choice. If the situation was reversed you'd be hoping for forgiveness, wouldn't you?

7. And the final note for today. Once in a while you won't be able to come to an agreement. If that happens, then just agree to disagree. Let it go, disengage and move on.

This just scratches the surface but hopefully it helps resolve some conflict where you are.

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

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