

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



318 When the Younger Worker is the Mentor

Major changes in the workplace will require managers of all ages to develop different skills in order to effectively deal with people in different age groups. I'm Jerry Roberts and today we talk about one of those scenarios, when younger managers mentor older workers. That's next, on The Extra Point.

In almost all workplace mentoring situations it has been the older person with more experience serving as the mentor, guiding a much younger mentee, helping them in their job and career. However, two factors, happening right now, are about to change the mentoring landscape.

First, Millennials and Generation Zs currently represent almost 40% of the workforce, and that will hit 50% in the next few years. The second issue is that a large percentage of Baby Boomers will either return to employed status, or never leave it unless they are forced out. In 2017, 32% of those aged 65-69 were employed, and that number is going higher.

Some Boomers simply want to work as long as they can because it fits their lifestyle, while others have no choice because they don't have enough money to retire. In any case, as more older workers remain in or come back to the workforce, there will be a need to update their skills; otherwise known as "reskilling." In many cases this will create a need to work with a mentor, a younger mentor, and will require adjustments by both.

Will the older person, perhaps a former manager or business owner, be able to take instruction from the younger person, without absorbing a huge hit to their ego? If they were a boss not so long ago, it could become an uncomfortable situation for mentor and mentee.

Whether it's the younger mentoring the older, or vice-versa, the approach is the same. Make the other person comfortable, and assured

they are valued, and that you're not just shoving some kind of training down their throat.

I'd want to establish mutual respect by opening with something like, "Before we jump into this, I know you have a lot of knowledge and I hope you'll be willing to help me at some point, just as I'd like to be of help to you. I believe everybody has value to pass along to others, and we can all benefit from that."

Another approach could be to team up. "I'll bet a lot of people are saying you and I can't make this work because of the difference in our ages. What do you say we prove them wrong?" If your counterpart agrees with either narrative, you're off to a good start.

Next, lay down the objectives of the mentoring, determining how close they are to where you want them to be. This is a point A to point B calculation. Once you concur on that you work together to determine the content of the mentoring, and develop a timeline.

Mentoring isn't easy. The only thing tougher is coaching, which is far more proactive and requires a deeper relationship. In either case it takes patience, persistence, encouragement, and a big helping of understanding. If you can put all that together, the odds of success go way up in your favor.

We recently talked about super powers in this space. Mentoring is one of them and will make you stand out. Learn how to do it right.

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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