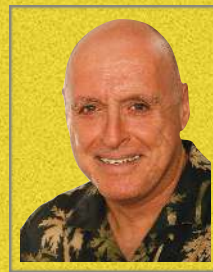


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



317 Business Lessons Learned at a Young Age

It was my first official job and it was dark, and cold, and all I could think about was, "What was I thinking about, being out here and doing this?" I'm Jerry Roberts and let's talk about business lessons learned at a young age, next, on The Extra Point.

It was February in L.A. and temperatures dipped into the 20s overnight. It was also a bit windy so what they call the wind chill factor made it seem colder than it actually showed. I was on a partially lit street corner at 3 a.m. and the light coat I had on wasn't enough. I was 13 and on the first night of my first official job, delivering newspapers for the local weekly.

I was told if I got there at 3 o'clock I'd be done in time to get home, shower, and make it to school by 8:00. It was a distance from our place so my mom dropped me off and went home to sleep. She was a waitress and had the breakfast shift at the restaurant. The route manager met us, gave me a box of rubber bands and a hand-drawn map of the route, and then he'd driven off. There I was, alone in the cold, folding newspapers and stuffing them into the bags the guy had draped over my bike. I learned that folding papers was hard in the biting cold and going faster didn't always make it easier as the rubber bands might break. Soon I was done and on my way, with the first load of some 350 papers I would deliver, in an area I knew nothing about.

Since every home got a paper there was no guessing involved. Just toss one on every driveway. I might have thrown five when the first one came undone as the band broke and pages began flying in the wind. I gathered it up and put it back together with another band. This would be repeated a couple more times before I stopped and put a second band on each paper before continuing. That was my second lesson, getting the product where it had to be and looking good could be challenging and took more time.

Every few blocks there was another stack of papers and more folding, which never got easier. There were also loose dogs on one particularly dark stretch and I had to swing a paper at one a few times before he ran off. I learned having a stick with me worked better.

I finished after 7:00 and it took 45 minutes of fast peddling to get home, but I was late to school. I learned having a paper route wasn't an acceptable excuse, so I got dinged for it.

I learned that going to bed early on one day a week wasn't easy and I normally did the route on very little sleep, which, even at age 13, led to a sleepy day at school. I learned to deal with the cold. I learned to expect problems and to figure out solutions. I learned to work fast or my 45 minutes of frantic biking was not going to get me back in time for school. Then I learned about newspaper economics. I knew I wouldn't get paid unless I collected from people who were not subscribers and didn't have to pay. However, I'd been told that wouldn't be a big deal. Well, it was. It required weeknights and even weekends, and peddling that distance back and forth several times — and most people did not pay. The job that had looked pretty good ended up being worth maybe 30 cents an hour once all the collecting time figured into the calculation. I resigned the route about three months later, having learned perhaps the biggest lesson of all — that I should ask a lot of questions the next time I applied for a job. I did...and you should, too.

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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