

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1209 Two Words We Hate and Two Words We Love

Today, a two-word phrase that we hate to hear in the workplace, and in some cultures can even bring shame. As well, two words that in all cultures bring joy, satisfaction, and add to self-esteem. Is it possible that two words can mean so much? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll find out next, on The Extra Point.

Most employees seek the approval of the person who supervises them at work. When positive strokes come, it's a great day. When negativity or disapproval happens, our pride may take a hit and bad emotions overtake us.

The negative phrase is "you're wrong," and the positive phrase is "you're right."

Think about it for a moment. How do you feel when your manager tells you that you're wrong? Your idea is wrong. Your decision is wrong. Your approach is wrong. How do you feel?

Is it possible that you become confused, startled, worried, disappointed, irritated, upset, angry, and maybe even feel some resentment?

What about when the boss says "you're right"? How do you feel then? Are you kidding? You're floating. It's a great day. The boss thinks you're cool, your ideas are cool; and you love your job, the company, and just everything.

Okay, I'm on the border of exaggeration here, but the point must be made that as a manager, our words can have impact and consequences.

Saying someone is right or wrong is rendering judgment on their effort, talent, performance, and attitude. When that judgment is positive, no sweat — we love it, give us more, knock yourself out.

When the judgment is negative, our defensive nature kicks in to protect our ego. We don't want any part of it. This is particularly so when the words "You're wrong" are said in front of coworkers and peers. They'll be judging, too.

"Wait a second," you say? Are we protecting the tender ears and psyches of snowflakes who can't handle criticism? No, we're trying to connect with workers. All workers.

My first job as a manager is to communicate with people in ways that keep them engaged and productive. It's not about me and my ego, and that things will be done my way.

My first boss, Big Ed, never told the three of us 19-year-olds that we were wrong, when we were wrong. Instead, he'd say something like, "Jerry, can I show you another way", or "I get what you're saying. I see things a little differently."

Ed had a million ways of getting his point across to three young guys who always figured they could find a better method of handling a job. He made us feel important, and we worked our butts off for him.

In his book *You're the Greatest*, Frank Maguire of Federal Express and KFC recounted how he used the phrase "You're right" to validate the people he worked with. He said something that is jaw-dropping: "motivation lasts a short time, but validation lasts a lifetime."

As my manager, you have the authority to judge me and the quality of what I bring to the job. If you validate that I'm doing well — BOOM! — my self-esteem may soar. Since you have the authority. If you say I'm doing well, you're obviously right, and a person with powerful skills of observation.

Positive validation not only makes workers feel better, it also makes them want to come to work more often, and be more productive when there. That's better for the bottom line.

Positive strokes help you build influence and trust with workers.

Let me offer some suggestions.
(Con't.)

1. Separate problems and people. Don't confuse the two.

2. Find different ways to say "you're wrong" that don't contain the words "you're wrong." It's okay to challenge workers, but stay away from unnecessary judgment.

3. Develop a list of ways to say "you're right". Play the validation card as often as possible. People feel good when validated, they'll want more and will work to get it.

When you do, everybody wins.

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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