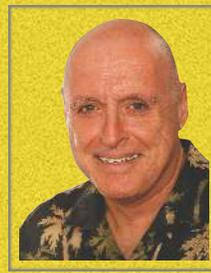


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



672 Giving Effective Criticism – Part 2

How good are you at giving criticism? If you're a supervisor, you need to be good at it. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we continue our look at what I'm terming Criticism 2.0, the way it needs to be. That's next, on The Extra Point.

Yesterday, in the first part of this set of Extra Points on criticism, I stated that there are three components to effective feedback. They are: it has to change behavior, provide motivation, and improve performance. If it's not doing those things, it's a waste of time.

Before we go any farther, I'm using two words here which mean the same thing in this discussion, criticism and feedback. Most folks like the word *feedback*, but *criticism* has all sorts of negative fur attached to it. Don't get stuck here.

Let me add another word you can use when someone has made a mistake and you know you have to sit down with them. The word is *correction*. "Okay, a couple of things didn't go the way we wanted today, I'd like for us to spend a few minutes looking for a correction, so we can get back on track."

Use that instead of, "Man, what is wrong with you? How could you screw that up? Dude, you better get it together, and I mean FAST!" That may somehow make you feel better, but it's counter-productive.

If you've ever sat someone down over a mistake, or you needed to set them straight on something, or to congratulate them on a job well done, you've likely seen various reactions to your words. It can go from happiness and excitement, to discouragement, or to defensiveness, to name a few.

If you start barking at an employee, or blaming, or being abusive, those defensive walls are going to go up, and no serious progress is likely to be made.

I believe most people want to improve, and they appreciate the right kind of feedback. Be seen as a fair boss who helps them to grow, and they'll listen — if the criticism is presented in the way I suggest.

In my years as a trainer and consultant, I have heard countless workers tell me stories of feedback that was unnecessarily negative. More than a few times I've had someone tell me something like, "Hey, I made a mistake, yes, but it's not like I did it on purpose...but that's how he/she made me feel."

The safest bet is to limit the conversation to, "Here's what happened, here's what we learned, now how do we want to move forward, so we don't have the same problem again?"

That's an inviting discussion that both manager and employee can feel good about, and it has a decent chance to yield the hoped-for result.

From the worker's position, they're thinking, "What behavior or procedure do you want me to change? Show me my mistake and how to correct it. Make me better than I was yesterday." There's no negativity in any of that. Nobody's temper has to be triggered, and no defensive walls have to go up.

There's something else. If a manager learns how to enter into and conduct a productive feedback session, workers will never fear being called into one. Eliminate worry from the equation. More tomorrow, on Criticism 2.0.

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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