

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1284 The “Open-Door” Policy vs. the 1:1 Meeting

Does your boss have an open-door policy? If you're a manager, do you have one? Is the open-door concept really delivering value, or is it just a convenient thing to tell people to make them think you're a good and caring boss? Could it even be causing too many distractions? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll dig into this to see if maybe we need to do things differently, next on The Extra Point.

I've had a bunch of managers in my career, and a lot of them proclaimed that they had an open-door policy. “Yessirree Jerry, if you need to see me you just come on by. I'm here for you.”

I found that most of those managers who said they had an open door, also were real busy, and I didn't always get a chance to sit down with them.

There was also something else. With the noted exception of about a half-dozen of them, the idea of staging a one-on-one meeting was absolutely foreign to them. It was like, “Do your work and if you get stuck, come find me.”

I knew they were missing something important, but exactly how important wouldn't become completely clear to me until years later. That being said, I'd had a number of valuable one-on-ones, and I understood what they could be if done right.

If you're thinking, “Well, having an open door can be sort of the same thing,” I disagree. An open door is there if somebody has a need to talk with you. A one-on-one session is totally intentional, and that begins with the fact that it is a scheduled event.

A few decades ago, it became fashionable for managers to escape their open-door office, and stroll through the premises, chatting up their workers. This became a corporate buzzphrase, *Management By Walking Around*. The intent was to mingle with employees in a casual way, and to improve morale. Personally, I liked it.

My first boss, Big Ed, believed in it, and he strolled through the mechanic bays, and out into the yard where our three-man team was washing and waxing vehicles. He did it pretty much every night, and we loved to see him coming. Ed usually had a story to tell, and we lapped it up.

Ed also was decades ahead of his time, as he would regularly call each of us into his office to talk about things. He wanted our take on the work we were doing, any improvements we wanted to see, and he always took time to ask about our life away from work.

I loved sitting down with him because I knew he sincerely cared about me, and he was a great listener. He let me do most of the talking. Then, he'd answer my questions, and I picked up information that has stuck with me for a lifetime.

Too many managers must dislike or even fear one-to-ones, and I'm not sure why. Maybe it's because they feel spending a half-hour or more with a single employee is a waste of time, or they worry they won't be able to answer their questions.

Many managers are loaded down with the details of their job, and don't realize that when it comes to growing talent, they are a key part of the team entrusted to do that.

Workers are these peculiar beings with desires and feelings, and careers, and some special attention might do them some good.

Never mind the open-door policy. Cut out blocks of time in your schedule and get to know your team better.

Maybe you've got the answer to a problem someone has. Maybe you'll re-ignite the excitement someone once had for their job. Maybe you'll do a little brainstorming with one of your workers and come up with a great idea. (Con't.)

Maybe, just maybe, you'll find yourself looking into the eyes of a future leader who will help drive a new level of success for your company.

One-on-one meetings can be almost magical, when you combine the willing nature of two people who want to be in that room together.

It's a big opportunity. Don't let it pass you by.

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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