

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



874 Building Excitement About Better Productivity

It was one of the smarter ideas about increasing productivity I've seen in my years of concerning myself about such things, and it could work for you. I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll reveal it, next, on The Extra Point.

How to help a team become more productive. I've been interested in such things for a long time. Even a small increase, seen throughout an organization, can mean big things.

About 15 years ago, I came across a discussion on a forum about how to lead a team to increase their overall production and profits. The memory came back to me a couple of days ago, and I think it's worth sharing.

The poster was a man named Paul, who owned a small service business in Miami, Florida, with about 50 employees. He told a story of wrapping up his annual planning session with managers in early November.

The company was doing reasonably well, but seemed locked in at slightly over \$3 million in sales, which yielded a small profit. Paul thought the company could hit \$5 million, but it would take a big effort from everybody.

Every department would have to share the load, and increase their productivity. They would be looking for nearly a 60% increase in revenue.

Like most organizations, Paul had a few outstanding workers who delivered at a high level; a large group who were diligent workers but didn't compare to the first group; and then a small number who essentially did enough to keep their job. He would need more from all of them.

They closed the company for two hours on a Friday, had breakfast catered, and everybody was to attend. Paul would unveil the plan to get to \$5 million. He knew he had to come up

with a significant enticement for employees to buy in. It had to get their attention. In going over an employee opinion survey from a couple of years earlier, he found his answer.

After he outlined the "Drive for Five", the \$5 million figure, and what he thought each company unit had to deliver, he told the assembled workers that getting to that level would result in desired expansion and improvements, additional jobs, and better working conditions for everybody. He then announced a bonus offer that got everyone's attention.

Paul stated when the company hit the \$5 million mark in revenue, every employee would get a \$2,500 bonus. That drew some cheers and applause. Then he held up the survey and said one of the workers had given some input he thought should be implemented.

He named the employee who made the suggestion, then said that if the company achieved the goal, they would close on December 24, and not reopen until January 8 — meaning two extra weeks of paid vacation. Paul got a chorus of "oohs" and "ahhs" with those words.

The plan was for college students to be trained to handle phone-in customer service during those two weeks, and the repair staff would alternate days and be on call. Of course, this was if they hit the number.

They developed charts and tracked everything. Signs went up in employee areas, promoting the extra holiday. It became a game of sorts, as everybody announced their successes, week by week, and the excitement mounted as the sales numbers for closer and closer.

Finally, on December 15, the \$5 million goal was reached, and they celebrated with lunch.

(Con't.)

Paul capped the story by saying all this had taken place a few years earlier. He said the initial campaign was so successful, people wanted to continue, and that current sales exceeded \$8 million.

In the second year of the program, Paul had arranged for part-timers to cover the repair duties for those two weeks, picking up extra hours, so the technical team got the whole two weeks off as well.

By telling this story, I'm not saying you have to give away big checks, or close for two weeks at Christmas. However, if you set out to hit a big goal, think about ways you can get your team excited about it, including ways you can reward them for making the effort to get you there. What would get them turned on? It might not always be just money.

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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