

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



380 Communicating With Workers After Hours

What is your preference for communicating with coworkers? Is it by phone calls, regular texts, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger?

There are a lot of choices and there's no right or wrong. I'm Jerry Roberts and today let's talk about business communications. It's next on The Extra Point.

I was in a meeting a few days ago when the leader of the group asked me how I preferred to communicate. Was it by phone, text, WhatsApp or something else? I appreciated the question and I've asked it myself when first connecting with people.

It's important to know their preference because I'm guessing if I use their preferred means of communicating, that the chances of reaching them will improve. Truthfully, that's not always the case. Some people still don't return calls even if you do use the method they like best, but I do believe it does help in the long run.

How should we view this when the communications are between a worker and his/her boss? Let's use texting as the example — whether standard texts, WhatsApp, or Messenger. Are there rules involved? Yes, there are rules, but all are basically the unwritten variety and this is going to be confusing, it's going to be a case-by-case decision whether all or none of those rules apply between the two parties.

When I published Directions magazine I often worked late, frequently still at it at two or three in the morning. If I needed to send a message to an editor or graphic artist regarding an article, I would write it and hit the send button. If texting was their preferred method I would text instead of the email. One person was always awake overnight and would quickly reply. Another was sleeping and I wouldn't get a reply for hours. I was fine with that. The

message had been sent and I was on to something else.

Then I was told all this was a big no-no and bad form. I should never send messages outside of normal business hours. Never overnight and never on weekends. They said it was even disrespectful, because some people left their notifications on and would hear my message come in.

Frankly, I suggest turning off notifications when you want to have quiet time. That way you won't be disturbed by messages at odd hours. On the other hand, managers and workers need guaranteed ways to touch base during critical times and should discuss how that will work. Does texting at all hours and during an employee's personal time lead to burnout? Do workers feel they have to be monitoring all the time? Do managers feel they have a right to connect with workers anytime they feel the need?

There's also the fact that many managers feel frustration if their messages aren't answered right away, and they end up transferring that frustration to the worker by complaining.

As stated earlier there are no absolute rules for this, though some organizations have established guidelines for how and when it is appropriate for employees to communicate outside of regular business hours. What do you think? Is it okay to send messages whenever you want or should there be limitations?

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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