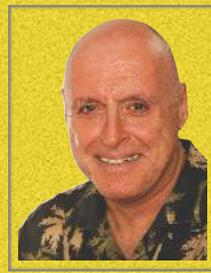


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



644 Revisiting the Land of Unwritten Workplace Rules

Workplace rules come in two flavors. The ones that are written and those that are unwritten. I'm Jerry Roberts, and we're going to talk about the latter, next on The Extra Point.

In Extra Point #196, from November 2018, we looked at the topic of unwritten workplace rules. In that program we identified a handful of rules that, though unwritten, are fairly common. You can download the transcript from our website, and I'll give you a quick summary here. The five we covered were:

1) Don't play loud music that anyone else can hear. 2) Don't bring smelly food and certainly don't cook it there. 3) Don't leave a mess in the kitchen. 4) Don't steal food from the employee refrigerator. 5) Don't pass along jokes or memes, or Facebook posts. All those are pretty simple. Today, we'll dig a little deeper.

Before I go any further, you have to understand that unwritten rules and the degree they are in force — and are enforced — vary from organization to organization, sometimes from department to department. It's tough to gauge but I give you a couple of ways to navigate that before we finish up.

6. Whoever barks the loudest gets the resources. When budgets and resources are limited, very often the people who relentlessly pitch management are the ones who get what they want, while others look on, saying "Hey, how about us?" It's important to understand how that process really works, before you follow all procedures and still come up empty-handed.

7. Politics sometimes wins out over fairness. Back to procurement. Who decides how to parcel out resources? Who decides who gets access to opportunities? Who makes the final decision? Who has a longer and maybe a stronger relationship with that decision maker than you have? Wouldn't you want to know?

8. Know the reality about office politics. A friend told me a story, saying when he was hired the boss said he'd get along a lot better if he ignored office politics and gossip. Then, he spent the next day with the HR manager, who told him he'd likely have a better chance to get ahead if he jumped into the politics and gossip, just to know what was really going on. Needless to say, he was pretty confused.

Quick story from baseball. About 10 days ago, San Diego Padres shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr., one of the most exciting rising stars in the game, hit a grand slam home run against the Texas Rangers. After the game, he apologized. He had unknowingly broken one of baseball's unwritten rules.

The Padres were leading 10-3 with one out in the eighth inning, had the bases loaded, and Tatis had a three-ball, no strike count. On the next pitch he swung with all of his might and connected for the homer. It was now 14-3, and some Texas players and fans got down on Tatis.

They thought it wrong that he would try to drive in more runs when the Padres already had a big lead. In fact, to show their displeasure, the Texas pitcher threw behind the Padre's next batter, Manny Machado.

The pitcher and Rangers' manager were both suspended. Even the Padres' manager chimed in, saying, "We're not trying to run up the score or anything like that"... "It's a learning opportunity"... "He'll grow from it."

Players from other teams came to Tatis's defense in social media, the majority saying the rules were stupid and should be done away with. Of course, the baseball analysts and reporters jumped on the story and chewed it over incessantly.

(Con't.)

From my perspective, if you don't want someone to score runs on you, then get them out. Don't invoke some silly rule. What if Tatis had taken the next three pitches and all were strikes, then the Rangers stormed back to win the game?

Tatis said he didn't know the unwritten rule. Now that he does, I hope he chooses to ignore it. Once you do know what they are, you don't have to observe all unwritten rules.

Last point. How do you find out what the unwritten rules are in your department or organization? Here are two ways. One, when restaurants are again a part of life, grab a lunch with one or two workers who've been there the longest, and ask questions. Another way is to flesh out what you want to know through someone who has retired. Retirees are often great sources of information.

Happy hunting in the world of unwritten rules.

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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