



SORRY ABOUT THAT!

RAC FORUM NOVEMBER 13, 2018

THE UBER APOLOGY PROJECT

- Goal: To repair relationships with customers
- Focus of Study: 1.5M customers reporting bad service
- Tested Four Responses:
 - Saying nothing in response to complaints
 - Email admitting the problem
 - Email admitting the problem and committing to do better
 - Email admitting the problem and providing customer with a promotional coupon

THE UBER APOLOGY PROJECT

The Economics of Apologies:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2018/10/12/657023877/the-economics-of-apologies>

WHAT WAS LEARNED?

- Economies are based on trust.
 - Right kind of apology increased revenues 1-2%
 - Wrong kind of apology decreased revenues 1-2%
- Commitment to do better either no effect or a bad effect (held to higher standard)
- No difference in the kind of language used
- Most effective apology—compensation (Uber provided \$5)

PERSON TO PERSON APOLOGIES

- Apologies beneficial in longer term relationships
- Apology must be perceived by the offended person as “costly” to the person apologizing
- If you apologize and commit to improve, and then you don't, it would be better not to apologize in the first place.
- Should not be overused
- Should be made as soon as possible
- Should avoid empty words/double talk

Rate These Apologies

- I'm sorry you feel that way.
- I apologize to anyone who might have been offended.
- Mistakes were made.
- I apologize if I offended anyone.
- I want to apologize.

Rate These Apologies (cont.)

- I am sorry you overheard me call you a liar.
- Doctor to patient: I am sorry that your family has had to listen to your reports of pain.
- My son is very sorry for what he did.
- I'm so so sorry! I feel so bad. I'm so sorry. Is there anything I can do? I feel so bad about this...
- Stuff happens.

Think About the Words You Use

- I'm sorry.
- Forgive me.
- Pardon me
- Excuse me.
- I regret it.
- I was wrong.



Think About the Words You Use

- I'm sorry. (describes the emotions of the person apologizing)
- Forgive me. (a demand)
- Pardon me (a demand)
- Excuse me. (a demand)
- I regret it. (state of mind of the person apologizing)
- I was wrong. (admits factual error)

The Best Way to Start an Apology

(Simply say,)

I APOLOGIZE.

(This says what you mean.)

Steps to Making an Apology

- Don't wait—sooner is better than later
- Focus should be on the harm to the offended person
- Stick to the issue at hand
- Admit wrong-doing/take responsibility
- Express “sincere” remorse/regret
- Indicate what will be done to prevent the problem in the future (if possible)

Steps to Making an Apology

- The “Context” is not important
- The “Why” is not important
- Express what will be done to prevent the problem in the future for others
- Consider making restitution/amends (when possible)

Example # 1

What I want the American people to know, what I want the Congress to know is that I am profoundly sorry for all I have done wrong in words and deeds. I never should have misled the country, the Congress, my friends or my family. Mere words cannot fully express the profound remorse I feel for what our country is going through...my actions are in the hands of the American people and their representatives in the Congress. Should they determine that my errors of word and deed require their rebuke and censure, I am ready to accept that.

--Bill Clinton, December 1998 (original apology in March 1998)

Example #2

This will be a year that a lot of us never forget, and it's really hard, and it's painful. It's going to be hard to sleep again, hard to get up in the morning, but we're going to keep working hard, and this will be the foundation this program is leaned on. Mental toughness. Physical toughness. Doing everything you can in the eye of adversity. I know it sounds corny to some people, but that's the grit and toughness this organization was built on. It's hard to lose, takes a toll on all of us. Apologize to the Raiders fans, and assure you we'll keep working.

--John Gruden, Post Game, November 11, 2018

Example #3

I've never said I'm a perfect person, nor pretended to be someone that I'm not. I've said and done things I regret, and the words released today on this more than a decade-old video are one of them. Anyone who knows me knows these words don't reflect who I am. I said it, I was wrong, and I apologize. Let's be honest — we're living in the real world. This is nothing more than a distraction from the important issues we're facing today. We are losing our jobs, we're less safe than we were eight years ago, and Washington is totally broken. Hillary Clinton and her kind have run our country into the ground.

--Candidate Donald Trump, October, 2016

Steps to Receiving an Apology

- Assess the sincerity of the apology—Listen for "I" statements, look at body language, listen for tone of voice
- Note if the person accepts responsibility or blames you/points out your faults instead.
- Consider if the apology is for something that has occurred once or many times before

Steps to Receiving an Apology

- Don't feel you have to accept an apology right away—you may need time to process.
- If you believe that the apology is sincere:
 - Thank the person—don't brush it off
 - Confirm how you reacted/felt
 - Indicate you understand and accept the apology—don't just say, “ok.”

Final Thoughts: The Downside

- Asking for forgiveness transfers power to the offended
- Apologizing may be perceived as a weakness by some
- Apologizing can damage relationships, lead to loss of status or power, or even result in the termination of employment.
- Before apologizing consider reframing the situation—be positive and proactive—is an “apology” really needed?
- Not all apologies are accepted/yield positive results.

Ways to Sweeten Your Apology: Gifts

