

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



738 Talking to Your Team About Stressful Events

With all the political intrigue and divisiveness going on these days, how can managers and business owners rally their teams and keep them on track, regardless of their individual viewpoints? I'm Jerry Roberts, and is this is something every organization should be thinking about? It's next, on The Extra Point.

Political anxiety. It's everywhere. People lobbing snarky Facebook posts at each other, social media censoring certain views while leaving others untouched, even though they appear to be just as divisive as the ones who are being censored. Hmmm.

In all of this we need to operate our companies, motivate team members, sell stuff, provide service, try to make a profit, and press on for better times.

Reading Forbes magazine yesterday, I caught an article that discussed how to work your team through times as precarious as these. The author is a man named Kwame Christian. He's a lawyer, author, director of the American Negotiation Institute, and professor of negotiation for The Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law.

I think he made some powerful points, and some of those things I've discussed here on The Extra Point. However, the staff writer who sent out the email notice, damaged his approach. That's coming in a moment.

Christian says we can't ignore what's going on in the world, and we should be proactive to stay ahead of the game. Too many leaders are passive and just hope issues go away, which they rarely do. We should be intentional, acknowledge what's happening, then restate the goals of the organization so everyone can refocus on what we all agree is important. Let people know that what's going on "out there" shouldn't have an impact on what's happening "in here."

Even though we may not share the same political viewpoints, I still care about you, respect you, and I'm excited to be a part of this team...glad you're a part of it, too.

According to Christian, a critical part of this takes place right at the beginning, as you explain what's going on in non-partisan terms. Now, we go back to that staff writer. Here's the intro she used in announcing Christian's article.

"Over the past few days, I've watched individuals and business leaders struggle with how to address the assault on the U.S. Capitol by pro-Trump insurrectionists. I'm hoping we can take away lessons from this horrific event, such as these important crisis management teachings for business leaders confronting emergencies of their own." Then she gave the link to the article.

Christian's article makes excellent points, but the staff writer colored it with her opinion. The words like "assault" and "insurrectionists" are being pushed by liberal media. It turns out I have a family member who was there, and she paints a completely different picture. This is not a radical woman. She said what's being presented in the media is not completely accurate.

It's likely at least half of the people in your workplace would disagree with the way that language describes the event. Especially so, when the media kept silent while people rioted and American cities burned during the summer. I don't want to get swallowed up by the politics of all this. The key point is what Christian advocates, to keep it non-partisan.

Key point, don't miss this. Christian, as a negotiating expert, understands that if you frame a situation in such a way that it casts a shadow on a particular person or group, you run the risk of losing people right from the start.

(Con't.)

That will make your job just that much harder.
You want universal buy-in, not pockets of
resistance.

Therefore, leave your personal opinions out of
it. If you don't think you can, then ask
somebody else to address the team.

What we should be after is letting people
know that regardless of the craziness that is
coming at us, our workplace is safe for them.
We respect them and we want them here.

If you handle these situations right, they just
might be unprecedented opportunities to build
trust. Stay focused. You can do it.

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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