

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



840 Developing a Strong Leadership Bench – Part 1

What do the majority of successful organizations have in common with the majority of championship athletic teams? Big payrolls, lots of fans, and cheerleaders? In a way, that could be true, but it's not what I'm after. I'll tell you what I'm going for, next, on The Extra Point.

Forbes magazine had a story this week on the recent quarterly report from the 2021 Global Leadership Forecast, stating that companies around the world are facing a leadership crisis, and it's in an area that I've been talking about for over 20 years.

Back to the question: What do the majority of successful organizations have in common with the majority of championship athletic teams? The answer is a talented bench. Some people call them reserves, or maybe the "second string."

Championship teams almost always have a number of players on their bench who can get results when they're sent into the game, sometimes performing as well or even better than the starting players. Teams without powerful reserve players usually fall short of winning.

This is the point of the survey. Only 11% of surveyed organizations reported they have a "strong" or "very strong" leadership bench, the lowest it has been rated in the past 10 years.

As I mentioned, I've been sounding the alarm on this for two decades, and the reason for the problem today is the same as it was when I first brought it up — it's a failure by companies to provide leadership development and transition training for existing employees, or those hired from the outside.

Almost all management personnel in Guam came from front line positions, and were hired

because they were good at their front line jobs. They share an additional factor — they were thrust into a leadership role with no formal management training.

I have to admit I didn't fully understand the issue until about seven years ago, when I wrote a course entitled The New Boss. It was intended to shorten the learning curve for first-time supervisors in their first year or two. I specifically promoted it that way...I wanted first-time supervisors with minimal experience, people I could help because they hadn't yet developed bad habits and would be open to new ideas.

That was the plan. Maybe you've heard the line, "Do you want to make God laugh? Tell Him your plans."

The New Boss rolled out in a public workshop, and we had about 30 attendees from a dozen companies. When I asked each person to give an introduction, including the number of years he/she had been a manager, I got a big surprise.

Two people had over 30 years as a manager, with the vast majority of the class having logged over 10 years in that capacity. When I asked if this was a refresher course for them, heads shook "no." For almost all of them, it was their first supervisory training.

Everything changed in that moment. I had expected to lead a class of mostly 20-year-olds, and the reality was a majority of people in their mid-30s to mid-50s.

Everybody learned a lot that day, but I think I learned the most. I asked a lot of questions on the break, picking up information like what I'm sharing with you now.

(Con't.)

Business owners in small companies with 10 or fewer employees will usually have one superior worker they heavily rely upon. In a company of 20, maybe there will two or three.

There are few leaders in the making. If they have a key player grabbed by a bigger company, their business will likely be crippled.

Whether yours is a small company or large, developing a winning bench is critical to your future. You do this by training them, and you do this by mentoring. That combination gives you the best chance to develop talent.

If you're not in the talent development business, then you're in the wrong business. If you're worried it's too time-consuming, too complicated, or too costly, I'll have some good news for you tomorrow as we continue the conversation.

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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