

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1221 Letting Go of Old Ways at Work — Part 1

It's common these days for a workplace to have four generations, sometimes five, side-by-side. What eventually happens is that we see some degree of difference in how each approaches their work. I'm Jerry Roberts, and let's talk about that, next, on The Extra Point.

By the time we've been in the workplace for any considerable period of time, perhaps as few as five or 10 years, we've developed a set of habits that govern how we work.

We have a work ethic, a style, and we've likely figured out ways of handling certain types of jobs that are effective and comfortable. If no one every challenges our methods, we'll stick with them. Now, sticking with them doesn't mean that we're *stuck*, though some people might think that.

Why do we have trouble letting go of these ways and be more open to change? We keep things the way they are for several reasons.

1. We've been productive
2. Back to the comfort zone. Our work style fits.
3. Fear of the unknown

Let's talk about each of these, beginning with productivity. If we've been successful in the past and our boss isn't demanding change, then why mess with success? I've heard Baby Boomers and Gen Xers say, "Let the young people do it how they want, this works for me."

This leads into the comfort zone and style. I like working in a certain way, so hey, why change? Somebody will say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Last, the unknown makes a lot of people very nervous. They don't want to embrace change, and would prefer to see it walk away, slipping out of site in the distance.

I like to ask a few questions when I come across this kind of situation.

- You are productive, but if there are new ways of doing the same job that would make you more productive, would you want to know about them?

- Did you have to become comfortable with the ideas you have now and methods you currently use to do your job?

- Isn't the unknown always a little scary or at least mysterious at first, and then once we know what we're dealing with, it begins to feel normal and we just go about our business?

With multiple generations in the workplace, we will have multiple ways to view situations, how we deal with them, and — in fact — the whole issue of the organization's culture. If we aren't open to new ideas, methods, and procedures, we will certainly fall into conflict.

When it comes to ideas, I've always lived by a single principle — it doesn't matter who comes up with the next good idea; it only matters that somebody does.

It follows that it doesn't matter whose method is the best way; it just matters that we always look for the best way. We'll never do that if we cling to how we've always done it, and refuse to consider new alternatives.

Tomorrow, we'll talk about how to build a solid system of collaboration between the generations.

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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