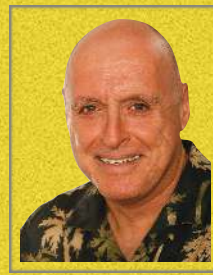


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 373 How to Approach Your Boss With Criticism

Are you okay with giving your boss some constructive criticism? What, you'd love to but there's no way you'd ever get involved in that kind of conversation? I'm Jerry Roberts, and what if I tell you that, deep down inside, your boss probably is wishing somebody would. That's coming next, on The Extra Point.

I owned a company for about 20 years. I made decisions on projects and on people, most of them turned out okay and some of them didn't. Sometimes I had to decide without much input or the input was incomplete. There were times I felt I was alone, flying blind, and just had to guess what to do. Wherever you work, it's likely your boss has felt some of those same emotions during his/her career.

It's also likely that they don't get much critical feedback from their team. That's too bad because all manager's need it and organizations do better when people feel free to communicate to all levels. Further, if their heads are screwed on straight they want it. All that said, let's talk straight — telling our boss a difficult truth, but a truth they need to hear, it isn't easy and it can be intimidating. Maybe there's a fear of retribution or we're worried that it's not appropriate to question our boss's judgment.

Let's lay down the foundation for such a meeting with our manager. The first thing to remember is that our boss almost certainly sees the business from a different perspective and possibly makes decisions based on input we never see. Thus, we want to be careful how we phrase things when we raise issues. We see the business from a narrower perspective and when we feed back to the boss, suggesting that a mistake was made or judgment could have been different, we should do so based on the broader view.

1. It's best to start with questions rather than statements. "Boss, I'm confused over your

decision to (we list the details and then add ... can you help me understand?" Their explanation may answer our concern and save us the embarrassment we'd have felt if we opened with, "Boss, I think you made a mistake in your last decision."

2. Just because we don't like the boss's decision or direction is not a valid reason for being critical...unless we can add a legitimate concern for the well-being of the company. If that's the case, we can say it this way: "Boss, I think we should reconsider our approach on ABC because of the problem it's causing with XYZ." Start with what we need to do, which is to reconsider, followed by the word "because," which is then followed by the problem, which is the reason for changing policy.

3. If we don't like how our boss has treated us and that's the reason for the conversation, then we let them know how we feel, but do so without accusations and without anger or strong emotions. "Boss, when you did or said such and such, it made me feel upset and devalued, and I don't think you're the kind of person who would do that intentionally."

Role play with yourself before the meeting, imagining what the boss's responses will be as you state your case. I've given criticism to my managers during my career and by following the basics mentioned here, it's resulted in good conversations and stronger relationships. I hope those are the results you get.

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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