

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1675 Employee Misconceptions 3 — Boss Plays Favorites

Today is the final part in our series of people having misconceptions, whether they be managers or other employees. I think I've saved the best for last — do bosses play favorites? A lot of workers think they do. A lot of managers flatly deny it, saying that they treat everybody the same. I'm Jerry Roberts, and we're going to chew on this topic for a bit today, next on the Extra Point.

Employee misconception # 3, managers play favorites. Do you think they do? If they do, is it intentional? Do certain employees get things that others don't, and are they allowed to break company rules and get away with it, while others are disciplined?

Okay, let's get real. Some managers do bend over backwards for certain employees, and not for others. I've seen it, and maybe you have too.

Here's a quick example. I worked for a startup publishing company in the early 1990s in the mainland. We had a sales manager named Bear. A New Yorker, he talked like this (deep and raspy voice), lots of ego and attitude, but he knew how to sell.

The company had about a dozen reps who were selling ads to its publication, and Bear had the "hots" for one of them. We'll call her Paula. She was a streetwise girl and had him eating out of her hand. He bought Paula expensive gifts, and he was falling for her big time.

All was good until he began to funnel more of the top sales leads to Paula, who was not a great salesperson. These were companies that had indicated strong interest in buying, and everybody wanted some of those leads, as the success rate was very high.

More often than not, Paula would fail to make the sale, Bear would jump on the phone to save the deal, and she would smile sweetly, knowing the commission was hers. The rest of

the sales room was unhappy and complained. Bear defended Paula and his actions.

The office opened at 8:30 and the sales team was expected to be on the phone soon after. People who were late were publicly called out for it. Paula would regularly waltz in at 9:00 or later, and Bear would say nothing.

"Wait Jerry, I'm confused. You call this an employee misconception, and then you show how favoritism is real."

That's right, Bear broke rules in his treatment of Paula. He could buy her anything he wanted, no problem. He was also free to give those in-house sales leads to anyone he wanted. No workplace rules prevented that, but the rule of fairness says he made a mistake. He lost the support of other salespeople when he gave Paula more than her fair share of those leads, then had to save them.

The workplace rule he did break was in his reprimands for employees who were late, when Paula was given a free pass. That would be seen as discrimination.

When I was a manager, I happily confess that I also played favorites, but not the way Bear did.

Anytime someone scored any kind of win, whether it was for selling, writing, creating a great graphic design — or anything else — they became my favorite...of the moment...and I would praise them long and loud.

Then, somebody else would be my next favorite and so on. I was an equal opportunity cheerleader. I wanted everybody to think they were my favorite.

Where this issue can get messy is with performance reviews. I see you get a great review and a promotion, while mine is nothing more than average, and I'm told to try harder. (Con't.)

My work is as good as yours. I start thinking about all the times I saw you in the boss's office, while I rarely got facetime. Immediately, my ego kicks in and I conclude that you got preferential treatment and I got the shaft.

However, what that bruised ego won't allow me to see are the complexities of performance evaluation, and the current needs of the employer. The decision to promote you was likely based on key metrics, contributions, and the results you delivered. More important, what they felt you would deliver in the new role.

Thus, this issue is a total mixed bag. There are managers like Bear who play favorites for any number of personal reasons. There are also managers who will like another worker more than you or me, and they might not even know why.

In most cases, in my experience, managers might seem to play favorites, but in reality they are focusing on people they believe will help them be successful. They're human and in this way, they're protecting their self-interests. You can't blame them for that.

My suggestion is simple. If you're going to play favorites, make sure it's for the right reasons, and let everybody know that when they deliver results, they can share in that favoritism.

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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