

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



431 Leaders Don't Run From Their Mistakes

You're the leader and you've just made a big mistake. I mean, this one is going to be painful. What do you do now? I'm Jerry Roberts, today we'll talk about the steps to take if you want to do the right thing and maintain the confidence of your team. That's up next on The Extra Point.

This edition of The Extra Point is one of the more important in our series. It's all about trust, the ultimate currency in building teams. Without it you will never achieve what you are capable of. It just won't happen.

So let me just come out and say it: if you are caught lying to your team or trying to cover up a mistake you've made, you are setting fire to your own house. As the saying goes, it can take years to build trust and seconds to tear it down.

I've had leaders tell me they thought they had to be seen as powerful and always doing the right thing, or the team would lose confidence. I'm not buying into that.

Mistakes are a part of life and nobody likes to make them, yet everybody does and that's not going to change. Most are small and rarely do lasting damage, but even the more serious errors don't have to ruin your reputation as a leader.

If that's where you find yourself here are some ideas on how to turn things around.

1. Admit the mistake immediately, making sure all affected parties know. The longer you wait the worse a problem can get. Own it. Don't try to hide from the problem and don't make excuses. Certainly never try to shift the blame to someone else. The sooner you acknowledge your error and accept the consequences, the more respect you'll earn.

2. Limit the damage. While figuring out how to

resolve the situation, make sure to protect the organization and individuals from further potential damage.

3. Apologize quickly and save relationships. If your mistake caused trouble for anyone, go to them and let them know you're sorry for any inconvenience caused. Offer help where possible. Again, that's about the relationships.

4. Let the story not be about the mistake, but about what you did to recover from it. If you try to evade blame and you're found out, that will always be the big story people remember.

On the other hand, if you take responsibility and then lead the effort to make things right, that's what people will look back on.

5. Use the experience to your advantage. These become teaching moments for everybody else, as well as ongoing examples of how the organization handles mistakes.

These situations play a critical role in leadership development because they teach us how to deal with issues that don't turn out the way we hoped they would. Big mistakes, painful and sometimes expensive as they may be, offer the opportunity for advanced education.

The ideal to strive for is when failure is seen as a part of success. You don't have to celebrate errors, but make sure you learn from them, apply what you learn and move on.

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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