

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1674 Employee Misconceptions 2 – Boss is Unapproachable

Did you ever work for someone whom you felt was unapproachable? For some reason, you just didn't feel you should come to them if you had a problem or needed something. Maybe it was something in their voice, or the way they looked at you. Whatever it was, you thought they were sending a signal that said, "Back off!" I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'm going to try to make a case that — most of the time — this is entirely a misconception. The court's in session, next on the Extra Point.

This is employee misconception # 2, that the boss is simply unapproachable. It's confession time.

There was a time when Jerry had hair, dark brown and lots of it. Dark eyebrows as well, and then a full mustache.

I also had a habit of slightly squinting, where the eyes narrow a bit. Added to the dark brown hair and mustache, it presented an image that made some people feel that I was upset or thought something was wrong. That wasn't the case — in most cases — but it served to make me seem unapproachable.

When my wife brought this to my attention, my reaction was "No way, I'm totally approachable, as approachable as anyone could be."

Well, she mentioned it a couple of other times, and then I saw a picture with me squinting and the dark hair and mustache, and it hit me that, yeah, I didn't look approachable.

So, while it was a clear misconception, I was contributing to it.

Over the years, I ditched the mustache, shaved the head, and the eyebrows are gray. I also learned to relax my face more and squint less. I haven't heard the "unapproachable" label in a long time.

Many managers may seem to be distant, aloof, and not someone who cares to engage with

workers so much. Workers might feel they're too busy or not interested in employee issues and concerns. I think that's rarely the case, but it becomes a roadblock to communication.

In my career I've had a lot of managers, and most of them struggled to perform their job. In many cases, they were flat-out overwhelmed by it. Trying to satisfy their bosses plus taking care of the day-to-day operations, required everything they had. Employee engagement was a distraction, and while I think most had the desire to be of help, the energy and focus necessary wasn't possible. Many seemed to be, yes, unapproachable.

When employees feel they cannot get with their managers to ask questions or deal with concerns, it can lead to misunderstandings and decreased morale.

Again, it's a misconception that most managers want to conduct business this way, but as the saying goes, "perception is reality." So, how can a manager change that so-called reality?

They will have to find a way to carve out time for workers. Even if it's just a few minutes here and there, that's a start. Regular check-ins, open-door policies, informal team gatherings, and just walking around to chat a bit can help create an atmosphere of accessibility — which will lead to trust.

For their part, workers should give their boss the benefit of the doubt, looking to understand the difficulty of their position and their stress. If the manager can't give them time right away, don't close the book on them and apply that "unapproachable" tag.

One way is to say, "Boss, I'd like to get five minutes with you. If now is not a good time, when do you think you can squeeze me in?" In most cases, that's going to get you the time you want.

(Con't.)

Use it wisely to get to the point of your issue.  
That will be appreciated.

If the advice your manager gives you does help, let them know and thank them. You probably won't have to work as hard to get with them the next time.

Okay, there are some unapproachable managers. Lots of ego, lots of attitude. I've had two like that. They are in the minority, and I hope you don't have one like that.

I also you are not one like that.

Approachability is cool. Be that.

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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