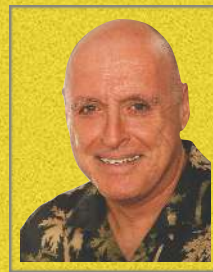


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



682 Should You and Your Team be Arguing More?

Do you argue well in your organization? Do you argue enough? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, let's dig into the value of everybody on the team knowing the value of getting into arguments with each other. That's coming up next, on The Extra Point.

Yesterday, in talking about the background and ideas of Live2Lead Guam speaker Alan Mulally, we hit upon the fact that when he became president and CEO at Ford, he found it necessary to teach his executive team how to argue with each other.

I found it bewildering that people at that level of a massive business like a major automaker, would have trouble communicating ideas with each other. We're talking men and women who likely survived a long and careful process to land their position, and who should be at the top of their game. Yet, they didn't argue well? How could that be possible?

I began to think about the organizations I'd worked for, and others I'd worked with in my role as a trainer and consultant. The pieces began to fit.

First, let's get clear on the term "argument". It's not a negative, as many people believe. The definition is to discuss, debate, dispute, and reason. When lawyers face a jury and give their final arguments, they are reasoning with the jurors to try to gain a favorable verdict for their client.

So, when Mulally took over Ford, he may have quickly figured out that his executive group weren't good at reasoning. Maybe that meant they had always gotten what they wanted and never had to put up any resistance or line of reasoning. Or, perhaps they forced their will on others to get their way.

It could also mean that when challenged, they shrank from the task of defending their position

and got pushed around. I don't know about you, but I've seen all of those things happen in a top-level team.

There's another facet to this. Some CEOs put themselves in the middle of conversations and the results aren't good. Years ago I was recommended to a group that was looking to hire a facilitator for their annual strategic planning. It's important work and I like to know how a team works together before accepting that kind of job. They agreed to let me observe a regular executive meeting.

The CEO opened by saying he wanted everyone to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions. He then brought up an issue and made a point, asking someone else for their opinion. When the person finished, the CEO strongly disputed what they said. They were wrong, said he.

Then he made another point and asked the next person for their position. Can you guess what happened? The man made it clear that he was in complete agreement with the CEO. And, you know, for the next 20 minutes I stayed in the meeting, everybody agreed with the CEO. No dissenting opinions, nobody else deciding it was worth the effort to present a different side.

I quietly walked out, stopped by the desk of the person who would process my choice as facilitator, and explained what I had seen. I said the only way I could take on the job is if I was the highest ranking person in the room and had complete authority to control the flow of the conversations. Otherwise, I wouldn't accept it. The man said that probably wasn't going to fly in this case. I thanked him and left.

John Maxwell would tell you, the late Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, often said it, not only do you want to know the value of your arguments, but you also want to know the value of those given by your opponents. (Con't.)

THE POINT
93.3 FM / 1350 AM / 104.3 FM HD-3

GUAM  TRAINING

The overall objective is not that you win, but that the group wins, coming up with the best answers for their circumstances.

Here are some thoughts that may help:

1. Know your stuff, backwards and forwards. Know the upsides and the downsides. Be ready to promote your ideas. Let's go a step farther. Let's say you've got a really good idea, but you know there are other strong concepts people will promote. Ask yourself this question: What must I fight for and protect, and what could I give up, if necessary?

So many people walk into a room ill-prepared. Don't you be one of them.

2. Don't try to control the conversation. Speak freely and allow the other people to do the same.

3. Allow them to make their points without interruption or judgment. Don't defend your position by making statements about theirs. Instead, ask them questions to get clarity on the points and ideas they express.

4. Try to find some common ground, and see where it leads.

5. My mom said, "Jerry, you can disagree with anyone and get away with it, so long as you're not disagreeable. In other words, and mom said it this way — don't be a jerk.

You don't have to make someone else wrong in order for you to be right. All you'll really accomplish in doing that is to make an enemy.

6. This appeared in a diary entry from the year 1863 in which the words were recorded as spoken by a Jesuit Priest named Father Strickland. A lot of people have used these words and have been credited with them, but this is the earliest mention I found. You've heard it before and it has incredible power if you harness it. "There's no limit to what you can accomplish if nobody cares who gets the credit."

When everybody has a clear understanding that the only thing that matters is you come out of that room with a win for the team, then it's about reasoning, not arguing — and that's

how you get it done.

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.

###

For information on training and consulting services from Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

