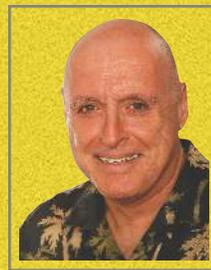


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



747 Are You Asking the Right Questions?

Big Ed once told me that if I wanted to get the right information, I'd have to learn how to ask the right questions. But, what are those questions...and are you asking them? I'm Jerry Roberts and let's find out, next, on The Extra Point.

Big Ed, my first boss, would ask us questions that required us to prove that we understood what he had said in a meeting. Since he was my first real manager, I thought everybody did things the way Ed did them. Not so. In fact, the vast majority of managers I've worked for often did not ask the right questions.

In example, in our course *The New Boss*, let's say you want to know if a worker was paying attention or clearly understands the points stressed in the meeting. The majority of managers will ask, "Do you understand?" Simple, right? Correct, except it's the wrong question.

I've been in meetings where I knew people were mentally "dialed out." The body was in the room, but the mind was vacationing. One day, the boss saw what I saw and asked this guy that question, "Do you understand?" The answer he got back was, "Sure boss, I understand."

As we walked out of the conference room, the guy turned to me and said, "Man, I wasn't listening, what did he say in there?"

The right question in that situation is not "do you understand?" This is because a simple "yes" response gets the person off the hook. If I press the issue after that, it would indicate that I don't believe what the person told me. Doing that in front of other members of the team might lose you a few style points.

The right question is one that doesn't focus on *if* the person understands, but *what* the person understands. "Jose, based on our

discussion, what changes are you going to have to make?" If Jose was thinking about anything but what the boss was going over, that's about to be exposed.

Sure, Jose can save a little face by saying, "Uhh, boss, there's a lot to consider here. I'm going to have to think about that. Can I get back to you in a couple of days?" Jose is pretty smooth and sold his answer nicely, and the boss nods his head — even if he thinks Jose was mentally in "La-la Land" and doesn't have a clue as to what was being discussed.

The goal here is not to embarrass workers in meetings. The goal is to ensure they listen. If you're a manager and you know people aren't focused in meetings, ask specific questions that require specific answers.

If I wasn't listening and I get that kind of question, and I'm not as quick a thinker as Jose, I'm probably going to be embarrassed, and I won't want that to happen again.

People spacing out in meetings isn't new, and it affects every workplace in Guam, as well as everywhere else. However, we can deal with it.

What's really going on here is you're training your team on the importance of meetings, and the importance that they remain focused, all done without having to criticize anybody in front of coworkers, or get a spike in your blood pressure.

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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