

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



329 When Workers Are Afraid to Speak Up

Are you afraid to speak up when you think your boss has made a mistake? A lot of people are. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we work through an issue that is an issue with a lot of workers and their managers. It's next on The Extra Point.

Question number one. Have you ever worked or do you now work for someone you would never even think of correcting in any way, whether that's in front of others or in private?

Question number two. Are you a manager who has a team of workers who never tell you when they think you're going in the wrong direction? Or they never challenge you on a position you take? Let me go a step further on this point. Have you ever had something go wrong and you later discovered that one of your people recognized you were heading into trouble, but they didn't speak up?

There are usually two reasons workers won't stick their neck out to do this. One, it could be cultural. In their culture, people don't get in each other's face. Or, in their culture, workers would never speak that way to their boss. Reason two is that they're intimidated by the force of the boss's personality, and that fear keeps them from airing their opinion. They do feel that they would be sticking their neck out if they said something.

We can solve this and let's start with the manager. If that's you, I recommend that you establish that you're not just open to the idea of workers giving their opinion, but it's your preference.

"Hey gang, gather 'round for a minute, let's talk about something. You know, we're all in this together and communication is really important for our success. Do me a favor, if you see a better way to do something or you think I'm making a mistake with a decision,

will you come to me and tell me? I've made mistakes before and I'm going to make more, so I need your help if you see something. Let me know and we'll talk it over. Will you promise me you'll do that?"

Yeah, I know, there are a lot of managers who will never make a little speech like that. I've worked for a few of them.

If you are willing to get past ego and do this, don't expect every worker to feel comfortable right off the bat. It's a process. If people do come forward, hear them out and discuss the issues. Thank them for telling you. The word will get around that you really do want to know what workers are thinking, and communication should improve.

If you're the worker and you're nervous about having this kind of conversation with your manager, you could ask this kind of question: "Boss, if I ever notice something that could be a problem for us, how would you like me to approach you?" In most cases the answer will be, "Just tell me."

When you do have something to speak up about, you can say, "Boss, you remember you told me to just let you know if I felt there was a problem or a potential problem?"

Set up these important lines of communication before you need them. Doing so will pay off for everybody.

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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