

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1322 Would You Want to Be a “Gofer” for Your Boss?

You’re a successful business leader, the CEO of a profitable division of a multi-billion-dollar company. You’re a highly respected member of your community, no doubt counted among the “movers and shakers.” However, when your demanding boss travels, your role turns into one of support, handling the small details as well as troubleshooting challenges to provide whatever is needed. I’m Jerry Roberts, and I want to know if you’re okay with becoming an executive “gofer” for your boss. Are you? We’ll get to this, next on The Extra Point.

I recently connected with a former corporate leader who had run a successful division for a large multinational company. He had a high profile position and a strong personality.

If you spent any length of time with him, “gofer” wouldn’t be a word that would come to mind. Yet, when his big boss traveled, that’s exactly what he became.

He hit the road as sort of an “advance man”, dealing with small details, as well as taking on difficult issues that had to be done on time and done right the first time. My guess is that his margin for error was very small.

I held a somewhat similar role about the same time for a company with some 20 offices across the U.S. I was the director of the unit in Southern California.

When my boss flew into L.A., I also took on the gofer role. I was his driver, handled details of his trip through the home office, and dug up whatever information he needed. This was before the Internet, so there was a lot of phone work involved.

This was the late 1980s, and a man named Donald Trump had just come out with book entitled *The Art of the Deal*. My boss idolized Trump, dressed like him, combed his hair like him, talked like him, and wanted to be like him.

He was a brilliant guy, and I was excited that he brought me along on lunches and dinners with clients and prospective clients. I learned how he organized his thoughts, and put deals together in a casual, almost effortless manner.

It was a good education, paid for by my gofering, but it wasn’t perfect. This man had another side to his personality that saw him become condescending and insulting, and too often that was directed to me.

I asked the CEO I spoke of earlier, if he had felt reduced in any way by being pulled into these assignments with his boss. I used that term “reduced” to see if he might have had a similar experience to mine.

He immediately shot back that he felt his role was highly positive. This brings us to another key point, one that can’t be overstated.

When you do your normal job and do well, that shows off certain capabilities. However, when you shift into a different role such as what we’re talking about today, it can open your boss’s eyes to another side of you that he/she may not have seen before.

The unfortunate stuff aside in my case, I saw the connection with my boss as being a good chance to make a solid impression. I’m sure my CEO friend did as well.

Some people would see the role of a gofer as demeaning, while it screams “opportunity” to others.

I met a struggling movie director during my time in Hollywood, and one day I heard him utter one of the most famous lines in the entertainment industry: “There are no small parts, only small actors.”

Perhaps you’ll recognize that and understand the meaning, that any job can be transformed into a masterpiece if you bring the right attitude to it. (Con’t.)

On the other hand, if think that certain work is beneath you, and that only a starring role is worthy of your attention, then you'll actually be a negative influence.

Tell the kids and young workers in your life. Step up and take on the role. A boss who is totally engaged and always looking to identify talent, will take notice.

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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