

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



364 The Art of Giving Feedback to the Boss — Part 2

When it comes to giving the boss feedback, there are a few key issues to be concerned with, as well as the potential for surprises. I'm Jerry Roberts and today as we continue this conversation, we'll outline the steps you can take to make the experience go smoothly. That's up next, on The Extra Point.

There are two times when you'll give feedback to your boss. One, when they ask for it, and the other is when they don't — when it's totally unsolicited. Are you breathless yet? "Give my boss unsolicited feedback?"

We established yesterday that managers need feedback from their team members. It's essential for their success and they don't get enough of it. Sometimes, none at all. If you're providing unsolicited information this is the angle you should come from, "Boss, I know like all good managers, you're interested in the opinions of your team, and I know you probably don't get enough of that. If you're interested I'd like to share some thoughts with you that will hopefully help."

In almost all cases you're going to get the green light to give your feedback. Even if the boss isn't particularly interested in what you have to say, they'll likely still agree just out of curiosity. That said, your feedback will carry more weight if your manager judges you to be a credible and trustworthy source.

1. When you start you start with praise. Sincere, legitimate praise for a great decision, leading the team to their best year ever, or something else that highlights his/her leadership abilities, problem solving prowess, or something else that's good. Don't even think of introducing concerns until you lay down a layer of praise. You don't want them defensive. This is how good managers deliver feedback to their workers, and you'll return the favor here.

2. When you deliver praise make it personal. Make it about them. When you deliver anything that deals with criticism, focus on the issue and keep the personal aspects out of it. You want to say, "I overheard your conversation with Joe the other day and I believe I know why it didn't go the way you wanted. In Joe's case, maybe a lighter approach would get better results." That's preferable to, "If you didn't yell at Joe I think he would have responded better."

3. We talked about surprises. One you should be prepared for is your boss challenging what you say. When I coach managers my advice is for them to solicit feedback from team members and then listen to what they have to say, only questioning them if they need clarity on something. This is not a time to challenge. But you may be challenged. You know your boss and the possibility they won't accept what you say, and the kind of questions you'll hear.

A couple of points in closing. You're doing your manager a good turn by providing this information. It's important to do it. It's also a great way to strengthen your relationship with the boss. It also gets easier the more you do it.

Second, managers who take feedback from workers are building bridges and scoring trust points. You can double those points by taking action and implementing suggestions given. Honest feedback is a gift. Give it and accept it that way and everybody wins.

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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