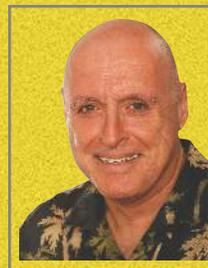


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1048 What if You Had a Good Idea?

In your career, I'm sure you've had a lot of good ideas. These might have been ideas to improve a procedure, a strategy, and in some way bring a benefit to your employer. I'm Jerry Roberts and one day, many years ago, I was talking about ideas in a training course I was conducting, and the conversation took a very unexpected turn. I'll tell you about it, next, on The Extra Point.

I was delivering a training at one of the hotels and was suggesting that everybody should go back to their workplace, and before the week was over they would come up with a plan to make something — anything — better.

I was making a point that most employers do appreciate when team members spend the time to carefully consider how to generate improvements, when a 30-ish guy raised his hand, then said, "You've obviously never worked for the Government of Guam." As you might expect, that drew a pretty decent laugh.

So I said, "No, I haven't." I knew he did work for a GovGuam agency, and I said, "I guess you're telling us that ideas aren't welcome in the government."

That kicked off an unplanned conversation, but one I thought was valuable. The man said he had contributed many ideas and they were indeed welcome. What they were not, in his experience, was acted upon.

In the first five years in government service, he had offered plenty of ideas. None of them ever saw the light of day. He gave up. In the 10 years since, he hadn't bothered. He just came to work and did his job.

I asked the rest of the class, about 25 people, if anyone else had experienced anything like that. Several hands went up and stories were shared. I found it interesting that more than half of those people spoke of disappointment

in sharing ideas in the private sector. That took me by surprise. Most business people I knew were always on the lookout for ways to make improvements.

I related to the class something I learned from my first boss and mentor, Big Ed. He made it clear to everybody that there was a tried and true way to do every job and we should do it that way — unless we had a better idea.

If it didn't use more resources, if it was just as fast or faster, and if the results were as good or better than doing it the "regular" way, then we were free to use our method. If it failed on any of those three tests, we did it like it had always been done.

In the year and a half I was there, we changed a few things, and did a whole bunch more the old way. That was fine with us.

I told the class that I had adopted Ed's idea principle in my company. Every employee had the right to do things their way, until they discovered it was not the better way.

I encouraged them to tell their bosses about my story, and that maybe it would help them. I don't know if they did, or if *it* did.

To finish off that part of the discussion, I said it was a shame that many of them had decided to stop contributing ideas to their employer. I also said I thought they had hurt themselves by doing so.

A look of confusion came over some of the faces looking at me, and I explained. I told them that creativity is a muscle and like any other muscle, it has to be exercised or it will shrink. You know, use it or lose it.

(Con't.)

In my opinion, people should continue to contribute ideas to their company for three main reasons.

1. Maybe, just maybe, somebody will listen and do something with the idea.
2. It shows that you're engaged in the process and that says good things about you.
3. Most important, it lets you flex that creative muscle. The idea you give may not be a game changer, but the next one might, or the next. Great ideas usually come from digging into a pile of good ideas, then adding to it.

Do you have an idea you think could help? Whether you toil in the local or federal government, the private sector or the military, write it up and submit it to your boss.

Then, the next time you have another one, do the same, and keep them coming.

Do it for your employer and the mission. Do it for your team. Most of all, do it for yourself and the good feeling you'll get when you get creative. Just do it.

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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