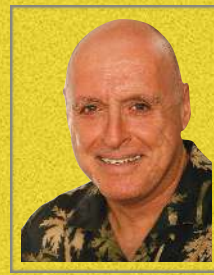


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



406 Are You Task-Oriented or People-Oriented?

Are you task-oriented or people-oriented? Which is best? That is, best for you and best for your team. I'm Jerry Roberts and let's go over some of the pros and cons of each, next on The Extra Point.

There's a long-standing debate among corporate leaders and especially HR managers when it comes to leadership style. In one corner are those who are people-oriented, and in the other are those who are task-oriented.

We'll spend a few minutes today discussing both, asking if one is better than the other, and looking at the positives and negatives of each.

Task-oriented leaders create clear, easy-to-follow processes and schedules to manage the work flow. They establish specific requirements and deadlines. They are consistent and get things done on time. Performance goals and meeting deadlines are the main focus for this leader, not the well being of the team members. This style is sometimes called autocratic, because the manager may not consult team members for input before making decisions.

The people-oriented approach focuses on well being and relationships, but doesn't mean goals and deadlines are ignored. Being people-oriented involves supporting and developing team members. Leaders who follow this path give serious consideration to how their decisions affect others. The style is more democratic, with high levels of communication, with workers feeling a sense of ownership in the choices made.

Now, the task-oriented pros and cons. First the pros. Optimal efficiency. High standards. Lots of structure. Well organized. Workers who need organization and structure will often turn in their best performance under a task-oriented leader.

As for the cons or the downside of the task-oriented method, creativity is often a victim of the process because workers aren't given the freedom or time to look beyond the boundaries of the job at hand. They generally follow the accepted processes. Self-motivated workers find it difficult to prosper in such a rigid atmosphere. Morale can also be low.

Now let's look at the pros and cons of people-oriented leadership. The pros are that workers feel they're more a part of the organization's success, are better appreciated, and that they make a bigger difference.

There can be negatives. If you take away too much structure it can result in workers lacking in direction. If the focus leans too heavily toward building strong relationships, overall performance can suffer.

As you can probably guess, success in leading today requires a blend of both approaches. We need to take the best parts of each style, figuring how to combine them to make our own unique method. The objective is to get the work done and reach our goals, while developing great working relationships.

It's not easy and I see this battle rage on in every workplace I visit. My suggestion is to take meetings and openly discuss the options. It may take a lot of trial and error before you find the best solution, but it's definitely worth the effort.

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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