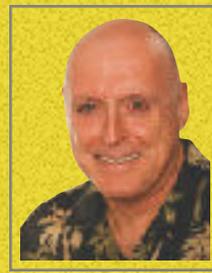


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



978 What About Having an Open Door Policy?

Are you a manager who tells workers that you have an open-door policy? Is that a policy where they can have access to you at any time? I'm Jerry Roberts, and let's talk about that, next, on The Extra Point.

In my career, I've had various looks at this thing called an "open-door" policy. Let's see if your experience comes close to mine.

Over the years, I've had a number of bosses who suggested they had such a policy. If you needed something, you could come right to them, no problem.

Well, what I discovered is that "no problem" didn't mean no waiting. I might be sitting outside their office for 30 minutes, or even longer, while they were on the phone or doing something else. However, true to their word, the door was usually open.

Of course, there were times when I got in quickly, and sometimes my few moments with the boss was interrupted by somebody else whose issues were more pressing than mine.

I'd be talking with the boss and another person would peek in, see me sitting there, and say, "Oh, boss, sorry to interrupt but..." and I'd lose my place.

When I became a manager and later a business owner, I wanted to assure workers that I was accessible, so I did my best to offer my version of the open-door arrangement.

People would come to me with questions or decisions that had to be made, and for a while it seemed to work. However, my personal productivity took a hit.

Some days, I spent a half-hour on the issues of others, and my work didn't suffer. However, there were other days when I got dragged into situations and lost hours. In addition, far too

many phone calls were routed to me, which could have been handled by others. Thus, my day was sometimes a series of starts and stops, and getting traction was often a challenge.

This ultimately led to me working from home. I was able to do my work on time, and people in the office dealt with issues that popped up, which helped them develop better decision-making skills.

I have no doubt that by inviting employees to come to you whenever they feel the need to do so, can make a world of difference to their satisfaction at work. I see how this would serve to empower workers.

That said, I'll fall back on what we've talked about before, the need to schedule time with yourself to do your most important work. This is called "time blocking" and I firmly believe it's essential to the success of everyone who needs to deliver a high level of results.

Can time blocking coexist with the concept of the open-door? I think it can, but it requires modifications. One of those may be to block time for those open-door visits.

I know that isn't the same as the door being open all the time, and allowing unlimited access, but I couldn't make that work. If you can, more power to you.

Here's a modified version that might fit what you're doing. You block out time on your calendar each day for whoever needs you. Maybe you offer two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon.

This might end up being a schedule filled with these time blocks, which will allow you a large amount of flexibility. You can get your work done, while offering some time with your open door.

(Con't.)

Having an open-door policy isn't a bad idea, though I believe it will be difficult for many managers to sustain, without enduring productivity issues.

Perhaps modifications like the one suggested here can help.

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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