

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1764 You Do Most of the Work While Others Get Paid the Same

I met with a group of high school students yesterday, trying to help them prepare for work after graduation. It was an hour-long session and we covered a lot of ground. Towards the end, one of the students highlighted a common workplace issue and asked what I would recommend for a solution. I'm Jerry Roberts, and since this situation plays out in workplaces across Guam and everywhere else, it is the subject for our time today, and that's next on The Extra Point.

Yesterday, I had an hour with 25 students at JFK, the topic being "How to Get Ahead at Work." All are graduating seniors. Some are headed for college and part-time work, some will go into full-time employment, and some already are working or have a job lined up.

The grouping was a combination of GCC's ProStart (culinary and food service) and Hospitality classes, led by Eric Chong. Eric has industry experience and has been preparing students for careers in those fields for years. I presented to another of Eric's classes three years ago.

As time was running out, one of the students asked what to do if you were working with others, but you were doing most of the work. In essence, you were covering for those who weren't doing their share. On top of that, they were being paid the same wage you get.

This is a common issue, and I get the question several times each year. It's a frustration for a lot of good workers who have to compensate for employees who make a minimum effort.

Let's unpack the issue. First, has the high-performing worker confronted the others and asked them to step up their effort? If yes and they didn't ramp up their output, then you need to look to the supervisor.

Does the supervisor know what is going on? If he/she does and is doing nothing to correct it, this is a different problem and we'll address that a bit later.

Let's assume the supervisor doesn't know. Are we going to inform them? Let's look at our options.

Option 1: Tell the supervisor, because everybody should pull their own weight, right?

Pro: Telling the boss can and should lead to the issue being resolved.

Con: Doing so may create tension within the team.

Option 2: Tell the supervisor and request a pay raise. If you're doing the bulk of the work, you deserve to get paid more. Isn't that fair?

Pro: This approach acknowledges your added contributions and you are rewarded for your extra efforts. It also shows your commitment to the team.

Con: I think the odds are low that you'll get a raise out of this, but there's no harm in asking. That being said, it's how you ask.

I'd suggest something like this: "I believe in the team and I was happy to be able to cover for the others. If you agree that my efforts are helpful to the team, I'd like to request a pay raise to reflect that."

This is opposed to whining about the other workers slacking off, and saying you deserve more. I doubt that will be appreciated.

Option 3: Say nothing and hope for improvement. My question is, what is likely to change here? You brought it to these people already and the problem still exists.

Pro: For the slacking workers, this is a great idea. For you, I can't find a pro.

Con: This option often leads to continued frustration and resentment. Over time, the imbalance in workload can lead to burnout for you, and your own performance may suffer.

For me, you can tell that option 3 is not on the board. I would likely select option 2, tell the supervisor and see their reaction. If they deal with it, fine. If they don't, then I go to option 4. (Con't.)

I also consider option 4 if the supervisor knew about the problem and did nothing about it.

Option 4 is the HR manager. Not to make a case against the workers or the supervisor, but to find out if there's another job I can transition to. There often are other openings, or may soon be. Maybe that's how you resolve the issue.

Pro: You might walk in at just the right time, and you can leave the trouble behind without any major confrontations. You get a new job and a fresh start.

Con: There is none. The worst case scenario is that there's nothing else available.

If you've worked through all of these options, then I have one more...option 5. That is to look for another job. If you go this route, keep your current job while testing the market.

Pro: Seeking new employment is exciting, and maybe you find a better fit.

Con: A job search can be stressful and a bit uncertain. If you don't find one, then you're back where you started from.

Getting in front of a group of fresh-faced young people, all who are climbing aboard their launchpad to their future, is a great experience.

Was I standing in front of a future all-star chef? How about a hotel manager? What about an inventor? Maybe the Governor of Guam in 2058?

You plant seeds into a kid's life and you never know what the harvest will be. I got to do it for a day. People like Eric Chong have been scattering seeds for years. I hope they know the value of their efforts, and get a chance to see the fruits of their labors.

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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