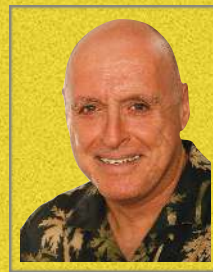


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



501 Can We Get Some Clarity Here?

Recently, we said managers are smart not to solve everybody's problems. Most people agreed but there were some who said I need to clear some things up. I'm Jerry Roberts and today we'll pull out the clarity machine and get busy. That's next on The Extra Point.

In Extra Point #488 we discussed what to do when a worker walks into your office and says, "Boss, I've got a problem." In general, my position was to work with people to get them to think for themselves. I said, "A worker who can't solve problems has to be taught how to do that, or you'll always have to do the thinking and the problem solving. I also said the role of a problem solver is to create more problem solvers.

Nobody called me on the carpet for this, but I've had some suggestions and I'll share them today. One manager — we'll call her Maria — said some workers are natural problem solvers and don't need help, while others need constant assistance.

Her solution was to work with the employee to find a solution the first time, and remind them of that solution the second time the same issue pops up. She learns what they remember from the first go-round and again helps them.

Where Maria draws the line is the third time. She said: "After the second occurrence I tell them we've covered it and the next time they need to take care of the problem on their own."

Another person, Bob, doesn't want to deal with any of this. He said, "We've got customers running through here all the time. It's just easier for me to jump in and fix what needs to be fixed. People make mistakes, they forget, and I can live with it. It's better than continually replacing people." He said something at the end that was surprising — "For what I'm paying I don't expect a lot of thinking." That's a pretty interesting point of view.

If Bob is of the opinion that he can't get workers thinking their way through any kind of problems when they're making a lower wage, I think his attitude is ruining his chances.

Here's where that clarity needs to come in. I get it that Bob doesn't have a team full of deep thinkers, but maybe he's selling them a bit short. Maybe there's more talent and reasoning power than he realizes. If he's willing to find out I suggest a little exercise. I would have him list all his team members and give them a grade for solving issues, 1-10, 10 being best. Let's say he has one eight, a six, a couple of fives, and the rest score four or less.

I'd have the eight work with the six to improve his skills, while Bob would work directly with one of the fives. Hopefully, you'd end up with three people you could trust to make some level of decisions. Then, see about the other five, and start working a little with the fours, etc.

So the question comes up, "Should I even bother with someone who scores badly on an evaluation like that?" I'll answer in the words of one of my early mentors, Big Ed. "The only time you ever stop working with someone is the day you decide to let them go."

His opinion was that as long as you've got someone on the payroll, you need to try to help them get further and do better...and most of the time they will. Some more than others and your mileage may vary. Hopefully, this adds a little of that clarity some folks were looking for.

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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