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Proactive Leaders Apologize Now

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As a proactive leader, being positioned to apologize in a timely way requires keeping focused on being a person of Intentional Leadership Integrity. Be the first to apologize when your wrong thoughts, talk or actions have negatively impacted a staff member, colleague or customer. To do this takes genuine humility.

Defensiveness, rationalization, blame and excuses are all signals that humility is missing in your character and that egocentricity and selfishness are having their way with you.

There are many ways to apologize. Here are a few I've used and have coached others to use to heal "pinched" relationships.

FACE TO FACE APOLOGY - This is the best, and probably most difficult. Many leaders do not like this direct approach because they fear seeing the other person's expressions and then possibly hearing a reply they don't want to hear.

VOICE-TO-VOICE APOLOGY - The telephone, while not the ideal personal or direct way of apologizing, is sometimes the quickest option. The goal is to apologize as soon as possible. Don't let the sun set on your wrong talk or actions! A timely telephone apology is a good "damage control" move.

E-MAIL APOLOGY NOTE - Again, if speed of response is an issue, this will work. However, know that it is also viewed as very impersonal by many folks. If you cannot reach the person directly by phone, this may be your answer if "damage control" is essential.

WRITING A LETTER - A friendship letter, or a letter expressing apologetic feelings can often be as powerful and have as great an impact as saying something to someone in person. A letter is especially appropriate and best if you are very close to the person.

SENDING A CARD AND/OR GIFT - The tried and true card, flowers, candy or other material peace offering along with a short apologetic message works well. Check your card shop or the free electronic cards available on the Internet and you'll find all kinds of creative cards, some with clever blanks for do-it-yourself messages.

APOLOGIZE THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY - The "Miles Standish" method may be useful at the right times. I seldom recommend this approach and have never used it myself. Most people would see it as being highly impersonal to have an apology delivered to them via a "proxy or "stand-in."

RIGHTING THE WRONG - Two things are necessary here. First, you accept and admit full responsibility for the damages done. Secondly, you take care of it in a way that is seen as

taking care of it by the person you've hurt.

PUBLIC DECLARATION - This takes more courage than most of the other ways to apologize. Sometimes, depending on what you did and what you are apologizing for, you might find it appropriate to use a public forum to openly declare your apology. I've even seen one on a banner attached to a small airplane flying along the coastal beaches on a Saturday!

ACTIONS AND DEEDS - Doing a real kindness for the person to whom you wish to make your apology is another technique. This can range from giving contact names and numbers to a business associate with whom you have somehow been less than fair to helping the person in a way meaningful to them and possibly inconvenient for you.

ALL-OUT APPROACH - If you have done something awful to a close friend, relative, business associate or customer, sometimes a combination of verbal, written, action and gift apologies is called for. Use your judgment. Again, well spoken, sincere words delivered face-to-face mean the most to the majority of people.

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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