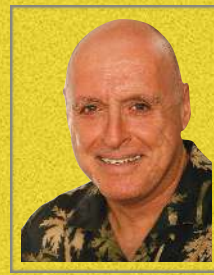


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



434 Changing Your Leadership Style – How Hard is it?

A few days ago we talked about the different styles of leadership. What if you've been locked into one style and you decide it's time for a change? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, what to do if you want to go for a style makeover. That's next on The Extra Point.

Last week we listed the various leadership styles: *autocratic* maintain control of the situation and make the decisions. They don't consult their team. *Democratic*, where the team is involved in the decision making. *Laissez-faire* leaders provide the tools to do a job and then step away, letting the worker handle things. Finally, *servant leaders*, who get to know each person on the team well, coach them up, and view them almost as a client, providing tools and guidance to maximize their achievement.

Maybe you've been going along with one of these styles for a long time, and now you decide it's time for a change. How hard will it be to do that? Let's take a look.

First things first. You're used to your current style and so are the members of your team. The initial question to ask is what's wrong with what I'm now doing? I want to know the answer to this before I make any changes. If most of the workers are comfortable with how I lead and we're hitting our objectives, then perhaps I'd be better off testing a few small tweaks to the system, not a wholesale swap of styles.

Explain the various styles to your team and ask them to identify yours. Wouldn't you be surprised if there was disagreement among workers as to how they classify you?

The next question is tough and I know because I've asked it: "Is there anything about how I lead that bothers you or makes it difficult for you to do your job well?" It's not easy to get feedback on a question like that. Let me give you some advice. If you have the courage to ask such a question, be smart and just listen

to what people tell you. Don't try to defend your position. You asked for feedback and workers gave it. That's hard for them, especially if they aren't sure how you'll take it. If you feel the need to explain yourself in light of their answers, do so in private meetings.

Once you have the feedback and if it clearly shows that a change is advisable, the next issues to deal with are how much and how fast? Unless you've got real problems my advice is to go slow and initiate small adjustments, those little tweaks I referred to. You don't always have to make a big announcement on what you're doing, either. The subtle approach is often appreciated. People will almost certainly notice at some point.

Change is challenging for everybody. Most people don't favor it. We like what we know and what we're used to. While small changes are usually fine with most people and may not need much discussion, the same can't be said for the larger ones. If you end up considering a major overhaul in how you do things, I'd want to run that by my team before making things permanent. Get everybody on the same page before implementing new decisions. This gives you a chance to sell the concept and get some additional feedback.

Transforming your leadership style doesn't have to be disruptive. Communicate well with team members throughout the process, and it can be easier and smoother than you might expect.

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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