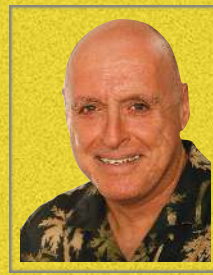


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



283 Reverse Mentoring – Is it Worth a Try?

We've talked about mentoring and the value that can bring to workers who yearn to grow and get ahead. But have you heard of reverse mentoring? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, let's look at another way to do it that might work well for your organization. That's coming next, on The Extra Point.

Reverse mentoring, also known as reciprocal mentoring, has been used in organizations for about 20 years. While traditional mentoring usually features a veteran worker who helps a younger, less experienced one in a specific topic or skill, reverse plans add a dimension.

Let's say that younger person has a skill the veteran would like to pick up or improve. They then enter into a second and simultaneous mentoring relationship. Thus, both parties are mentor and mentee. We're both receiving and providing value. That's reverse mentoring.

Making it work is a little more involved than one-way mentoring. Here are some ideas to consider.

1. Bury the egos and bury the rank. One party isn't superior to the other. I've got knowledge in my topic and you've got knowledge in yours, and we both want to get better. That needs to be the foundation of the program.

Yes, I know you're the CEO and I'm the 20 year-old new hire. While we're mentoring each other, this needs to be an eye-to-eye relationship. This is going to be important if we're going to be able to push each other past our comfort zones.

I have to say, this is harder for people who are older, and who are in the senior management levels. Many people in these categories just can't get used to a younger person — often much younger — teaching them. Those who are open to such a relationship look forward to

their mentoring sessions, and are excited to be learning new things.

HR managers may want to experiment with mixing and matching people and personalities to find good fits. Encourage your CEO or business owner to participate, as well as all managers. Besides the swapping of skills, you should see stronger relationships develop, and a reduction in generational gaps.

By the way, if you've already got a mentoring program set up, reverse mentoring can slide right into it. It doesn't have to be separate.

2. Define expectations. What are we trying to do here? I'm not going to be a chief financial officer but I would like to be able to read a profit and loss statement. You have no interest in being a social media specialist, but you would like to better understand how to expand your influence on Facebook and LinkedIn. When the stated expectations have been met, the two parties can terminate the mentoring, or continue simply by advancing the objectives.

3. Schedule your meetups like you would any other serious commitment.

4. Have fun with it.

Mentoring programs can do wonders in every kind of organization, drawing people together while sharing valuable knowledge. Jump in and take advantage of it.

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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