

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



931 The Missing Ingredient for Too Many Workers

It's a beautiful thing when you see it, but it's lacking in so many organizations. We'll find out what that is, next, on The Extra Point.

Margie was in the 4th grade, and she wasn't the best student. She was a good student, with a firm foundation in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic — what they used to call “the three Rs.” Her teacher could always count on Margie's hand being raised when she asked a question.

It turned out that Margie's mother had told her that she didn't have to give a perfect answer in order to answer, that it was fine to just give the best answer she could, and that it was very important to participate in class.

Margie wasn't the best athlete, but she knew how to play games, and performed pretty well. She tried her hardest during the games. Even though she wasn't the best player, she was always one of the first chosen to be on a team.

Margie wasn't the best artist, but she liked painting. She wasn't the best musician, but she could play songs on her guitar.

In truth, Margie wasn't the best at anything, but she exhibited talent in many things. However, she had amazing confidence in her abilities. She believed she could do everything. Her art teacher once commented to the other teachers, that Margie must be the most confident 4th grader in the world.

It was the art teacher who once said to her students, “Okay class, for the next hour, you can paint or draw or paper-mache or finger-paint anything you want.”

Margie put her hand in the air, and said, “Can I draw a picture of God?” The teacher said, “Well sure you can, but you know, nobody's quite sure what God looks like.”

The world's most confident 4th grader responded, “Well, they will when I'm done.” It wasn't arrogance, because this wasn't an arrogant kid. She just believed in herself.

In 25 years of training in numerous organizations, working with thousands of workers, I've seen too little of the confidence displayed by that 4th grader. I've seen too many workers who are tentative, and unwilling, or afraid to take chances.

I've had too many managers and business owners tell me that workers don't step up and take charge. They don't know what holds them back. Is it a lack of talent, lack of confidence, or a lack of motivation?

So what do you do? Fire people, and start over again with a new bunch? Here are a few things I think you can try, that may help build confidence, and build performance.

1. Find something each worker can do well, that will accomplish a dual purpose. Recognize them for having this skill. One, it gives you hope they can improve. Two, you showing appreciation gives the worker hope. Without hope, all this goes nowhere.
2. Build on that, and any other current skills. Add a new one and help them grow it. Give them recognition for that as well, which will begin to make deposits in the worker's confidence “account.” The more recognition, the bigger the confidence account grows.

What you're doing is strengthening their fundamental skills, and bolstering that self-belief that they can perform competently.

3. As the worker grows, give them added responsibility. Let them make more decisions. Some will require your guidance, but eventually you want to utter a magical phrase: “Use your own best judgment.” (Con't.)

If they make a mistake and it costs you a few bucks, chalk it up to their education. If they do well, expand their authority and freedom to make more decisions.

Growing talent and confidence is not an overnight event. It's a process, sometimes taking months, sometimes taking years — and sometimes it doesn't take.

That's why the investment of your time, effort, and money into people is just like any other investment — it carries risk.

That said, the potential rewards are well worth it. I think Margie, the world's most confident 4th grader, would agree.

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.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

