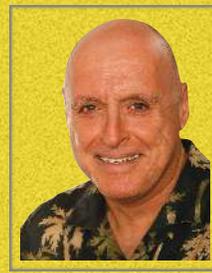


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



232 Change Series: Lack of Assertiveness

This week we're discussing things that we do or don't do that can get the boss upset. Today, let's focus on a character trait that many of us have, which doesn't always serve us well on the job. I'm Jerry Roberts and I'll you what that is, next, on The Extra Point.

The character trait I'm referring to that is relatively widespread in Guam, is a lack of assertiveness. Does that make sense?

In areas that concern personal issues and their job and career, many people find it difficult to stand up and be vocal about them. Unless provoked, they're content to just go with the flow and accept what comes their way. We're going to focus on the work end of this conversation only, how not being assertive can become frustrating for our boss.

Let's start by being clear. I'm not saying that a lack of assertive behavior is a character deficiency. Not at all. In many cases, maybe all cases, we were taught not to speak up, or stir things up. We might have been taught that it's polite to let others go first, to get what they want, to give others the larger share. There are elements of this that run through Chamorro, Filipino, Asian and other island cultures. It's seen as an issue of respect.

I've known people who were told by a parent or grandparent jobs are tough to come by, that they should keep their nose clean, their mouth shut, show up and leave on time, and mind their own business. To avoid any kind of confrontation. Does that resemble anyone you know?

There are three types of people we find in the workplace — those who are aggressive, passive, or assertive... assertive being the middle ground. There's often confusion as people think that being assertive is being aggressive or close to it. That's not the case.

Social media hasn't helped. If you spend much

time with it you've probably noticed that there's not much interest in anything to do with "middle ground." Aggressive people are portrayed as jerks, while passive ones are seen as doormats. Real life isn't as black and white.

Let's bring the boss into this. How does this lack of assertiveness make his/her job tougher? For starters, people who aren't assertive may not ask many questions on how to get a task done. They might accept a job at face value and later get stuck, which could have been prevented had they asked those questions. Sometimes people don't want to let the boss know they're confused about a job, and instead of speaking up they ask a coworker to help them.

Some employers have told me they've had workers they had to stick up for because they wouldn't stick up for themselves. Still others have been surprised when a good worker left them for another job, as there were greater opportunities available if only they'd spoken up and shown interest in being promoted.

This is a huge topic and I've barely scratched the surface. If this description fits you, here's how you can start in a painless way. You have to step out and step up, but let's make it easy. Go to your boss and explain that you'd like to do more. Maybe they have a small project you can take on, or be part of a committee for an upcoming event. If you're given a job to do, ask a lot of questions. Find ways to get your voice heard. Assert yourself just a little, and show people what you can do.

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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