

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



941 A Short Course in Effective Communication

Would you like to be more effective in your communicating at work and in your personal life? I'm Jerry Roberts, and I can help, next, on The Extra Point.

Are people sometimes confused by the things you say, and ask for clarification? Effective communication is essential for just about everybody in the workforce today, but some of us struggle with it. Let's look at some of the reasons.

1. We try to impress others with our words. It's fine to have a large vocabulary, but using less familiar words than the ones found in common language can be a problem. Do you know anyone who does that?

Any time we use words that are not understood, it cause a break in communication.

I write The Extra Point at the fifth- and sixth-grade levels. Occasionally, I'll spill over into the seventh-grade. Communication experts have said going beyond that leaves some folks out. I don't want to do that.

I've got a few minutes to establish an idea, make a few points, and hopefully end up with a solution. That's not much time, and if I lose someone along the way because I used a word they didn't understand, then they may not pick up on what I'm trying to get across.

I read a lot, as it's important to my work, plus my interests. I believe I have a decent-sized vocabulary. Yet, far too often, I see writers who are either in the "impress the reader game", or don't use common language, and must think their readers don't, either.

On one hand, I welcome the opportunity to learn new words. On the other, if I'm forcing people to have a dictionary at hand when they read my stuff, or reading without a clear understanding, that's a problem. Summing up

that point, say what you mean in words most people will understand.

2. Use the fewest words possible. Another way to say that is "be concise." Author Mark Twain once wrote: "If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter."

It's almost always best to go short, rather than long. Most people don't pay attention to anything for very long, so putting your communication on a diet makes sense.

3. Make sure you get to the point. Some people send long and rambling, wandering messages, and you have to slog through a sea of words before you get to what they want you to do. If you've ended the first paragraph and I have no idea what's to follow or why you sent me the message, you need to rewrite it.

4. End with a "call to action." What do you want me to do? I know there's something you see as the logical next step. Please don't make me guess what that is. Say or write what you want me to do.

I repeat:

1. Use familiar language.
2. Use the fewest words possible while saying what needs to be said.
3. Get to the point as quickly as you can.
4. Have a call to action. What is it that you want me to do?

Class dismissed. How did you do?

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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