

The Extra Point

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1031 Be Careful With the Lessons You Try to Teach

Today, a cautionary tale of a manager who held to rigid rules, denying the request of a valued worker because that manager wanted to provide a teaching moment. We'll tell the story, next on The Extra Point.

A manager wrote to an Internet forum about an action he took regarding an employee's request. I've had to shorten it a little, and it went like this.

The company had a new product launch, and the employee in question was part of the support team. When these launches took place, the team had to provide service outside of normal hours.

One employee, we'll call her Gina, asked to come in two hours after the start time due to her college graduation ceremony being that same day. Gina had been taking night classes to earn her degree.

The manager, we'll call him Paul, declined her request. Why? Paul said it was "because she was the employee with the lowest seniority and we needed coverage for that day. I said that if she could find someone to replace her for those two hours, then she could start later."

Gina asked her coworkers, but no one was willing to come in on their day off. When she came up empty on the fill-in worker, Paul reaffirmed his earlier decision. Gina could not start two hours later, and that she would have to skip the ceremony.

An hour later, Gina walked into his office and handed Paul her work ID; plus a list of all the times she had worked late, come in early, or worked overtime for each and every one of her coworkers. Then she quit on the spot.

Paul told the forum members that he was a bit

upset with Gina's decision because she had always been extremely reliable over the six years she had worked there.

Then Paul added, "Even though she doesn't work here any longer, I want to reach out and tell her that quitting without notice because she didn't get her way isn't exactly professional. I only want to do this because she was an otherwise great employee, and I don't want her to derail her career by doing this again and thinking it is okay."

As I'm reading this, I'm thinking Paul doesn't really understand his job, or whoever manages him doesn't understand theirs.

Paul's job is, one, to make sure he has a team of workers ready to cover whatever support needs the company requires. Two, his job is to develop talent and provide an atmosphere where that talent can thrive. That helps the company retain their talent.

Then, Paul added more about Gina. He said she was raised in many different foster homes and had no living family. She was homeless for a bit after she turned 18, and the longest period of stability in her life was this job.

So, now I'm mad at Paul. Are you mad at Paul, too? Knowing what he knew about Gina, how could he handle the situation that poorly?

What could Paul have done? Well, here's what I would have done — everything in my power to see that Gina attended that graduation ceremony...for the whole day if she wanted, not just two hours.

(Con't.)

I could have pulled the shift for her. Or, go worker by worker, explaining the circumstances, and begging someone to take the shift. The worst-case scenario, the support line might have run slightly slower than normal with one less person on board.

After a start in life that was challenging to say the least, then to hold a job for six years, and to earn a college degree...she deserved someone to call her out for recognition. I'd have asked the CEO to write her a letter and present it.

I'd have found out how many guests Gina could have, and tried to sneak in as many as possible to cheer when they called her name.

The only lesson I might be teaching that day would be compassion, and that's because Gina's drive, grit, and desire to get past her childhood taught all the other ones better than I ever could.

If you're a manager, know that employee issues like the one Gina had are really opportunities dressed up like problems. Opportunities...for you to show how much you value them. Don't take your eye off the prize.

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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