

“You Call that an Apology?: Utilizing Effective Communication in Conflicts

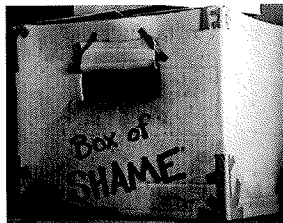
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What is an Apology?

I'M SORRY

Why Individuals Avoid Giving Apologies

- ❖ **Internal:** Fear of shame, ridicule, appearance of weakness and loss, and expressing feelings
- ❖ **External:** Permits others to feel superior, gives power to others, and fear of retribution



KINDS OF APOLOGIES

- **Full Apology:** "I'm sorry. It was my fault."
- **Partial Apology:** "I'm sorry that you are in such pain."
- **Partial and Insincere:** "I'm apologizing for my alleged conduct."
- **Non-Apology**

What do you think?

Sarah Michelle Gellar apologizes (November 21, 2018).



"I love Thanksgiving and unfortunately my eyes are often bigger than my stomach, and I tend to eat so much I make myself sick. This was a joking reminder to myself not to do that. ... I'm terribly sorry that people were offended by my attempt at humor. Anyone that knows me, knows I would never intentionally 'shame' any one on any basis. I am a champion of all people."

What do you think?

Justin Bieber apologizes to JoJo (December 31, 2018).



What do you think?

Justin Bieber apologizes to JoJo (December 31, 2018).

"Burn it."



"@tjsjojosiwa: I have nothing against you it was the car and the colors I didn't like I really hope you didn't think I was malicious or mean spirited."

What do you think?

Supermodel Bella Hadid apologizes (June 17, 2019).



"I never noticed the planes in the background and that is the truth. I would never mean to disrespect these airlines, let alone these amazing countries. ... I want to send a sincere apology to those who ever thought I would put blame on them, especially to Saudi Arabia and UAE."
"This was an honest mistake on an early morning ... never, ever would I intentionally try to offend anyone like that. I am so sorry."

Elements of "an Effective Apology"

- A. Acknowledge offense;
- B. Provide an explanation;
- C. Remorse; and
- D. Reparations

A. Acknowledge the Offense

- Be Specific
- Provide adequate detail of the offense
- Correctly identify the parties to whom the apology is owed
- Confirm that the grievance violated a social and/or moral contract between parties

"Pharma Bro" Martin Shkreli's bounty for Hillary Clinton's hair (September 11, 2017).



"I wanted to personally apologize to this Court and my lawyers for the aggravation that my recent postings have caused. ... I understand now, that some may have read my comments about Mrs. Clinton as threatening, when that was never my intention when making these comments."

Starbucks apologizes (July 5, 2019).



"This treatment of public safety workers could not be more disheartening. While the barista was polite, making such a request at all was offensive. ... Unfortunately, such treatment has become all too common in 2019."

FOX News apologizes
(September 24, 2019).



"The comment made by Michael Knowles who was a guest on The Story tonight was disgraceful – we apologize to Greta Thunberg and to our viewer."

Pastor apologizes to Ariana Grand
(September 2, 2018).

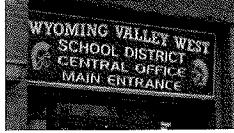


"It would never be my intention to touch any woman's breast. Maybe I crossed the border, maybe I was too friendly or familiar but again, I apologize."

B. Provide an Explanation

- Don't diminish responsibility
- Identify whether the grievance was/was not intentional
- Behavior was not indicative of "real self"
- Victim is blameless
- Similar grievance unlikely to occur

Pennsylvania School District Apologizes
(July 25, 2019).



"[The] Board of Directors sincerely apologizes for the tone of the letter that was sent regarding lunch debt. It wasn't the intention of the district to harm or inconvenience any of the families of our school district. We want to thank everyone for their concern and generous donations to help pay for the unpaid lunch bills. ...

As a result, all students ... will receive free breakfast and lunch in all of our schools for the next five years regardless of income. Again, please accept our sincere apology for any harm or inconvenience the letter caused."

Florida State University apologizes (January, 2019).



"In a well-intentioned effort to recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. on this special day, a member of our recruiting staff created a graphic using one of Dr. King's quotes The quote resonated with our program's Do Something mantra. However, in our attempt to more closely connect the message to FSU, we foolishly posted a graphic that was not in line with our intent. We are sorry for missing the mark in our attempt to celebrate Dr. King's legacy."

FanX apologizes to author
(September 10, 2018).



"In response to my poorly chosen words about the #metoo movement being 'trendy', I came off insensitive to people's pain, and I am sorry.

I felt my comments were taken out of context from the original email exchange, and I responded hastily and inappropriately. I deeply regret sending the original email and the tweets that followed. ...

I would like to apologize to @haleshannon for the events that happened on Twitter today, and my overall handling of the reports of harassment form our last event."

Andy Gross apologizes to Purdue University
(August 21, 2018).



"Andy Gross is profoundly sorry that students at Purdue University were offended during his show this past weekend. ... Andy has never before been accused of sexual misconduct or harassment.

Andy was oblivious and naïve about the current environment on college campuses, and he sincerely regrets causing any offense or discomfort to any student participating. Andy has chosen to no longer perform on college campuses in the future. Further, he plans to change the parts that upset Purdue students.

Again, Andy Gross sincerely regrets causing offense or discomfort."

Dani Mathers apologizes for her selfie
(September, 2016).



Mathers apologized on Snapchat, saying that she meant to send the photo as a private message and not to her public followers. "That was absolutely wrong and not what I meant to do ... I know that body shaming is wrong. That is not the type of person I am."

Monterey Bay Aquarium apologizes
(December 20, 2018).



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"Hey everyone. It has come to our attention that some of the references in this tweet are problematic and insensitive. We've posted here in the thread so that people who have engaged with this tweet will join in our learning moment.

If our tweet alienated you, please know that we are deeply sorry, and that we offer our sincerest apologies. If you follow our feed, we often reference popular memes to talk about the ocean. In this case, the memes used had connotations we were unaware of until now."

C. Remorse

An expression of sincerity, shame, humility, remorse/forbearance

A Hungarian camerawoman tripped and kicked desperate migrants as they fled (September 2015).

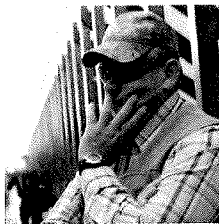
"I am very sorry for the incident, and as a mother I am especially sorry for the fact that fate pushed a child in my way. I did not even see that at that moment. I started to panic and as I re-watch the file, it seems as if it was not even me."



Zimbabwe hunter apologizes for killing Cecil the lion.

"I regret shooting a lion named Cecil. That was never the intention. I didn't know he existed. ... Any other lion, I don't think it would have been a problem."

"It's been a traumatic experience and I wish it was over."



Larry Nassar speaks at sentencing (February 6, 2018)

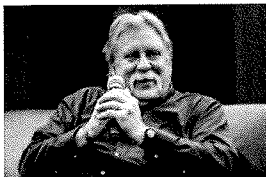


"The words expressed by everyone that has spoken, including the parents, have impacted me to the – to my innermost core. With that being said, I understand and acknowledge that it pales in comparison to the pain, trauma and emotions that you all are feeling. It's impossible to convey the depth and breadth of how sorry I am to each and every one involved. The visions of your testimonies will forever be present in my thoughts."

D. Reparations

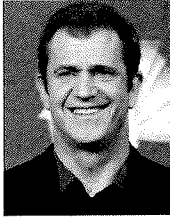
Something is done to attempt to make injured party/parties whole

Tribune columnist Robert Kirby apologizes (September, 2018).



"I'm profoundly sorry that my actions have offended people in the community. I have a lot of work to do in understanding the pain I have caused. ... After discussing my conduct with Tribune management, I am more aware of the consequences of my action and I will be undergoing training and counseling to become a better person."

Mel Gibson apologizes for anti-Semitic remarks
(July 2006).



"I want to apologize specifically to everyone in the Jewish community ... I would like to take it one step further, and meet with leaders in the Jewish community with whom I can have a one on one discussion to discern the appropriate path for healing. I have begun an ongoing program of recovery and what I am now realizing is that I cannot do it alone. I am in the process of understanding where those vicious words came during that drunken display."

Harvey Weinstein apologizes (October 2017).



I came of age in the '60s and '70s, when all the rules about behavior and workplaces were different. That was the culture then. I have since learned it's not an excuse, in the office — or out of it. To anyone. I realized some time ago that I needed to be a better person, and my interactions with the people I work with have changed. I appreciate the way I've behaved with colleagues in the past has caused a lot of pain, and I sincerely apologize for it.

Harvey Weinstein apologizes (continued).

Though I'm trying to do better, I know I have a long way to go. That is my commitment. My journey now will be to learn about myself and conquer my demons. Over the last year, I've asked Lisa Bloom to tutor me, and she's put together a team of people. I've brought on therapists, and I plan to take a leave of absence from my company and to deal with this issue head on. I so respect all women, and regret what happened.

I hope that my actions will speak louder than words and that one day we will all be able to earn their trust and sit down together with Lisa to learn more. ... I want a second chance in the community, but I know I've got work to do to earn it. I have goals that are now priorities. Trust me, this isn't an overnight process. I've been trying to do this for 10 years, and this is a wake-up call. I cannot be more remorseful about the people I hurt, and I plan to do right by all of them.

... One year ago, I began organizing a \$5 million foundation to give scholarships to women directors at USC. While this might seem coincidental, it has been in the works for a year. It will be named after my mom, and I won't disappoint her.

Lara Spencer of Good Morning America apologizes (August, 2019).



My sincere apologies for an insensitive comment I made in pop news yesterday. From ballet to anything one wants to explore in life, I say GO FOR IT. I fully believe we should all be free to pursue our passions. Go climb your mountain-and love every minute of it.

Mark Zuckerberg's apologizes (March 21, 2018).



"So this was a major breach of trust and I'm really sorry that this happened. You know we have a basic responsibility to protect people's data and if we can't do that then we don't deserve to have the opportunity to serve people. So our responsibility now is to make sure that this doesn't happen again."

Elements of a Failed Apology

1. Vague and incomplete acknowledgement
2. Passive voice ("Mistakes were made")
3. Make the offense conditional
4. Question whether victim was harmed
5. Minimization of offense
6. Use empathic language ("I'm sorry" or "I regret")
7. Apologizing to the wrong party
8. Apologizing for the wrong offense

United Airlines Passenger Dragging (April 2017)

United: "Flight 3411 from Chicago to Louisville was overbooked. After our team looked for volunteers, one customer refused to leave the aircraft voluntarily and law enforcement was asked to come to the gate. We apologize for the overbook situation."



United CEO: "This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United... I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened... We are reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation." The officer who dragged the man from the plane was put on leave.

United CEO: "I'm sorry. We will fix this. I deeply apologize to the customer forcibly removed and to all the customers aboard. No one should ever be mistreated this way."

RECOMMENDATION

An apology is only as good as it is perceived, so if you don't mean it, think twice before making one.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

1. Is an apology appropriate?
2. Is the other party ready for an apology?
3. What does the apology look like?
4. How will the apology be made?
5. Practice the apology
6. What will the apology mean?
7. What if the apology is not accepted?

