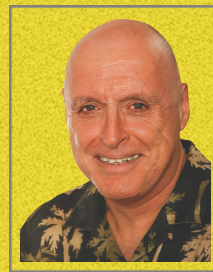


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1727 How Can Equal Treatment be Discriminatory?

Let me ask you a question. A new manager takes over a team, treating each and every worker equally. Yet, some employees feel they are being discriminated against. How is that possible? I'm Jerry Roberts, and the answer to that is coming next on The Extra Point.

I left you with this question of how can people who are treated equally believe that they are being discriminated against?

There's only one answer. People feel that equal treatment is unequal when they have been receiving preferential treatment. I'll say it again, when people get used to preferential treatment, equal treatment seems like discrimination.

Let's talk about special handling of workers, which can be an issue that can arise within teams. Preferential treatment, while often intended to motivate or reward certain employees, can end up leading to unintended consequences that undermine team morale and relationships.

When management consistently favors certain individuals, whether due to long-standing relationships, exceptional performance, or other reasons, it creates an environment where those employees feel entitled to special privileges.

This favoritism can manifest in various ways, such as flexible working hours, choice assignments, public recognition, and even turning your back when rules are bent or broken.

Let's break it down. As employees become accustomed to preferential treatment, the perception of fairness within the team begins to erode. Those receiving equal treatment may feel as if they are being punished for not having the same connections or not being part of the "in-crowd."

This sense of injustice can eventually lead to disengagement, lower productivity, and even

high turnover rates. Why turnover? Because once you're accustomed to being treated in a certain manner, you don't want to go back to the way it was before.

Whether it's a new manager or the existing management attempting to enforce equal treatment, it may be perceived as a sudden and unwelcome shift. To some, it might even be seen as a form of discrimination. I know that sounds weird, but some people think that way.

So, we're the new manager. What do we do? We'd like to meet with the previous manager and ask if there are any situations or special arrangements we should be aware of. If that manager was fired, we won't get that chance. Further, we might not get much insight on this from that manager's manager. We're on our own.

In that case, and this is very often the case, we might be able to learn key factors when we conduct initial one-on-one interviews with team members.

Those meetings can refocus workers on their primary role, and some of these special issues can come out at that time.

All this said, some managers don't do anything and just accept their position and condition of the team as is, favoritism and all.

Others want to take it in a different direction. They are rigid in their approach, and nobody will ever receive any form of favoritism. That may sound good, but it's tough to deliver in the real world. Things happen, concessions are made through necessity, and that perfect balance gets unbalanced.

Let's be clear. Showing favoritism toward one or more workers is not, in itself, a problem. The problem is when the unequal treatment is not based on merit or value received.

(Con't.)

We see this issue play out across our society, not just in our workplaces. When groups or specific individuals are given preference over others, without earning that in some way that is acceptable to all concerned, then the field is not level.

If and when it becomes level again, then some of the formerly favored will complain.

Special treatment is truly special when each and every person has the same opportunity. Then, it's up to the individual to deliver the value required for favored status.

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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