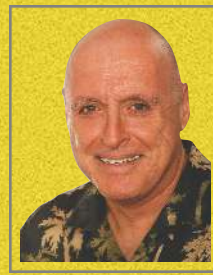


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1052 The Question is: Why Are You There?

Once in a while, you meet up with someone who has ideas that change the way you see things. Many years ago, I met a person like that after I'd been fired from a job, and what he said gave me a different view of what a manager could be and should be. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's next on The Extra Point.

I've told the story a few times of being fired from a job, because I wouldn't lie to a client about a deal my boss made that violated an existing agreement.

A couple of nights later I'm coming into my gated building and get to the front entrance at the same time one of my neighbors did. Truth be told, we'd said almost nothing to each other in the year I'd lived there. "Hi, how ya doing?" ... "Fine, how about you?" That took place maybe three times.

He always wore a suit and carried a briefcase, so I figured he was a corporate manager of something.

So, we're at the entrance and he says "How are things?" For some reason I said, "Could be better, I just lost a job." That led to him inviting me over for dinner with him and his wife.

His name was Marko, and both of them were from Greece. They got married in college and came to America in the 1960s, had raised a family and were nearing retirement. They asked about my history, and eventually we got to the part where I had this management job, didn't see eye-to-eye with the owner, refused to lie for him, and got thrown out.

Marko wanted to know how the conversation went between me and the owner before I took the job. I told him the owner wasn't involved in the hiring process. One of his managers from another city had interviewed me, and a few days later called me to offer the position.

Marko said that was the first mistake, that the owner and I had no personal connection in advance of our first meeting a few weeks later.

He then asked why I was hired. I rattled off a list of the things that probably would have been on a job description — if I'd had such a thing. Marko laughed and said, "No, that's a list of tasks on a to-do list. Why were you hired?"

I didn't know what he was looking for me to say so there was this pause in the action, and what he offered next changed how I viewed management overall.

"Every manager has a list of things to do," he said, "but their role is greater — even if the boss doesn't understand that or say that to them."

He explained that his first 15 years as a manager he didn't understand that, until a CEO took him aside and said he was there to do all those things on the list, and see to it that the department operated at a profit, but his real reason for managing was more. He was there to grow the talent he had and make people ready to move into greater opportunities. As a manager, he was there to create new managers.

Marko said when he got hold of that image of why he was the manager, it changed him as a person and gave his job deeper meaning. He wasn't there only for the purpose of helping to move more widgets out the door efficiently, he was there to help build careers while filling jobs for a growing company.

In every job he moved to after that, he always sought out the top leader and asked him why he was hired, and what did the boss really want him to do. He said those questions always led to interesting discussions and planted the seeds for better relationships with his manager.

(Con't.)

By the way, Marko told me that he thought part of the manager's job is to always grow talent, or the CEO probably doesn't really understand his/her job.

That said, it could be to expand a department. Or, to recapture business lost to competitors. Maybe to open a new market, or help veteran workers through a period of change.

What's beyond your daily/weekly/monthly to-do lists? Why else are you there? If you've never had this kind of conversation with your boss, maybe this is a good time for 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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