

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1059 We Need More People Contributing More Ideas — Part 3

Today, we wrap up our conversation on needing more people to step up and contribute ideas to our organization. I'm Jerry Roberts, let's get to it next, on The Extra Point.

Tuesday, I related a story about leadership guru Tom Peters, who advocated finding people who are different from the norm to bring new ideas into the organization. Peters has always termed these different folks by the loving term, *freaky people*.

Yesterday, I had the story of Rip, a guy who benefited his employer in unexpected ways, once he was identified as one of those freaky types. We also talked about how to find them, and that requires really getting to know the people on your payroll. Understand their skills and desires, and figure out what motivates them.

Today, I've got information on what we might whimsically call "the care and feeding" of these unique individuals who can bring us ideas with breakthrough potential — simply because they see the world differently from how most people do.

It's just a few key things to keep in mind.

1. Create a workplace where it's okay to challenge "what is".

Ban the words "that's our policy." Let it be known that your company wants continual improvement, and there are no "sacred cows." Everything is up for consideration. If it makes sense to generate changes and we can, then we should.

Be aware that some employees will cling to "what is" like it's a life preserver. They will find change hard to take. You, as a leader, will have to decide between their comfort and getting people truly involved to bring about significant improvements.

2. Reward good ideas.

I can hear it now. Somebody just said, "Oh no, did he just say we have to pay them for their ideas?" Yeah, I did. Let me be clear, Guam is better in this respect than we used to be. That said, we've still got some employers who have the opinion that because you work for them, they shouldn't have to pay you any more for coming up with ideas that save or make them money.

All I will say is that generosity in this area will benefit you many times over. If a worker comes up with an idea that saves you \$100,000 the first year alone, and you give them \$100 or \$500 for their efforts, you need to think about it.

The goal is to get everybody excited enough that they begin to look for additional ways to make improvements. There are companies in the world that would happily pay 10-20 percent of that \$100,000 for such an idea, and have done so. I guarantee you that will get workers buzzing.

Quickly, there's more to this. Get rid of the suggestion box. Do it electronically and give workers an easy way to submit ideas. When they do, fire back a response that you'll get the ball rolling to consider their offering.

3. Make brainstorming and "open" discussion a big deal. Invite people in, take pictures, and let everybody know who took part.

4. If you identify people with special thinking skills, offer to mentor or coach them. You just might have a star on the launch pad.

5. If you take in an idea but it needs more development or redirection, quickly get back to the creator, and ask them to work it up again.

(Con't.)

6. This part is so important. Take action on something. Even if there's no homerun idea in the batch, find something basic you can go with and make it happen immediately. This is called picking the "low-hanging fruit." It's a payoff for all those who took the time to go through the exercise.

7. The last item, and it's just good manners if nothing else. Respond personally to every idea submitted with your gratitude. Further, encourage the individual to resubmit an idea that isn't used, with modifications, or hand in something new.

If you've got a few bucks to spare, maybe toss the employee a free lunch somewhere for their trouble.

If you want ideas flowing in your organization, you're going to have to work at it. I hope you do.

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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