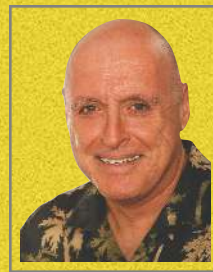


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1105 You Need to Make New Mistakes

Raise your hand if you make mistakes. Keep your hand up if you figure you're going to make a lot more of them. Reach for the sky if you think that's good. I'm with you, except for one thing I have to say on this subject, and it's the most important thing you'll ever hear when it comes to making mistakes. I'm Jerry Roberts, and that's coming next, on The Extra Point.

If you're like me, you've made a lot of mistakes in your life.

If you're like me, you didn't listen to the older and wiser folks when they told you, "You know, there's nothing that says you can't learn from the mistakes of others, and avoid making a few of them yourself."

My mom said it. Big Ed, my first boss, said it. I mostly ignored that advice. Oh, I might have avoided a few, but not as many as I could have.

The most common thought passed down from managers is to — repeat after me — don't make the same mistake twice.

I fully agree with that, except what we've done by saying things like that is to infuse fear into the issue.

Don't mess up, or the boss will get mad. Do it again and you might get written up, or your job could be on the line.

What this results in is the employee operating with a very narrow focus on how things should be done. The supervisor's way is the only way. Not necessarily because it's the most efficient way, but it's the safest for the employee. Thus, that's what they're going to do.

The end result is that the work does get done, but the methods used are never questioned or scrutinized to see if improvement is possible. Therefore, nothing ever changes. In some cases, maybe it doesn't have to. That's not all cases.

So, I'm not after doing things the same way they've always been done, just because that's our tradition, and I certainly don't want to make the mistakes I've made before. I want something else.

I want new mistakes, and that means you have to try new ways to do old things. It may not apply in all cases, but the concept is to take a work process or sequence, break it down step by step, and look for ways to improve upon it.

Sometimes, you may find that you can skip a step and the result is the same. That saves time. Maybe you can change the order of the steps, or replace a step with another way to do it.

You have to put all this on paper, or a whiteboard, and sketch it out. Then, if you discover possible changes, you test the new sequence. Based on the results, tweak and test again.

Edison said he made 10,000 tries to fashion a working lightbulb. Whether that's a real number or an exaggerated part of history, the message is clear — if you want improvement you have to be willing to change how you do things. Change brings the likelihood of making mistakes, new mistakes. Each small failure is another step to building your foundation of success.

If you're a manager, senior leader or business owner, I believe you should continually push your workers to examine everything they do to see if they can improve not just efficiency, but also effectiveness. Giving them the green light to make things better can reinvigorate a worker, and a team.

If that becomes a part of your organizational culture, then every day might be *the* day when somebody experiences a breakthrough. That makes the job more compelling, more exciting, and more fun.

(Con't.)

When effort in the name of innovation is seen as “how we do things around here; when mistakes made in those efforts are seen as necessary failures to gain ultimate success; when fear over failure is removed from your workplace, and replaced with encouragement to go on and go further; I think you’re on your way to places nobody previously imagined you could reach.

Make some new mistakes today, and celebrate them.

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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