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Workplace Mistakes: A Survival Guide

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Introduction

This course is not about how to avoid making mistakes – as if writing such a course were actually possible – but how to recover as gracefully as possible from the inevitable moments when you wish you could rewind the tape and start over.

There will be times when you make a mistake because some external source was not as reliable as you thought. Or, it may come from your own internal errors in processing information, being impatient, or simply using bad judgment.

Regardless of the reason for your mistake, your reaction, recovery, and learning will almost always determine the impact of the event on your career from that moment forward. Everyone makes mistakes. It is essential to learning and a part of life. But not everyone recovers well or learns from them. As philosopher George Santayana said, *“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”*

If you can set aside your ego for personal growth, you can get to the point where you see every failure as bearing a gift for you: *the gift of learning*. That was Thomas Edison’s philosophy when he replied to a reporter who had asked him if he was afraid of making mistakes saying, *“No. That’s how I learn what doesn’t work.”*

This course will help you assess the situation quickly, recover, and move forward with the least amount of career (and relationship) damage possible while continually learning...learning...learning.

Learning Outcomes

Participants taking this course will:

1. Learn to identify the common source of all mistakes we make
2. Be able to list the five key failures within common mistakes
3. Be able to identify the foundation to personal growth when dealing with mistakes
4. Be able to identify the two obstacles to getting help from others
5. Be able to list six obstacles to effective listening
6. Be able to discuss the Sunk Cost fallacy and how it applies to decision making

The Common Source of Your Mistakes

Dictionary.com defines mistake as “An error in action, calculation, opinion, or judgment caused by poor reasoning, carelessness, insufficient knowledge, etc. It is a misunderstanding or misconception.”

In other words, it is **an action originating with you – you are the common source of all your mistakes!**

Success does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a second time.

[George Bernard Shaw](#)

Please do not take offense here – I am not trying to be antagonistic but only to lead you to the recognition, and admission, that regardless of what external sources contributed to your particular mistake, it is still your action that made it happen.

Consider these common situations in the workplace:

- You are late for work because:
 - You overslept when the alarm did not go off. (Who is responsible for setting the alarm or has a backup in case the power goes out?)
 - There are traffic problems. (Who selected that road you took or what time to leave home?)
 - Your car had problems. (Whose job is it to maintain the car?)
- You missed a deadline because;
 - Someone on whom you relied for information failed to get it to you. (Who failed to keep in touch to make sure they could meet your deadline?)
 - You got sick. (Who failed to maintain your health or act at the onset of earliest symptoms?)
 - IT problems prevented your collecting the data, writing the report, and printing the hardcopy. (Who failed to anticipate potential problems and plan accordingly?)
 - Your boss kept changing the requirements. (Who failed to tell your boss that constantly changing the requirements meant that you could not settle down and

deliver a final set of data? If you do not tell him or her that their actions are causing you problems, it is too late to say something when the deadline passes. Who is responsible for your work performance – the Boss or you?)

- You missed an appointment because:
 - You misplaced your schedule. (Who manages YOUR schedule for you?)
 - You lost track of time. (See the previous ‘Who...’ statement)
 - Your transportation failed to materialize. (Who manages your mobility?)

In every case, you either failed to plan sufficiently or did not have plan “B” ready as a backup.

It is critical to recognize your role in the mistakes. Without that admission, you cannot take the steps necessary for career recovery and personal growth. Additionally, it makes it more likely that others will forgive you if you are sincere - and they believe you - about your role in the situation. (We will talk a lot more about the recovery stage later.)

Learn from the **mistakes** of others- you cannot live long enough to make them all yourself.

- [Martin Vanbee](#)

Key Failures within Common Mistakes

There are at least five key failures associated with the common mistakes we make at work.

In no particular order:

1. **Failure to admit** to being an imperfect human being;
2. **Failure to use** available knowledge, skills, or experience
3. **Failure to understand** *from the other’s viewpoint* the expectations of the situation
4. **Failure to assess** your personal habits, beliefs, or practices for potential traps;
5. **Failure to consider** what *could go wrong* instead of *what may go wrong*

Failure to admit...

Admitting that we are less than perfect is the foundation for any potential growth that may result from making mistakes. Even though we may have graduated at the top of our class with a perfect 4.0 GPA or had a grandmother who constantly gushed about how perfect we were growing up, we still have room for errors and subsequent learning from them. But only if we are smart enough to admit our imperfections.

This self-directed honesty is the basis for rehabilitation from destructive behaviors such as making repeated mistakes to alcohol or drug addiction. For example, when a participant rises to speak in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, their first statement is always, “Hello, My name is (name). I am an alcoholic.” You cannot grow as a person if you do not think there is room for it.

If you can always consider yourself a work in progress with the capacity to make mistakes, admit them, learn from them, and move on, then your career will continue to grow as you earn the admiration and respect of those around you.

For example, the popularity of advice columnist Ann Landers rose when she announced that she was getting a divorce in the 1970s. The so-called expert on relationships had problems of her own. She publicly admitted them, dealt with them, and moved on. Communication experts and public relations folks say she appeared “more human.” (Psychologists have found that people dislike those who try to be perfect because these are the characteristics we most see in ourselves.)



What event do you think history regarded most highly about President John Kennedy’s tenure? Surprisingly, it was not the successful handling of the Cuban missile crisis but rather his mismanagement of the Bay of Pigs offensive — for which he took responsibility. Experts consider this one of the hallmarks of Kennedy’s career. In other words, we expect our leaders to do the right things but are impressed when they admit to colossal blunders instead of blaming everyone around them.

More recently, lifestyle diva Martha Stewart made mistake-recovery news when she used a prison term as a stepping-stone to re-establish her career. Clearly, people can recover from colossal blunders.

Failure to use...

Have you ever heard the phrase, “None of us is as smart as all of us”?

Pretty simple but makes a lot of sense to think that, if we are willing to seek information or insight that may be available if we only ask for it, we can easily expand our information boundaries while limiting our potential for errors.

Look around you at work. Who are the people that may have useful information or insights into a given problem you are trying to solve? (Note: It will not always be the same people because you will not always have the same problems facing you.)

However, two obstacles typically block access to this wealth of information: your ego and theirs.

The challenge to your ego is limited further by two more issues: your willingness to (1.) admit that you do not have all the answers and, (2.) your willingness to feed the ego of a co-worker or potential competitor in office politics. (This ties loosely back to the Failure to admit...that you are an imperfect human AND ALSO to *admit it publicly* by asking someone else for help.)

The ego challenge of your potential resource is based around the question they would ask themselves – if you sought their help – “*why should I help her/him?*” In other words, what is their motivation to be helpful to you? Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves “*Why would I want to do that,*” or “*What’s in it for me?*”

If their internal answer gives them a good reason to act, they will act. If not, they will not. There can be as many reasons why people are motivated to act (or not) as there are people.

Some of the more common reasons include:

- **I materially gain from it** (money or property)
- **I emotionally gain from it** (it makes me feel good)
- **I spiritually gain from it** (it heartens my soul)
- **I psychologically gain from it** (enhances my reputation or self-image)

Parents may say to a child, “The sooner you get your room cleaned up (what the parent wants), the sooner you can go out to play with your friends (what the child wants).”

While it is true the parent can still order the child to clean up their room, it may not have the speed and quality that the parent desires.

The results are much better when the child has some internal motivation to do it.

Unspoken answers to internal questions are typically like these:

Situation	Internal Question	Internal Answer and Choices of Action (the Motivation)
Seeing new clothes for sale at the mall	<i>"Why would I want to spend that much for a suit?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Because it will make me look so good!" and you buy it or • "I need the money for something else that I want more" and do not buy it.
Your boss asks for volunteers to work late	<i>"Why would I want to do that?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Because I want to get off early next week to see my child's game" and volunteer or • "I don't like him/her – why should I help?" and not volunteer.
You see a charity asking for donations	<i>"Why would I want to donate to that?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Because it makes me feel good to help others" and donate or • "Nobody helped me when I needed it" and do not donate.
You see a potential problem coming up at work that no one else sees.	<i>"Why would I want to tell the boss about this?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Because I like my boss and this is a good place to work" and tell someone or • "If my boss and this company do not care about me, why should I care about them?" and stay quiet.

Now before you ask someone to help you, take a moment to consider if there were a way that doing what you want will help him or her achieve any of the gains listed above.

In other words, ask yourself this, *"How can I present this need of mine to them in such a way that it will help them achieve something they want?"*

- "Jane, you seem so competent with that spreadsheet application, can you help me figure out how to do this?" (It strokes their ego by acknowledging their skill superiority.)
- "Jane, you seem so competent with that spreadsheet application, can you help me figure out how to do this?" (The same event with a different reason for helping you. It makes them feel good by helping others.)
- "Joe, if you'll help me figure out this, I'll cover for you if you want to take a longer lunch." (They get a little longer to run an errand or something they want to do.)

The percentage of **mistakes** in quick decisions is no greater than in long-drawn-out vacillations, and the effect of decisiveness itself "makes things go" and creates confidence.

- [Anne O'Hare McCormick](#)

Failure to understand....

The clue that your failure was based on failing to understand the situation from someone's perspective is when you begin your apology with, "Oh, I thought you meant..."

The primary cause of failure to understand is poor listening skills. The more that you listen to someone – instead of just hearing him or her – the more you will understand what they want. It follows that better understanding of their requirements or expectations improves your chances of providing them.



Typical obstacles to effective listening can be:

- **Being preoccupied and not listening** (You are scanning news blogs or sports scores on your PC while the conference call drones on in the background)
- **Being so interested in what you have to say that you listen mainly to find an opening to get the floor** (As soon as they take a breath, you are jumping in!)
- **Formulating and listening to your own rebuttal to what the speaker is saying**
- **Listening to your own personal beliefs about what is being said**
- **Evaluating and making judgments about the speaker or the message** (This is especially true if the speaker has an accent or is from an ethnic or cultural background different from yours.)
- **Not asking for clarification when you know that you do not understand** (It is wise to say something like, "I'm sorry that I am not getting this. Is this what you are saying...?" They will gladly indulge you and appreciate your honesty because you are sincerely trying to understand them – which is a form of flattery.)

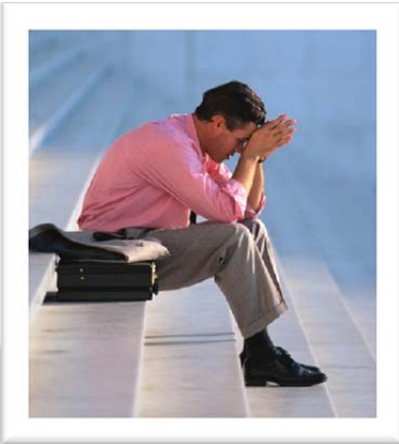
Restate or paraphrase your understanding of their message and reflect it back for verification. Please pay particular attention to verifying their account of the facts; thoughts and beliefs; feelings and emotions; wants, needs or motivation; and hopes and expectations.

Failure to assess...

One definition of insanity is to *keep doing things the way you always have and expecting different results.*

Refusing to acknowledge mistakes, or your tendencies to make similar kinds of mistakes, is a refusal to acknowledge reality. If you cannot see the gaps, flaws, or weaknesses in your behavior, you are trapped forever in the same behavior and limitations you have always had, possibly since you were a child.

This is why success in learning from mistakes often requires involvement from other people, either for advice, training or simply to keep you honest. A



supportive friend's, mentor's or professional's perspective on your behavior will be more objective than your own and help you identify when you are hedging, breaking or denying the commitments you have made.

Also, in moments of weakness the only way to prevent a mistake is to enlist someone else. *"Can you give me a ride home? I think I've had too much to drink."*

Admitting you need help and asking for it often requires more courage than trying to do it on your own.

Think back over the most recent failures or mistakes you have made and analyze the steps that led to the final result. In the analysis, do not make a value judgment or justification about the behavior but simply identify the behavior.

- **Do it this way:** *"I waited too long to get started on that project and didn't have time to collect all the data."*
- **Do not do it this way:** *"It was the week of the World Series and every one of those games went into extra innings. If I didn't have money riding on the outcome, I could have shut off the TV and gotten to work on the project."*

Whether your tendency is to put greater importance on other activities that are more fun or to procrastinate, it is still critical to break any self-destructive habits you may have. (Please do not

feel persecuted here – we all have personal behavioral shackles to overcome at some point in life if we want to be successful.)

There really is not much more to say about this beyond, **“If you have bad habits keeping you from being successful, STOP SABOTOGING YOURSELF! What’s wrong with you?”**



Failure to consider...

On 15 February 1982, the world's largest semisubmersible drill rig, *Ocean Ranger*, capsized and sank in a fierce storm on the GRAND BANKS with the loss of all 84 crewmembers. The *Ocean Ranger* and 2 smaller rigs drilling in the area at the time were hit by winds of 145 km per hour and 18 m waves. The other 2 rigs survived the storm.

Three inquiries found that the rig sank after seawater entered its ballast control room through a broken porthole and caused an electrical malfunction in the ballast panel controlling the rig's stability. The commission concluded that the capsizing and loss of life was caused by a "chain of events which resulted from a coincidence of severe storm conditions, design inadequacy, and lack of knowledgeable human intervention." ¹

What do you think is the likelihood that someone aboard that rig saw the broken porthole long before the storm struck and thought, *“Why worry? What are the chances that water could get through there and cause problems?”*

The mistake is not about wrongly calculating the odds something *could happen* but rather ignoring the fact that water *can get through an open hole and the hole needs to be sealed*.

In you have someone or something (like equipment) that has always been reliable and you have come to expect they will always deliver on time (or always work), you may be tempting fate when you least expect it.

What will you do when your reliable resource gets sick unexpectedly, is in an accident, or cannot deliver what you need when you need it? (“Sorry boss, it’s my assistant’s fault because he/she didn’t get it to me on time.”)

¹ <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0005876>

Even if you have never had a car accident, should you carry auto insurance? Of course, you should! Just because you probably have not had an accident does not mean that you cannot have one.

What will you do when your PC crashes (or locks up) when you need it most and you cannot get to those critical files for the presentation in an hour? (“Sorry boss, it’s my PC’s fault. I have never had a problem with it before but, suddenly, it crashed on me and I couldn’t get to the presentation.” The issue is not asking yourself, *will it crash* but rather asking, *could it crash?*)

Remember, it is not about asking yourself, “Is it likely to happen” but “can it happen?” If it could happen, then be ready for it.

It never hurts to take time to think about a Plan B in case they cannot deliver on time or the equipment does not work when you need it most. The problem may still occur but your recovery will speak volumes about your preparation, foresight, and planning skills! **That is the gift from the problem.**

Sunk Cost Fallacy

Before we start looking at ways to recover from our mistakes, we should take a moment to consider a popular rationale people use for NOT correcting the problem or at least stopping the compounding of it.

The **Sunk Cost Fallacy** is an informal logical fallacy in which one argues that the amount of time, effort, or money already invested in a project justifies the investment of yet more time, effort and money in order to complete the project. ²

This is a fallacy because the actual economic calculation one should make is whether the project would be worth completing at the cost of the investment which still remains to be made. People sometimes call this “throwing good money after bad.”

Or in relationships where a couple has dated for a while but neither really enjoys it. Each is reluctant to meet someone new and try again because, “We’ve spent so much time together and know each other so well, it seems a shame to waste all that.”

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunk_costs

This fallacy can occur because people try to avoid changing their minds once they make a decision, especially if they are in a position of authority, where changing one's mind could be interpreted as admitting a mistake or being indecisive/weak.

A Real Example

The sunk cost fallacy is sometimes known as the "Concorde Fallacy"ⁱ referring to the fact that the British and French governments continued to fund the joint development of Concorde even after it became apparent that there was no longer an economic case for the aircraft. The British government regarded the project privately as a "commercial disaster" which should never have been started, and was almost cancelled, but political and legal issues ultimately made it impossible for either government to pull out.

Kenny Rogers' song, "The Gambler," offers insight into this situation when he advises:

"...you've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em

know when to walk away and when to run"

http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/k/kenny_rogers/the_gambler.htm

Exceptions to the Rule

There are no real exceptions to this rule. However, contemplation of sunk costs may serve as a powerful psychological motivation to complete a difficult or arduous task which really *is* worth completing: "If I don't finish (such and such a genuinely worthwhile activity), all my hard work so far will have been for nothing."

This is still, in fact, a fallacy: either the thing is worth finishing, or it is not --- but arguably, it is a psychologically useful argument in such cases.



Survival: Tactics and Strategy

Regardless of what has happened – whether it is a big deal or a little one - you cannot undo it which means the situation changes instantly from regret (“I screwed up!”) to recovery, “Now what?”

If you feel a pang of regret, it is probably because you have let down someone who was relying on you to come through. In every case, the quicker you can switch from focusing on yourself (“I screwed up!”) to the person you let down will speed your recovery.

The best phrase to use is also the simplest, just start by saying WITH SINCERITY, “I am sorry.” Then acknowledge their loss (“I knew you were counting on my getting that done by today”) followed by what you will do to fix the problem (“I will stay late tonight until I finish that and have it on your desk when you come in tomorrow morning if that is acceptable to you.”)

Caution here – The solution that you propose must be acceptable to them to work. Do not offer a solution just because it is the easiest thing for you to do.

Two Kinds of Fatal Mistakes

A cautionary note is in order here. There are two kinds of mistakes from which recovery is nearly impossible:

1. **Commit a breach of trust.** Remember that *trust is historic*. People must learn over time from your actions - not your words - (i.e., develop a history with you) whether or not you are worthy of their trust. Once you break that, it is very difficult to repair.

They may ultimately forgive you but they will unlikely forget what you did.

2. **Commit a series of foolish mistakes.** Although making a mistake may be bad enough by itself, making a foolish mistake is much worse. By “foolish,” we mean something that clearly results from thoughtlessness (someone asks you, “What were you thinking?”) or an obvious lack of maturity in the workplace (telling jokes or playing pranks that seem typical of junior high school).

If you make either of these mistakes, you may appear to be immature and/or incompetent. It may be best to look for another employer and make a fresh start.

If you are not making mistakes, then you are not doing anything. I am positive that a doer makes mistakes.
[John Wooden](#)

Starting the Apology

The *right way* to begin your apology should be with the words “I’m sorry about ...” or “I apologize for ...”

The *wrong way* to apologize is to offer a statement of regret and follow it with the word “but” because, to most people, that little word is a **verbal erasure**. In their minds, it erases everything that you just said in front of it and your attempt at an apology becomes an excuse. The listener tends to remember the excuse and forget the apology.

So, please do not believe that putting a “but” after the apology absolves you of the transgression. It simply makes the listeners not believe your apology is genuine.

To be effective, your apology must:

1. Acknowledge that you made a mistake; (*“I really got this one wrong, didn’t I?”*)
2. State how your action affected others; (*“I know how much you supported me for this project.”*)
3. Offer a sincere statement of regret; and (*“I am so sorry that I did not do more research before I made the selection.”*)
4. Indicate how you will rectify the situation to their satisfaction. (*“I will do this...”* or *“Please tell me how I can make this up to you.”*)

The only place the word “but” can help you with an apology is saying something like this: ***“The result that happened was not my intention BUT it was my fault.”***

The Anatomy of the Apology

These steps will give you the best chance (not a guarantee) for recovery as long as the mistake was not one of the two fatal kinds on page 14.

1. **Acknowledge that you made a mistake.** Start with giving a detailed account of what led to the offence. By describing the sequence of events, you can use it as a learning opportunity for you while helping them see the situation through your eyes. If they understand your perceptions better, they *may* realize how it could have happened.

Experience is the name so many people give to their **mistakes**.

- [Oscar Wilde](#)

Also, this helps to assure you that you are both talking about the same situation and legitimizes the feelings of the recipient by having the person who caused the offence recount the situation.

Finally, acknowledge the details of their expectation to assure them you fully appreciate the situation. For example, do not just say, "I am sorry for being late:" acknowledge the details, "*I know we had the appointment with the client at 3:00PM. I simply did not allow enough time for traffic to get here earlier. It was worse than I expected.*"

(Although it would be tempting to say simply, "I know we had the appointment with the client at 3:00PM **BUT** traffic was worse than I expected," including the word 'but' erases your apology and makes it sound like you are using heavy traffic as an excuse.)

2. **State how your action affected others.** By acknowledging the hurt or damage done, you are validating their feelings and the recipient begins to sense that you understand the situation. This is important to rebuilding your relationship because it legitimizes their reaction, even if others in the same situation may have reacted differently.

Do not try to defend yourself or justify the situation or your actions. The apology is all about THEM and *how they feel*. It does not matter if the actions were intentional or not, the end result is the same and that is what you needs to focus on when learning how to say I am sorry.

3. **Offer a sincere statement of regret** such as I "apologize" or "I'm sorry" along with a promise that it will not happen again are important to rebuilding the relationship and are key ingredients to any apology. After all, there is no value in apologizing for something that you

will do again and again. (If you have done this in the past, then you are risking loss of trust because you apparently cannot learn from the past. See the fatal mistakes on page 14.)

4. **Indicate how you will rectify the problem to their satisfaction.** First, once again make sure you demonstrate that you know how much your actions impacted them. (“I know my missing the deadline caused you to miss yours” or “I know this made you look bad because you sponsored me...” etc.)

Then, specify how your actions will also help repair their damage while you are trying to repair yours.

Finally, asking for forgiveness at the end of the apology gives the "power" back to the recipient. It tells them, that you have done all that you can do by apologizing and providing whatever form of restitution you can. The next move is up to them.

The Delivery of the Apology

Your apology can carry greater weight if you take a little time to think beyond the content of the apology to your actual delivery of it.

In person – An honest apology in person is a great approach to resolving an issue. It shows integrity, humility and a willingness to accept responsibility all while looking a person in the eye.

In public – If you made your errors in public, then apologizing in public is a great way to demonstrate your sincerity, show some class, and the humiliation will go a long way to keep you from doing it again in the future.

Schedule a meeting When the relationship is more formal and/or more distant—often in a business setting. Letting a person know that you want to meet with them face-to-face for the simple purpose of saying I am sorry is a respectful and courteous way of mending fences.

Over coffee - When the relationship is close and the mistake is not too severe. Inviting the person out for a coffee has the same benefit as a scheduled meeting with the added element of an activity shared by friends.

Over lunch - When this is part of your normal routine with the recipient or when you feel the gesture of a lunch invitation would be appropriate. It is appropriate when the mistake is a little more significant, or in cases where the recipient considers the mistake serious enough to be very hurt, insulted or angry.

Also, a lunch invitation lets the recipient know that a more lengthy discussion is in order, and that YOU think YOUR mistake is serious enough to warrant the additional time. The gesture of the invitation itself also becomes part of the apology.

Here is an example of this apology (People magazine, 07/06/2010)

Levi Johnston isn't just getting past his differences with Bristol Palin – he's also hoping to make amends with her famous mom.

"Last year, after Bristol and I broke up, I was unhappy and a little angry. Unfortunately, against my better judgment, I publicly said things about the Palins that were not completely true," he tells PEOPLE exclusively. "I have already privately apologized to Todd and Sarah. Since my statements were public, I owe it to the Palins to publicly apologize."

"So to the Palin family in general and to Sarah Palin in particular, please accept my regrets and forgive my youthful indiscretion," Johnston says in the statement. "I hope one day to restore your trust."

(Emphasis by the course author)



Over dinner - When the relationship is intimate or strong and long discussion is necessary to convey the many reasons why your apology is important. Emotions can run high depending on the situation and infraction. A restaurant invitation will provide added protection from the negative effects of a very emotional reaction to your apology.

If the recipient deserves the right to react emotionally (or tends to resolve issues more effectively through emotions) then the invitation should be for a home cooked meal.

We made too many wrong mistakes.
-Yogi Berra

Some Famous Mistakes

Compare what you learned in this course and the comments made by these famous mistake makers.

	<p>Televangelist Jim Bakker, on the collapse of his ministry and his fortunes after a sex scandal involving Jessica Hahn and charges of wire and mail fraud: <i>“Why should I apologize because God throws in crystal chandeliers, mahogany floors, and the best construction in the world?”</i></p> <p>How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?</p>
	<p>Pop singer Britney Spears, on her website after a paparazzi photo showed her wearing no panties: <i>“It’s been so long since I’ve been out on the town with friends. It has also been two years since I’ve even celebrated my birthday. Every move I make at this point has been magnified more than I expected, and I probably did take my newfound freedom a little too far. Anyway, thank God for Victoria’s Secrets’ new underwear line! I look forward to a new year, new music and a new me.”</i></p> <p>How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?</p>



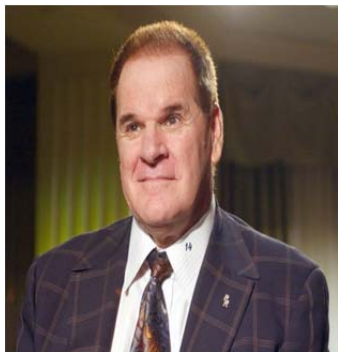
Singer **John Mayer**, in an apology from stage in the middle of a song after a Playboy interview in which he made racist comments and spoke explicitly about his relationship with ex-girlfriend Jessica Simpson, *“In the quest to be clever I completely forgot about the people I love and the people that love me. I decided I would be as clever as possible all the time and I did that at the expense of people I love and that feels absolutely terrible.”*

How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?



Televangelist **Jimmy Swaggert**, after his ministry was toppled by a 1988 scandal involving a prostitute: *“I do not plan in any way to whitewash my sin. I do not call it a mistake, mendacity; I call it sin. I would much rather, if possible - - and in my estimation, it would not be possible -- to make it worse than less than it actually is. I have no one but myself to blame. I do not lay the fault or the blame of the charge at anyone else's feet. For no one is to blame but Jimmy Swaggert. I take the responsibility. I take the blame. I take the fault.”*

How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?



Major league career hits leader **Pete Rose**, finally admitting in Jan. 2004 that he had bet on baseball after denying it for years: *“I'm sure that I'm supposed to act all sorry or sad or guilty now that I've accepted that I've done something wrong. But you see, I am just not built that way.... I am sorry it happened, and I am sorry for all the people, fans, and family that it hurt. Let's move on.”*

How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?



New York Yankees slugger **Alex Rodriguez**, talking to ESPN's Peter Gammons last February after *Sports Illustrated* reported that he had tested positive for steroids in 2003: *"Back then, it was a different culture. It was very loose. I was young. I was stupid. I was naive. And I wanted to prove to everyone that, you know, I was worth being one of the greatest players of all time. And I did take a banned substance. You know, for that I'm very sorry and deeply regretful."*

How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?



Syndicated radio host **Don Imus**, on his April 4, 2007, reference to the women on the Rutgers basketball team as a bunch of "nappy-headed ho's": *"Want to take a moment to apologize for an insensitive and ill-conceived remark we made the other morning regarding the Rutgers women's basketball team. It was completely inappropriate, and we can understand why people were offended. Our characterization was thoughtless and stupid, and we are sorry."*

How well do you think the public received these comments? Why?