

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1704 Surviving Fumbles in a New Job

Today, we're going to talk about fumbles. No, not the kind of fumble that the Chiefs and the Eagles might make in today's Super Bowl, but fumbles made after taking a new job. Can you remember something you did in a new position that ended up all wrong? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll talk about fumbling at work, along with what you should do before such a mistake takes place. That's coming up next on the Extra Point.

Starting a new job can be both exciting and nerve-wracking. You want to impress your boss to be sure, but you also want to perform well to let coworkers know that you're going to be a capable member of the team.

I heard the story of a prison guard who split his pants on the very first day on the job. As you can imagine, he heard about that all day long, both from his coworkers and the inmates.

There's no doubt he was embarrassed, but he laughed it off and eventually got a new pair of pants to change into.

If you're an oldtimer here, you might recall that a certain Chinese restaurant opened up, and within a few hours had run out of rice. The cook had ordered what he thought was enough for the first day, but the place got slammed with customers. Each party was led to their table and informed that their meal would not include rice.

There was no social media in those days and the community was much smaller than now, but that event spread like crazy.

I've got a quick story of my own. When I left Guam in the 1980s, I went to California and worked at a national radio network. When I went on the air, I was on 200-some stations across the country.

Without getting too far into the weeds, the technology was set up so a radio station didn't have to do anything. They turned on the

network and could walk away with confidence that we would make them sound good. It was all done by satellite. When I finished talking I'd punch a button in L.A. and it would send a signal to each station that would fire off local commercials and other announcements that played in each of those cities. After two or three minutes, I'd resume the program.

Timing had to be precise, to the second. There was no room for error. If I punched the wrong button or was late, it could lead to chaos times 200. I didn't know exactly what would happen or how bad it would be, but my boss told me it would be pretty ugly and not to let it happen.

There were multiple buttons on this console, close together, and in the first few months I had taken great care to make sure I only touched the right ones. Then, one day, I inadvertently hit the wrong one. Not knowing what might have happened, I waited for the moment to jump back in and continue, and finished the show on a good note.

Later that day I got a call from my boss, asking, "What did you do?" He said the network had received numerous complaints and the big boss wanted a piece of my backside, if not more.

I drove to the studios, walked into the general manager's office and he was fuming. So, I apologized for the error, was chewed out, but when he got done he backed off to a degree. He said I had done so well to that point that he wasn't going to fire me. That said, I couldn't make the same mistake again. I was there for the better part of three years and there were no reoccurrences.

What I learned is that a mistake, even a big one, doesn't necessarily signal the end of a job.

(Con't.)

I also remembered a lesson my mom and first boss, Big Ed, had taught me. To make a difference in any way possible, from the moment you sign on with a new job.

In other words, start showing value from the get-go. Whatever you're being paid, make management feel they got a bargain.

Then, when you do stumble, bumble, or fumble — and almost all of us do sooner or later — your mistake will be measured against the performance you've already delivered.

Large perceived value will make a mistake look smaller. I hope that's the way it works for you.

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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