

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1580 Managing People Who (Think They) Are Smarter Than You

If you're a manager, I have a question for you. Have you ever managed a worker who was smarter than you? Another question. Have you ever managed someone who thought they were smarter than you? I'm Jerry Roberts, and today let's talk about having to deal with workers who may have superior intellects — or just think they do. That's coming next on The Extra Point.

If you're in the management game long enough, eventually you'll likely be presented with an employee who has mental capabilities that are superior to yours.

It doesn't necessarily mean that they know how to do your job better than you do. It just means they may think a bit more quickly, see things a bit more clearly, and maybe handle issues a bit more effectively than you do.

If that was the case, would you be intimidated in any way or see the situation as a positive?

Perhaps you believe that you know more about pretty much everything than your team does. If true, would that be because you are indeed so smart, or you're not doing so well in the hiring area?

Let's say that you did hire a worker whose knowledge and skills exceed yours in critical factors. How would you approach your role as their manager?

I think the first thing is to fight off insecurities you may have. Some managers may worry that if a worker outshines them, that their job is at risk.

I'm not saying it doesn't happen. That being said, if you're doing a good job and delivering value for the organization, then they up and unceremoniously toss you out in favor of somebody else, I think they're actually doing you a favor. Take your talents to a new place where you'll be treated better.

So, how do I manage this very bright talent.

Do I leave them alone, guide them, or direct their efforts on a daily basis?

Apple co-founder and legendary innovator Steve Jobs once said: "It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do."

I agree with that, and I would have liked to ask Jobs what he would do if that smart worker had a massive ego to go along with their smarts.

I think Jobs' response would have been that he didn't mind ego if it served to drive the worker to excel in his/her field, and to help take Apple to even greater heights. However, if their ego led them to try to make others feel inferior, then that wouldn't fly.

I've been privileged to work with some highly talented people over the years, and some had pretty big egos. I believe that these people possessed a strong sense of self-awareness, and managed to keep the negative side of that to a minimum.

Jobs might have mentioned that truly smart workers would understand how little value an ego play of that kind would bring; and the smarter the individual, the more aware they would be of their own limitations.

Let's get back to the person who thinks they are smarter than you and everybody else, at least in a specific area or job. That feeling is obvious every time they speak up. What can you do about it? Consider the following.

1. Decide if they are a distraction to the team. Is anybody complaining? If yes, then take a meeting and explain how you respect their talent, but let them know that others feel they are coming across a little strong. Again, if they are smart, they'll recognize the need to cool their jets.

(Con't.)

If there are no complaints, you can move on to the second step.

2. Give them a task to handle that is at an advanced level. Let's see what they can do. If they nail it, then you may have an exceptional talent you can leverage in numerous ways.

On the other hand, if they fail the test, then the ego issue shouldn't be a dominant factor any longer, and they may be more humble in the future.

There's more to the matter of being smart about dealing with smart workers. We'll get back into the conversation tomorrow.

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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