

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1564 Rebuilding Your Reputation After a Big Mistake

Have you ever made a big mistake in your line of work. I'm not talking about an itty bitty thing that just slid on by and nobody really noticed. I'm talking about a big mistake that everybody knew about, and which was in some way costly for you and your organization. Maybe that cost was in dollars, maybe you lost a good client relationship, maybe your miscue resulted in significant embarrassment. During the break, I want you to think about when you blew it and everybody knew it. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today we'll talk about how to repair our reputation after a serious mistake. That's coming next, on The Extra Point.

You did it. You messed up big time. Now you have that sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that you have not only hurt yourself, but your organization and everyone who works there.

Was it a project that went off the rails after you had promised that everything was totally under control?

Was it an awkward conversation with a client that ballooned into an argument, and that client has just fired you and your company?

Did you embarrass the organization, and now your senior leadership has to scramble to cover for what you said or did?

Maybe you allowed secret company data to go public, and one of your key marketing advantages has been lost.

Whatever the reason you messed up, one thing is for sure: You feel horrible about your mistake and you realize that all eyes are on you. The CEO or director may have to clean up your mess, but everyone knows you created the mess.

Besides playing a role in fixing the problem, if you're allowed to, repairing your reputation is a necessary part of the aftermath of the situation. That could be your external reputation with customers or vendors; or your internal

reputation with your coworkers. It also could be both.

Laura Crandall, author of *Working With Humans*, says "The first step is to take full accountability. Be direct in acknowledging what happened and when. Don't talk around the topic, just state the facts. Own the mistake and apologize if needed."

Here's a critical factor: If you know you've screwed something up, don't wait to own it until somebody finds out. As soon as you realize what you've done, let the right people know what happened.

Critical factor number two. We use a principle I've mentioned many times in this space. Don't bring your boss a problem unless you've made some effort to work out a potential solution.

Maybe it's not always possible, depending on the nature of the issue. If it is possible, show your character, not only acknowledging what you did that led to the problem, but you then led the effort to find the fix.

A sincere apology works in your favor. You can get up in front of your team, say what you were trying to do, explain what happened, highlight your mistake and what you should have done instead of what you did, then say you're sorry for any trouble or embarrassment you've caused.

Is it painful. It might be, but it shows the kind of person you are, and people are usually quick to forgive. We love people who admit their weaknesses and failures. It makes us feel better about ourselves.

A couple of key points. This sends a message to every employee that a mistake isn't necessarily the end of the road for a person's job. We're big people around here, and we look out for each other. We'll get through whatever the issue is.

(Con't.)

Getting up in front of the group delivers a major teaching moment. This is a positive for the individual, who might otherwise keep running this bad movie over and over in their head, with the outcome never changing.

My last point. Following this method tells employees that this is how we handle our problems. It says loud and clear that, "If I ever mess up like that, this is how they'll treat me.

If you think there's value here, bring up the topic at your next staff meeting. Download transcript #1564 at guamtraining.com and read it at your meeting to get the conversation started.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

