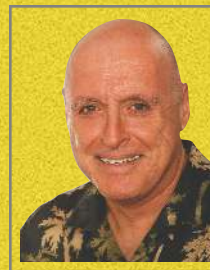


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1175 Are You on Autopilot – and Is That a Bad Thing?

How much of your working life do you spend on autopilot? How much your day are you in robo-form, doing things you've done so many times before — so many times that you can do them without really thinking...so you don't? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, let's talk about when autopilot is good and when it's not. That's next, on The Extra Point.

When is it good to operate on autopilot? You may remember the day we discussed the four levels of competence.

First, there's unconscious incompetence, when you don't know what you don't know; then conscious incompetence, when you do know and can take steps to improve; then on to conscious competence, when you focus on the task at hand and methodically handle it well; and finally, unconscious competence, when you operate at the highest level without direct step-by-step focus. It's as if your body just takes over and you perform.

Technicians do it, painters, dancers, singers, athletes, and countless others do it. They seem to get into a zone and effortlessly deliver high-quality results. There's no doubt that autopilot is an efficient way to work. We tend to make fewer mistakes, and we aren't distracted as much. Have you ever been in that zone?

For almost everybody, autopilot — some may call it “force of habit” — is a normal part of life. We sleep the same way every night. We put on our clothes in the same order...socks, shoes, shirts and blouses, pants and dresses. We eat the food on our plate in a certain sequence. That's autopilot. Our subconscious mind has taken over.

We've all experienced driving from one place to another, getting there and not remembering the journey. How did I get here? I know I drove, but I don't recall any of it.

At work, too? Some people spend most of

their workday, almost every day, in that zone.

I mentioned a number of people who have jobs where we can see this autopilot activity, and it's not only admired but encouraged. How about in the case of managers and leaders? Does it work when people in those jobs get into autopilot mode?

I'm going to say “no” to that. A manager or leader has to be conscious, aware, and connected to the things that make him/her successful. A person in a position of authority who is working out of habit is likely not as connected and aware as they should be.

If they're focused solely on reports, spreadsheets, and other things that have nothing to do with growing people, or setting the vision and direction, where is that organization headed?

For a manager, the one who protects the process, there are too many moving parts to lose focus. They have to be totally conscious of what every worker is doing, and that the projected daily progress is actually generated. Autopilot cannot be a part of their production, but I've known many who did it that way. None of them were particularly successful at it, but some were bailed out by the top-level performance of their team.

Yes, we are creatures of habit, and many of us slip into autopilot in our work. For some, it's a good thing. For others, it's potentially dangerous. If you do it, make sure you know which group you belong to.

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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