

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



912 Team Building Won the Space Race

It was an event that shocked Americans, and led to a frenzied wave of worry across the land. Would this nation's enemies finally have the leverage to threaten our freedom. I'm Jerry Roberts and we dig into a story that shook the world, next, on The Extra Point.

Older folks may well remember a day when Americans felt threatened by a huge advance in technology that benefited our chief political rival of the day. It was October 4, 1957, and the Soviet Union launched a 23-lb. steel ball into a low orbit of the Earth. It doesn't sound like much of an achievement, but it was the first time an object had been put into orbit, and circled the planet.

Sputnik was its name, and it sent shockwaves around the world. John Casani, who worked at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena CA, remembered the day, saying: "That sort of shook us all pretty much, I mean I can remember going out in the back parking lot in back of one of the buildings over here in the early evening, and we could see the doggone thing flying overhead. That was really quite an experience to know that the Russians had done it and we hadn't."

You have to understand, we didn't have a space program. Thus, this was called by many America's technological Pearl Harbor. The Russians were in space, and we weren't even close to doing the same thing. A month later, Sputnik 2 went up, an 1,100 lb. satellite with a dog on board.

With the second launch, military officials nearly came unglued. They had felt the U.S. had a superior tactical edge over the Russians, but now felt they could one day soon launch nuclear weapons against us from space.

America answered with Explorer 1, sent up in January 1958. NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, was formed in

October of that year. Three months after President John F. Kennedy took office, the Russians sent the first manned flight into orbit. Astronaut John Glenn wouldn't match the Soviet's feat for nearly a year.

On May 25, 1961, before a joint session of Congress, Kennedy stated that it should be America's goal to put a manned flight on the moon before the end of the 1960s. He knew the importance of building a powerful team that would draft this crystal clear vision to life.

Landing a man on the moon was a massive challenge that few people could comprehend. The president needed to sell his vision and build the right team. Eventually, it would unite 400,000 scientists, mathematicians, and support staff who made a total commitment to make JFK's vision reality.

NASA used a formula with five Cs to make hiring decisions on who would join the team, and be a part of arguably the most ambitious plan the world had ever known.

1. Competence: Workers must be competent to get the job done. It is okay to hire people who are smarter than you.
2. Character: Our people should have sound character, and possess the same core values.
3. Coachability: People at all levels must be coachable.
4. Creativity: You want people who can think differently and who are willing to try new things.
5. Culture fit: Hire people who culturally fit your team.

(Con't.)

President Kennedy mentioned that he once saw a janitor at NASA, and he asked the man, "What do you do here?" The janitor responded, "Oh, Mr. President, I'm putting a man on the moon!"

That man saw his role as supporting the mission. His job was tied to the main goal. Where you work, does the cleaning crew, or receptionist, or runner, or (pick any job you like) feel that connected to the overall mission of your organization?

If not, why not?

If not, will you make it your business to change their mind, and show them why they're more important than they think?

No, you're not putting a man on the moon, but you just might be responsible for putting someone's head in the game, and their career on the map.

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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