

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1524 Learn From a Highly Difficult Boss – Part 2

Yesterday, I talked about a stint as manager of a Southern California office of a growing national company. My relationship with the owner wasn't great. He talked down to me, and embarrassed me in front of my team. If you've ever had such an experience, then you may be reminded of that as I tell the rest of the story, next on The Extra Point.

I had taken a position as manager of the Los Angeles-based office of a growing company. The CEO/owner was a dynamic man who possessed powerful skills and vision.

He was also clearly a narcissist, totally self-absorbed. He idolized Donald Trump, who had a popular book out, *Art of the Deal*. This wasn't the Trump we see today. It was before politics, before *The Apprentice* reality TV show, and pretty much all of the media loved Trump. He received coverage galore.

My boss dressed like Trump, cut and combed his hair to match Trump's style, and quoted him. All of this didn't go unnoticed by his employees, including the managers who ran his operations. A few of them had joked about his Trump obsession during calls I had with them.

As I said in yesterday's segment, this man exhibited a clear dislike for me. There were no problems in my operation, and the only thing I could figure is that I advocated pay increases for several members of the significantly underpaid staff.

We had a great profit picture, could easily absorb the pay bumps, and everyone knew it. Losing experienced talent would hurt, and trying to replace them could be costly. It made sense to adjust salaries, but my boss must have seen all this as a weakness in me. I can't think of any other reason for his attitude.

I had decided to ignore his negativity, and instead focused on his gifts, and what I could learn from him. His dealmaking skills were exceptional. Maybe he was modeling "The

Donald." I went to school on this man and made notes whenever I was with him. I'm sure still benefit from some of his ideas today. That being said, school would end abruptly.

He brought me to dinner with the president of a large company, that just happened to be the principal competitor of a huge client we'll call Company A. It was a heated competition, and my boss wanted to serve both of them.

Signing Company B wouldn't be a problem, but Company A wanted to make sure that any resources used to service their account would never be used for Company B. I can't get into any more detail than that, just to say that Company A wanted a firm separation between the two.

As I listened, my boss outlined an agreement that served Company B well, but would infuriate Company A as it would require the use of some of its resources. He was trying to cut corners and save money, but he had to know it was going to cause a problem.

Company B's president shook hands on the deal, and on the drive back to the office I asked how my boss saw this playing out. It was not going to be a secret. The executives at Company A would likely know on day one, and would scream. He laughed and said, "I guess you've got a problem."

Day one came and before lunch, I got an angry call from Company A's general manager. He knew what had happened, and had received verification from one of our employees. He wanted immediate resolution.

I informed my boss and his response was that I should call back and tell the man he was wrong, and that our employee was wrong. I was stunned. I said that lying was only going to make things worse, and would be insulting. The facts were known. He told me to make the call anyway.

(Con't.)

I agreed to the call, but I said that I wouldn't lie for him. He wasn't happy about that, and my refusal essentially ended my employment.

In the call, I apologized to Company A's manager, a man who had treated me with respect, then I told him the position the company was taking.

He was gracious, telling me that he knew none of it was my doing.

Managers in our other company cities called, asking what had happened. From their questions, it seemed like a narrative had been formed.

My boss flew in and I was gone a week later. It was called a resignation, but it was a firing.

After a month had passed, it was confirmed to me that indeed I had been blamed for the entire mess, and that I had been terminated as a result.

Sounds like a low-budget Hollywood movie.

What I came away with is...

1. Sometimes very bright people make decisions that make no sense, and you can make yourself crazy trying to apply logic in a situation like that.

None of it was necessary. The company had the resources to do the deal the right way, without any drama. The CEO chose not to.

2. Gather the gifts you get as you go, and appreciate them. Make no mistake about it, I labeled this man as a jerk for some time. Then, it dawned on me that I had learned valuable lessons from him, which brought me value.

While I never saw my former boss again, and never had to deal with the unfortunate part of his personality, I would get to keep those gifts and use them for years to come. And I have.

If you're having trouble with a boss and any of my story resonates with you, hopefully you can identify some gifts he/she has given you, and know that you too will have permanent use of them, even after the relationship has ended. I think that's a very good thing.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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