

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1571 Three Words We Need to Use More Often

You rarely hear them in job interviews. A lot of CEOs would never think of using them. Too many managers believe that if these words left their lips in front of their team, that it would harm their image. I'm talking about three words that society has taught us we should try to avoid using. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I believe that it's not merely okay that we use these three words, but I think it gives us an advantage. We'll unravel the mystery, next on The Extra Point.

I've performed a fair number of job interviews in my time, and I don't recall hearing a certain three-word expression. I once worked for a man whose ego was sufficiently large that I doubt he would ever use those words...at least not in front of the people who worked for him.

The words I'm referring to are "I don't know." I'm sure most people listening to my voice right now have no problem at all admitting they don't know, if there's something they don't know.

I also think I'd be on solid ground if I said that you know somebody who would not be quick to admit that, if ever asked.

Is it just ego, or do we live in the age of easy and immediate access to information, and therefore we should always be able to quickly scrounge up the answer to well, anything?

A few years ago, it seemed the opinion among hiring managers was that job seekers should try to answer an interviewer's questions with some kind of answer...that it was better to try that, rather than just giving up on the question.

Interviewers also began asking off-the-wall questions which had little to do with the position being hired for. Things like, "If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?"

My response would be, "Thank you for your well-thought-out question. If I was an animal, I'd be the kind of animal that eats interviewers who ask

questions like that."

What's wrong with a small giggle, and "I don't know?" Do I blow the job because I wasn't super creative on the spot? Maybe that's not the right job or right organization for you.

In 2004, Google CEO Sundar Pichai applied to Google for the job, Vice-president for Product Management.

He was asked a question about one of Google's new programs, but he knew nothing about it, and Pichai said, "I don't know." Wait, this was a big job and Google's products were talked about everywhere. How could a guy who wanted to be the head of the product division not know?

Shouldn't Pichai have done what a lot of people try to do...just come up with something, anything, you know, generalize and hope it was good enough?

Pichai didn't do that. He said he didn't know and got the job, and eventually became CEO.

If you have someone who tells you they don't know something, don't respond right away. Instead, wait a moment to see what they say next.

Maybe it'll be, "If you've got a moment, why don't we take a look together?" Or, "I love to learn. Let's talk about the answer."

If you're a manager and you think you need to have all the answers in front of your team or you'll somehow lose face, you might want to reconsider that.

If somebody brings you a problem and you don't have the answer, maybe it's worth a few minutes to pull people in and pursue it together.

(Con't.)

That becomes a teaching moment, and everyone will have the chance to be part teacher and part student.

We could pile possibility on top of possibility here, but I think you get the picture.

Responding to a question with “I don’t know” is not a sign of weakness. In my book, it’s a sign of opportunity.

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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