

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



350 What to Do When You Say the Wrong Thing

You're been in a heated discussion and said something that, later, you wished you hadn't. What should you do? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, how to handle a situation when our words get away from us. That's next on The Extra Point.

Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero has raised eyebrows in her recent comments, referring to off-island companies that pursue military contracts as "carpetbaggers." She characterized them as benefitting from doing business in Guam, but that Guam comes out on the short end.

I don't know if she really feels that way or not, and our mission today won't include a debate on the merits of the buildup or pausing the construction. We also won't discuss whether she was right or wrong in her statements. That's up to her to decide, and if she needs to make any clarification.

What this event did accomplish is to allow us a chance to talk about how to handle situations when we're scrutinized and criticized for something we say. At one time or another, in a personal or business situation, many of us have uttered words that caused us problems. I've done it several times, including on the air, and I had to deal with the repercussions.

What do you do if it happens to you? Here's a few suggestions.

1. If you can find any humor in the situation, maybe you can score a couple of points. "Did I really call them carpetbaggers? You know, we're remodeling our house and I spent half the weekend looking at carpet samples. I guess that was still on my mind."

2. Whether or not I use humor, I wouldn't be afraid to let people know that I regret if my words proved hurtful to anyone, and that I was embarrassed at my slip. If a direct apology is called for to a specific individual, make it. This

gains us a little empathy, because most others will remember how embarrassed they were when they were in the same situation. It says, "I'm only human and I make mistakes, too."

3. Explain the point you were trying to get across when your words went astray, to let people know why you got so wound up in the first place. Keep the explanation simple. "Even if I used questionable words in describing the situation, it doesn't change the reality that we've got a serious problem to deal with."

4. With clarification and any apologies issued, now you move on. Don't dwell on the issue, put it behind you.

One more thing. If you're ever caught up in a tense situation and you feel under pressure to respond, but you don't feel you're ready to do that, my advice is to call a timeout. Time out. Look at the person or people you're engaged with and say something like, "I'll be happy to respond to your question/statement in just a moment. I need to step away for about 10 minutes for a personal reason, and then I'll be back to answer." Then walk away. Go to your office, or maybe the restroom. Take a breath, gather your thoughts and decide how you'll address the issue. Maybe splash some cold water on your face. Walk back in with an air of confidence and say what you have to say.

Tough moments can be managed effectively with honesty, humility, and maybe just a little creativity as well. I hope this helps.

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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