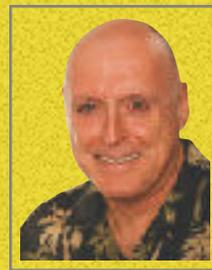


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



957 A Different Idea About Selling and Winning

Competition is a fact of life in business. Everybody works hard to gain market share, people want to win sales contests — it's all about winning. I'm Jerry Roberts, and could there be another way to look at things? Let's find out, next, on The Extra Point.

It was in the Special Olympics one year, where all the participants were lined up to run a race. They all took off and were running hard, then one of the contestants fell down.

Some runners were just seconds away from crossing the finish line, but they all stopped and turned around, going back to the runner who had fallen down.

They helped him up, and all the runners, including the one who had fallen, joined hands and ran together as one, going across the finish line at the same time. They all won the race.

A group of children in Africa were taught a simple game. A basket of fruit was placed near a tree, and the kids were told that whoever got to the tree first could have all the fruit.

The organizer gave the signal to go, and all the children grabbed each other's hands and ran to the tree together. Then they sat in a circle enjoying the fruit.

When asked why they ran as a group to win, when an individual winner could have had more fruit on his/her own, one child said, "How can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?"

I met author/speaker Stephen Covey about 20 years ago while attending a leadership event. We had a brief time to talk privately, and then he went to the stage for his presentation. He told a story that day I have never forgotten.

He was hired by an insurance company, when

it seemed motivation was low. The company had put on their annual sales conference, had the winners announced at a huge gathering, with just a few getting the big prizes and the vast majority politely clapping for the winners.

They brought in high school cheerleaders and played loud music, trying to generate some excitement, but it wasn't working and everybody knew it. Shortly thereafter, Covey was brought in to consult and suggest changes.

This company had many hundreds of agents, just a relative few prize-winners, which meant the vast majority were all losers. Covey made a bold suggestion.

Rather than create a few big prizes for the next year, where almost everybody would be losers again, Covey suggested that every salesperson have a unique contest of their own. It would take a lot of work to put it together, and carried some risk.

Each salesperson put together a prize package they really wanted. Vacations, electronics, various kinds of gear, you name it. Hundreds of unique packages, and then a sales number was attached to each. If the salesperson achieved the number, they earned whatever was in their unique package.

I forget the number who won, but I believe it was over 70%. Those who didn't win had the same opportunity the others did, but they didn't hit the number. In Covey's explanation, the majority of the sales reps had made the choice to win, while the others had chosen not to.

At the annual sales event, no cheerleaders were necessary to manufacture excitement. The room was buzzing from the start, because it was full of hundreds of prize winners. Company leaders were also excited, because overall sales and profits had gone through the roof. (Con't.)

Do you stage sales contests? Would you like everybody to be a winner? Do you think you might be able to create uniquely targeted sales goals for each rep, based on what prize they want to win?

Is it worth trying to talk about this, and see if it will fly where you work?

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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