

BNet

“Interview with Fred Taylor, Jr.”

NOVEMBER 27, 2007

Q: Why do you consider apologies important?

A: When things don't go according to plan, an apology provides the opportunity to offer the Customer an assurance that you care about their feelings.

People often misunderstand the intent of an apology. It is not an admission of fault. It's an acknowledgment of a bad experience—no matter what happened.

Q: How has the public reacted when receiving an apology?

A: I see three reactions all the time: 1) Shocked, 2) Impressed, and 3) Appreciative. I see this when our Employees speak to our Customers face-to-face, over the telephone, and in writing. They are shocked because we sincerely acknowledged their concern. They are impressed that we take the time to provide a quality response. They are appreciative of our effort to make them feel better about their experience with our Company.

What my Team tries to do is roll all of that up in one proactive letter that is sent to the Customer before they contact us. I call that completing the Customer Service Loop.

I know our proactive correspondence works because we get tons of positive responses from the Customers who receive our letters. (provide examples)

Q: What are the elements of a great apology?

A: Desire to try to settle the Customer's concern. Flexibility to provide a reasonable solution. Confidence in being humble—all of the time. And, a good sense of humor.

Through experience, you will develop the wisdom to know when is the right time to draw the line.

Q: How important is follow through?

A: Very important because it goes to your credibility. Our Company takes great pride in our effort to provide our Customers with a quality response. In the same light, we welcome our Customers' questions b/c that's also our opportunity to learn about the service we are providing.

My Team will send followup responses to Customers who have followup questions and send us thank you notes. We also send corrections when needed.

Q: What advice would you offer a CEO or top manager about making an effective apology?

A: Customers can smell insincerity from a mile away. Impersonal form letters and/or cookie-cutter responses water down your product. If that's the impression you want to convey, then so be it. But from my POV, half-hearted efforts increase frustration—or worse, cost you a Customer.

Most importantly, being proactive requires a 24/7/365 commitment to do it no matter where you are or what you are doing.