

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



992 Don't Let Tension Throw You Offstride

Do you ever get tense at work? Is tension a normal part of the workplace experience? When do you find tension is an issue? I'm Jerry Roberts, and let's talk tension, next, on The Extra Point.

There could be a lot of reasons for tension at work. The boss being upset with you is a fairly common reason. Another could be that big changes are in the air. Change can make us tense.

I recall two staff meetings, one in Guam while in radio, and the other when I was in the publishing field in California, where things didn't go well and everybody emerged with feelings of not just tension, but dread.

Regardless of the rosy picture the owners of both businesses had attempted to paint, those of us who had to try to implement the changes clearly understood that we were in trouble.

I recall walking out of those meetings, and in both cases, staff members did something that made the situation worse. People were mumbling things like, "Man, that is never going to work, and we all know it"... and "Hey, it was fun while it lasted."

Quiz time. Who do you think heard those comments? Did you guess the other workers who were not in the meeting? Good guess.

People stepped out of the meeting, grumbling about the decisions made, and with serious faces, and the other employees are watching and listening. What happened next?

The mood of the entire office changed within minutes. Word spread from one section to the next, gossip started up, and a normally loose and friendly workplace was suddenly in the grips of uncertainty. How many of us would still be employed? If you've ever seen this type

of thing go down, you know it's not pretty. If you find yourself tense because of decisions made by your leadership, keep in mind that it helps nobody if a storm of discontent, worry, and fear takes over the company.

The conversation about tension could take us in several directions, but today I want to direct it to how we deal with it personally, no matter what our position is in the organization.

1. Don't spread the tension virus. It's highly contagious because jobs, personal finances, and futures are at stake. Nobody wins if more people are upset.

2. If you're a bit freaked out over what's going on, or what you think is going on, talk to your supervisor, or the CEO, owner of the business — somebody who is in position to know more about it than you do. Explain why you're upset, and get answers to your questions.

Understand that there may not be answers at this point, at least those that will give you more confidence or ease your fears.

3. If you're a supervisor, be prepared to discuss the issues with your team, even if you know you don't have all the answers. Look to build confidence where you can.

In every case I have ever seen, the best way to approach the situation is for a team to continue to do their jobs. Continue to make sales, provide service to customers, work with vendors, and do well what they've always done.

Doing those things probably won't eliminate the changes being considered, but improving the revenue picture for the business certainly won't hurt anything. It will also serve to make things seem normal, which can be a positive as change is taking place.
(Con't.)

If you're saying, "Okay Jerry, all this is fine, but it doesn't solve the issue of tension." You're right, it doesn't. We'll always have tension, we'll always have change. What we want to do is have a strategy for how to deal with it.

We may not be able to control change. We may not be able to eliminate all tension. That said, we can decide to prevent that tension from causing us greater problems.

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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