

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1200 Senior Workers Can Help Those in Mid-Career

If I said that it's highly likely that your employer is not taking advantage of a significant asset and resource, would you want to know what that is? What asset? What resource? What are we missing? I'm Jerry Roberts, and today I'll tell you how to get much more mileage out of one specific group on your payroll. That is coming next, on The Extra Point.

So, what is this asset and resource that we're not tapping enough? Simply, your most senior talent.

Art Markman, a University of Texas professor of psychology, with special emphasis on how organizations work, has spent considerable time studying the role of senior people and how they can best be utilized. Markman is also the author of the book, *Bring Your Brain to Work*.

It has long been established that people new to the workplace can learn from their more senior colleagues. However, Markman's research determined that even mid-career workers can also benefit from exposure to their more experienced coworkers. That's our focus today.

If you're at the mid-career point in your journey, Markman's work might be valuable for you. He says that the greatest benefit may fall in the four ways which follow.

1. Focus on impact. If you're mid-career, then the statement applies that you're no longer a spring chicken. You may have more work days behind you than those that lie ahead. Therefore, time matters. You may be thinking that you'd like to make those days count.

The original J.Q. Fanihi radio show ran for 8+ years, and about 2,200 programs. Ray has been at this in Guam for some 40 years, and his show count is about 10,000. If I were just coming into the business, I'd be looking to buy him lunch to ask a ton of questions. If I was 20 years into my career, I'd still buy that

lunch, to see how I can better go another 20. How can I maximize the time I have left in terms of impact on my organization, my industry, and whatever personal need and goals I have.

2. Putting change into perspective. At mid-career, you probably have seen enough to feel you understand how things work. You have a set of established skills, and a personal network of connections. You're comfortable. Then, you get hit with change. You now have to develop new skills and new connections. Maybe that feeling of comfort is gone.

Your senior team members may have seen more of this, and have found ways to adapt to whatever comes at them. They might be able to help you see the value in change. They may have been through new leaders, severe down times, company restructuring — the kind of events that can be both challenging and upsetting. How did they approach these issues and what helped them get through periods of turmoil and uncertainty?

3. Being a lifelong learner. Markman is quick to acknowledge that too many senior workers are just playing out the string, coasting to the finish line. They are not lifelong learners. Still, there are also a lot of people late in their careers who are still brimming with ideas and enthusiasm. They are eager to learn new skills. Pick their brains on what they're reading, what they want to know, and why.

This can be both people in your job category, as well as those in different positions. Ask this question: "Who can I learn from, and what do they know that I should know?"

4. Giving others their shot. Markman points out that early in your career, you may see yourself in competition with your peers. If a promotion is available, you're going after it and you're looking for advantages over other workers.

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That element of competition isn't the same with most senior workers. They are likely to be far more open to helping others improve and rise in the organization. They find meaning in having a hand in seeing people get further and do better.

One more thing. I need to mention that senior executives are a part of this as well. Who can you mentor? Who can you help prepare to be in your chair one day?

So, questions...

To the mid-career worker, who can help you make progress?

To the senior worker with much to offer, who in the mid-career ranks can you lift up and help get to the next level?

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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