

The Sorriest Story I Ever Heard!

By Shawna Schuh, CSP



"He who never made a mistake never made a discovery." Samuel Smiles

There are some people who have discovered the very powerful purpose in apologizing. When you are wrong it's a great thing to do!

Apologizing can also be a very difficult thing to do because admitting you are wrong can be humbling and humiliating. However, it shows a strong character and also garners respect from those who appreciate honesty. In business it's a very big part of developing trust and loyalty.

I find that if when I've made a mistake and ask for forgiveness with a simple apology, I connect with my clients better and they can relate to me. There are also people who seem to apologize for everything, even if they haven't done anything wrong! They are the first to say, "I'm sorry" or "I apologize for the inconvenience."

This causes two things to happen:

1. The person appears to be insincere.
2. You expect that this behavior will happen often, since they are so accustomed to apologizing!

Usually this type of person doesn't even realize what they are doing. They have just fallen into a mode of mediocrity.

Who am I talking about?

People who begin their voice mail message with an apology!

You might be saying to yourself right now, "OOPS! That's me!" or "What's wrong with that?"

When a person starts their voice message with, "I'm sorry I can't take your call..." the tone of the message is negative. Do you think people really want to call and immediately hear you apologize?

Present yourself in a better light by starting with something more positive. Whenever I reach a voice mail and the first thing the person says is, "I'm sorry..." I am left wondering if they will be apologizing to me throughout our relationship. More importantly, it makes me want to call the next business in the phone book – one that won't give me bad news before I've even spoken with them. I'm also left wondering if they will end the message with "have a nice day," which is a phrase that has become commonplace and filled with insincerity and mediocrity.

While attending a phone sales session the instructor told us to always apologize for not being able to answer a call. Her comment was along the lines of, "Let them know you're sorry you can't help them right off the bat." My question then and now is – why? If you can't pick up the phone you can't! I'm never sorry to let voice mail get the call if I'm providing service to another customer or involved in something that keeps me from answering the phone. I'm not sorry and neither should you be so don't start your message in a position of apology – Start with power and panache!

Before you record your voice mail message, ask yourself...HOW DO I WANT THE CALLER TO FEEL WHEN THEY HEAR MY MESSAGE? After you've determined that critical detail take the necessary actions to make your caller feel better about not reaching you. When you have done this, you have nailed voice mail!

What should your message do?

1. Identify yourself to the caller, using a positive tone.
2. Tell the caller what to do. Give people actions to take and they are more likely to leave a positive message for you.

By the way, this works just as well when dealing with a customer in person. When someone comes up to me (having never met me before) and apologizes for anything by saying, "I'm sorry, I'll be right with you," or, "Sorry for the delay," or, "I'm sorry I kept you waiting," I don't believe they are really sorry.

I also don't mind waiting if I will get good service. When dealing with customers in person ask yourself how you want the customer to feel in your presence, warm and wonderful or just next in line.

Replace worn out insincere phrases with ones that will make a difference. If you usually say, "I'm sorry, I'll be right with you," instead say, "I promise I will be right with you!" If you normally say, "Sorry for the delay," instead say, "How can I help you?" or "What can I do for you?" Or, if your habit is to say, "I'm sorry I kept you waiting," instead say, "You now have my undivided attention." These phrases show me that you are now ready to do business with me. That's mostly what I want as a customer – not apologies!

"True prosperity is the result of well placed confidence in ourselves and our fellow man." Benjamin Burt

Conquer Apathy and Erase Rudeness as you follow proven, fun and beneficial information by Shawna Schuh, CSP. Specializing in communication, professionalism, service & business finesse. Shawna helps you bring your best self to the work you do for maximum results. To book Shawna to speak or for article reprinting contact Sandy McCready at 503-280-1946 or visit www.ShawnaSchuh.com.