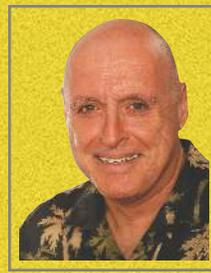


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 816 Be Careful With Those “Teaching Moments”

When I train managers, one of the things we talk about is publicly criticizing workers. Taking the conversation behind closed doors is almost always the better option. But, you say, “No, what I’m doing is providing an example for everybody. You see, this is a teaching moment.” I’m Jerry Roberts and today, let’s talk about one area that almost everybody gets wrong. That’s up next, on The Extra Point.

One of the worst days for any worker is when his/her manager gets all hot and bothered about something they’ve done, or not done, or an attitude issue, and decides to reprimand them on the spot, in full view of other workers.

I always advise against this. Unless you’re extremely gifted in controlling not just the content of what you’re discussing, but you’re also careful about facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, inflection — and you know how to get to the point, stay on point, and end up making the point you intended to make, with all parties more or less okay with it...just avoid the trap to think you’re creating a so-called “teaching moment”.

Instead, take the individual into your office and discuss it there.

I had one boss who would scream at me about once every six months. He’d seemingly wait until the most people were around, then bark out my name, with a juicy “Get over here” tacked on the end. I’m sure there were a couple of folks who were silently applauding this, “Oh goody, Jerry’s gonna get it.”

The strange thing is, every time he did this, he would later apologize to me — in private, saying he didn’t have the facts straight, or made a big deal out of nothing. I’m thinking, “Wait a second, you dress me down in front of everybody, and you now you apologize to me in front of nobody? That’s messed up.”

However, there’s more. Now, we enter the land of unintended consequences. Whether you reprimand or praise a worker in front of others, the message that gets through is the same — “I could be next. That could happen to me.”

In the case of ripping somebody publicly, that’s chilling for all workers and you lose trust points. It’s hard enough to build those up. Why would you want to squander them that way?

Then there are the bosses who think they’re incredibly funny, and they believe they can make a lesson out of something with humor. I had another manager who was like that. He’d have an issue with something and make a public joke about it.

Understand this, humor is a danger zone. Many people don’t understand jokes. Even more don’t appreciate them. Unless you are “stand-up comic good,” with incredible timing and clarity, just stick with easy to understand language, again, in your office.

To the issue of teaching moments, the worst mistake managers make — aside from deciding to do it at all — is not thinking it through and asking some questions.

1. Am I teaching the team, or reprimanding the worker? If it’s the reprimand, don’t go any farther with it. Do it privately.
2. Is this going to be embarrassing for the worker? Are they okay with that?
3. Can I make this point while minimizing that embarrassment?
4. Can I do this quickly, stay focused and not get sucked down a rabbit hole in details, thereby confusing everybody?
5. Is this going to seem like teaching, or dumping? — if you get my drift.

(Con’t.)

6. Will I be clear enough that everyone would be able to effectively repeat the lesson back to the group, without problem?

7. Now that I've thought it through, would a quick and private meeting be best after all?

Sometimes, managers justify to themselves that a public lesson is good, because you educate everybody at the same time. Sorry, that's too often wishful thinking. My advice is not to do it, unless you're very effective in front of a group.

The safest way to provide correction for any worker is in a private setting. Every time you stray from that, you're taking a chance that the intended outcome isn't going to be in the best interests of the individual, the organization, or you.

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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