

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1278 When You Realize You're Following a Weak Leader — Pt. 1

If you're in the workforce long enough, you'll work for a number of organizational leaders. If you're fortunate, there will be one or two you'll remember for being strong, some will give you little to remember them for, and a few will be memorable for being weak. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today we start a conversation of what it means when we have a weak leader. That's next on The Extra Point.

Let's begin our exploration of weak leadership by talking about the problems they may cause.

- Lack of direction. Weak leaders likely lack a clear vision or strategy, which can lead to confusion and uncertainty among followers.
- No inspiration. Motivation and excitement will be missing.
- Poor decision-making. Decisions may be based on a combination of bad judgment, self-interest, and avoiding tough issues. If so, the group will lose confidence quickly.
- No accountability. Weak leaders may not hold anyone accountable, and that includes themselves. Without establishing expectations and consequences for delivering on them, it will be difficult for any organization to perform.

You can add a couple of more to the list. Weak leaders are change-resistant. To them, change is scary and to be avoided. One more mark of a weak leader is they'll spread low morale everywhere they go.

When you look at this, it's not a pretty picture. Weak leaders can create a number of troubling issues for the people who toil on their teams.

We live in Guam and the challenge is going to be different, depending on whether you work for GovGuam, the private sector, civil service, or you're in the military. There's not enough time to dig into all of those possibilities, so we'll offer three options that will hopefully be

of help to everyone impacted by a weak leader.

Option 1. You can leave. Other than military folks, you can resign your position and look for something else. You might also be able to transfer out into another job, if one is available.

Other than director positions in the Government of Guam which are politically-oriented hires, a weak leader may be locked into their position for a long time, to the detriment of the workers in their unit.

As for the private sector, most employers are family-owned companies. Sometimes, that means the founder retires and a relative — most of the time the owner's child — will take over and not be the same level of leader the parent was. So, in each case, what do you do? Do you go or do you stay?

If you stay, all may not be lost. Let's explore a few ways to help this leader, assuming they have some awareness that they need it and are open to it.

Option 2. Where they end, you and your team begin. Does the leader not communicate well? Then you step in and give the information and clarity needed.

Is the leader incapable of making good, timely decisions — or they just back away from doing it? You offer to make decisions for the issues concerning your work. Or, you set the table for the leader by giving them detailed explanations on their options, plus your recommendations. That will make it easier for them.

In a reverse mentoring capacity, when things go right — and even if it was you who really made the decision — you congratulate the leader and explain that what they did led to something good happening. Maybe they'll learn something in the process.

(Con't.)

Encourage your leader to collaborate more. Doing so will help them gain new perspectives and ideas, which can also help build their confidence.

I said this works if the leader is open to it. If that is not the case, this strategy will be a tough sell.

The other thing to know is that you may end up doing a lot of work you hadn't counted on and you may not get any official credit for it.

Your satisfaction will have to come from doing your part to help the whole team succeed...or at least keeping things going. At least your team will know what you did.

Then there is Option 3. Do nothing. Just ride it out and count the days, weeks, months, and years until retirement or whatever. I don't think it's a viable option, but far too many people choose it.

I've seen weak leaders first-hand. It's no fun. That being said, unless you take the initial option and walk out the door, I believe you and your coworkers need to step up and do what you can to help everybody. More on this topic tomorrow.

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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