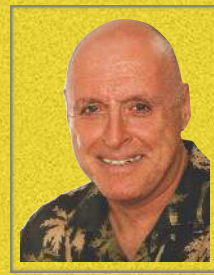


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 592 Simple Strategies for Workplace Conflict

Dealing with difficult people in the workplace. We've all had our challenges when folks are tough to get along with. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, a couple of tips you can use to do better with that, on The Extra Point.

People write books on dealing with people who are tough to deal with. Some people produce courses on the subject. I did that about 15 years ago and it's been one of Guam Training's most popular programs. We want to know how to handle ornery coworkers and customers. I'm going to help you do that today with two basic concepts.

Before I launch into this, I strongly believe you improve your chances for success if you can move the individual to a conference room or somewhere away from others. Nobody else has to hear what's going on. You can say, "Please, join me over here and let me see if I can help." If they follow your lead it's a small agreement. In psychological terms it gives you an advantage. Get them some water and put your phone on vibration mode. This leads us to the two tips I referred to.

1. Be curious and ask questions. Statements can be more threatening to someone who is already agitated. If you say, "George, you're getting mad for no reason," then George may assume you've already judged the situation and it could make things worse. If you had said, "George, you're usually pretty calm about everything. Why is that not the case now?" This puts George into explanation mode. He's going to open up and give you his reasons. As he does you ask more questions.

Curiosity opens the mind and lets us see more possibilities. We naturally ask more questions, and better questions. Better questions usually lead to better answers. Open-ended questions that start with what, why, or how make the other person give you more details and help with understanding.

"What happened to make you upset?" "Why do you feel the way you do?" "How do you think we can make things right?" In my experience, the more questions you ask in a normal tone of voice, the quicker they'll return to normal.

2. Don't go for an instant cure. Unless you're absolutely sure you completely understand the situation and have the solution, don't go for an instant cure. Too often we're in such a hurry to solve problems that we end up with a poor solution or none at all. Our desire to end the problem pushes us to grab a fast fix. We act as judge and jury as we speed our way to a quick verdict, and that can lead us in the wrong direction.

Another reason to take your time and ask enough questions is that it helps the individual unload. From a psychological standpoint, people under stress and highly emotional want two things. They want the problem solved in their favor, yes, but often more than that they want to be heard, to feel they are understood.

Not everybody has this particular need to the same degree, but we all have it. When people have the feeling nobody understands and worse, they're not being given the opportunity to be heard, frustration builds and a solution is increasingly unlikely.

Workplace conflict isn't always easy to handle, but these simple strategies can help.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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