

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



426 If You're Not Getting a Steady Flow of Ideas

You say your team members really want to work together and come up with great new ideas, but it's just not happening. I'm Jerry Roberts and today let's dig in and find out what to do about it. That's next on The Extra Point.

When workers successfully collaborate, it's a beautiful thing. When that doesn't happen the way we prefer, we're often confused about the reasons it didn't. Was it a bad combination of workers, or something else?

Some people churn out work at a high level and others don't. Some kids play nice together, and others just can't get along. It's always been a mixed bag and it always will be.

The question is, can we make the process easier, to a point where everybody feels good about taking part.

1. The simplest answer is asking the question, "Have you, the manager, created an atmosphere where ideas are not only valued, but you place a premium on them? The Harvard Business Review and Google conducted a recent survey that found 89% of global executives say that for a business to be successful, they need new ideas from everyone, regardless of company position. If you want ideas to flow in your place, you need to have a culture where people feel comfortable coming up with them.

When a worker comes up with a solution to a problem, or finds a way to upgrade a system or process, or saves you a bunch of money — how do you handle the situation?

Do you celebrate their success? Is there formal recognition? Does the whole team go to lunch or dinner? Will the person or people who came up with the solution end up with a bonus in their next check? Tell me straight out, do you make a big deal out of people thinking up and developing a win for your organization?

If you do, then that becomes an important part of your company culture...part of your DNA. Workers will spend time and effort looking for ways to get better because you've made it clear that you value it. If you don't do any of these things, then why should anyone work up a mental sweat to brainstorm improvements?

2. Avoid perfection. Google has a system where ideas are in one of three levels of completeness. Draft, where coworkers are welcome to give feedback. It's about the big picture at this point. We're not focusing on details yet. Next is Work In Progress, where feedback is still encouraged and now we can get into some of the finer points and hash them out. The last stage is labeled Final. This is a complete idea, concept, job, or project. It will undergo some review to make sure the individual or team didn't skip something important or useful — but it's close to done.

The big thing here is Google doesn't spend a ton of time trying to polish the finished version and make it perfect. As we've mentioned numerous times in this program, perfection is not your friend. You'll never achieve it and it can ruin you if you chase it. Make it good, make it great, but don't try to make it perfect.

3. Don't let mundane tasks rob you of time to innovate. We all fall prey to busy work. We get bogged down in all that day-to-day stuff and it keeps us away from being creative. Find unique ways to automate the boring things, or maybe gamify them. A few ideas on how to think about ideas in your organization.

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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For information on how to send your team to the Live2Lead conference on November 7, please click this link: guamtraining.com

