

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



951 Oh No, the “P” Word Again!

I visited the emergency room at one of Guam’s hospitals last week. I heard the “P” word there. The dreaded P word. Which word is that? I’ll reveal all, next, on The Extra Point.

Quite unexpectedly, I was told to go to the emergency room. Something had to be looked at. I had a lot to do that day, but when a doctor says to go, you go.

It ended up okay, but I was there for several hours. I decided that I should take mental notes and maybe get an Extra Point out of it.

There was one person in the waiting area, and I was handed paperwork to fill out.

I asked the attendant (I don’t know her professional designation) if she had a feel for how long it would be before I’d see a doctor. She said the one person ahead of me had a more pressing condition and would get in first, that was their policy. Further, she really couldn’t predict, but it shouldn’t take too long.

She had used the “P” word. Policy. Whenever I hear, “That’s our policy,” it comes across as “We have these rigid rules and you will abide by them and like it, or not, we don’t really care. This is the deal, live with it.”

Let’s be clear. I’d happily stand aside for those who had to get in faster, no matter how long it would take for me to be seen.

The reality is that policies are designed for the benefit of the organization, and that’s not just hospitals. It’s pretty much across the board. A policy is not written to joyfully convey rights and benefits to a customer. It is written to set guidelines and restrictions.

About an hour passed and I was led to a room where others were waiting to see a doctor. However, I was told I’d have to take a COVID test. I was led to the designated area, and the

attendant (a different person) said there were two swabs, one being for the rapid test, and the other for the PCR test. I questioned why I was being given both. Why wasn’t one test sufficient?

The attendant said — get ready — “That’s our policy.” So, I wasn’t going to get an answer, just the line that some people seem to believe removes the responsibility to give an actual answer: “That’s our policy.” As soon as you and I hear that, we’re supposed to be satisfied and never have any further questions or concerns.

Another person took blood, then another set up an EKG, and I heard the “P” word again. Was that three times now, or four?

The overall experience took a definite upswing when one doctor came in, and then another. They were engaging and answered questions, and not one mention of “policy.” Was this their general outstanding bedside manner, or maybe they were new, and hadn’t yet been schooled in the need to frequently drop the “P” word.

Ahh, but there was one more chance. I had elected to leave, and that required that I sign more paperwork. I was advised that I could go as soon as the papers were ready. An hour later, I was still waiting for them.

The nurse, a young man who had been excellent all day, said it shouldn’t be too much longer, but I had to wait there until the papers arrived. He added, “That’s our...” — and from deep inside of me, I silently screamed the words, “No, no, not you too, please don’t do it...you’ve been so good...say it ain’t so...no, no, no.”

He spoke in a soft and natural tone, but that word “policy” came out, sounding to me like Freddy Krueger from the Nightmare on Elm Street.
(Con’t.)

Lest you conjure up the thought that I am the only person who is affected by this cold and dismissive word — policy — you would be mistaken. I have heard and read countless opinions on the use of the word “policy.” Many people have no love for it.

This hospital is just an example. Most private and public organizations have people who use “policy” to stop questions and to put an end to discussion.

I know you have rules and protocols, and some of that probably works in my favor. However, it only makes sense to train people to use words that make me feel that way.

What if you used a different set of words, something like this: *“You know, it’s our policy to do everything possible to make our customers happy...so let me see what I can do.”*

Now, that’s a use of the “P” word I can get behind.

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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