



Does an Apology Help Your Business?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Today I attended a break out session with the topic of apology at a conflict resolution conference. We discussed the importance of apologizing to others and how it is best done. I have been thinking ever since it ended about why you might be required to offer apologies when you are in business.

Sometimes you might have offended someone without knowing they were offended until some time had passed. You might hear a complaint about products or services that were not delivered as expected. Perhaps you had a misunderstanding with a peer or another business owner.

There are several things that are important to know when you consider offering an apology to another person:

1. You need to hear their story first so you know exactly what harm was done.
2. If they believe that you listened and understood, you have a better chance that they will believe your apology is sincere.
3. Make sure that you are the best person to give the apology. Sometimes, for example, an offended person wants to hear from the Manager rather than staff.
4. Timing needs to be considered. The middle of a crisis might not be the best time - especially if the person is upset and not listening.
5. Be authentic. An insincere apology might be worse than no apology.
6. Begin with the words "I am sorry for..."
7. Then state the thing that you have done with as few words as possible.
8. End this with "Will you forgive me?"
9. Do not base your apology on the idea that the other person will forgive you and everything will be great.
10. Ask what you could do to rectify the problem.
11. Don't make promises that you can't keep (remorse and repentance are two very different things).
12. Change the behaviour and in the future do what you said you would do.

Sometimes, when people have been harmed or offended, they need time before they can let go of the hurt. They might not be ready to accept the apology. That isn't your problem.

You are responsible for sincerely providing an apology but you cannot force forgiveness from the other person. In fact, if s/he doesn't forgive you, they are now the one with the problem. Sadly they might let it fester until they are physically nor mentally ill.

The important thing to remember is that you are responsible to craft and honestly say the words in order to start the process of healing. Once you have done that you are off the hook despite what happens next!