

A Strategic Sorry

--- Studies on Leaders' Apologies Using a 10C-Checklist

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Abstract

There has been debate about the role of apologies in crisis communication. Transgressors, especially leaders, including heads of governments and C-Suites of multinational corporations, encounter the dilemma of apologizing. Keeping silence makes them indifferent, whereas issuing stupid confessions worsens crises. A strategic expression of sorrow will demonstrate that the wrongdoer is willing and able to take responsibility, show care, dispel concerns and meet needs of the victims, hence strengthens the leadership.

This thesis will focus on the effectiveness of leaders' apologies using an initial tool called 10C-Checklist. The 10Cs are specific variables of an apology: Characteristic, Consequence, Culture, Channel, Content, Change, Customization, Control, Cause and Charisma. The thesis will systematically evaluate former apologies from leaders; organize a list of components that affects the efficiency of an apology and provide a standard and guideline for leaders to follow in the future. It will calculate the impact of various elements on a specific apology using no-human based research methods.

Introduction

Apologies from leaders, including heads of governments or C-Suites (esp. CEOs) of multinational corporations, keep hitting headlines of mainstream media. Some of them are strategic, some are useless, and others are just stupid. Motivations behind every expression of sorry are strong---Stakeholders from socio-political environment expect the contrition of transgressors.

A strategic expression of sorrow demonstrates that the wrongdoer is willing and able to take responsibility, show care, dispel concerns and meet needs of the victims; On the contrary, a thoughtless delivery of sorrow undermines the leadership.

This thesis will study on the mystery of every successful apology and the lesson of every ineffective apology. It will categorize classic apologies and evaluate them according to specific variables such as causation, culture, victims, timing and aftermath of an apology, and summarize key features of a strategic sorry.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Definition of An Apology

In terms of definition of an apology, different scholars offer different explanations.

Apologizing is the act of admitting fault and offering empathy following an error or transgression (Goffman, 1971). It is an acknowledgement of full responsibility, and an extensive apology is the highest level of taking responsibility (Hodgins and Liebeskind, 2003). Kim and colleagues (2004) describe an apology as an acknowledgement of responsibility and an offer of regret for a trust violation. Kellerman (2006) adds that an apology consists of “an acknowledgement of the mistake or wrongdoing, the acceptance of responsibility, an expression of regret, and a promise that the offense will not be repeated”. Tucker et al. (2006) broaden the conceptualization of apology as an admission of error, an acceptance of responsibility, an expression of remorse, and an offer of a plan of action. More recently, according to *The Five Languages of Apology* wrote by Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas (2008), an apology includes an acceptance of responsibility for the mistake; an expression of regret, a request for forgiveness, a form of restitution or compensation, a credible commitment to change and a promise that the act won't occur again.

There seems to be enough empirical definitions of an apology, but considerable discrepancy remains in the understanding of what constitutes an apology. Even a brief review of the literature on apologies reveals multiple components of an apology, some of which overlap and some of which diverge (Barling et al. 2008).

Admittedly, apologies are comprised of different components that vary with different contexts. However, there is little discussion on how to configure variables.

Transformational Leadership

As defined by Bass (1997), transformational leaders display four specific characteristics: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Idealized influence builds respect and trust among followers. Inspirational motivation raises followers' personal expectations and sets higher aspirations. Intellectual stimulation increases follower awareness of issues and encourages them to reframe problems and reconsider new perspectives. Individualized consideration includes behavior that attends to follower's needs.

Transformational leadership theory has been studied on various contexts, chronologically including higher business performance (e.g., Barling et al., 1996), increased motivation (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2001), higher socio-moral reasoning (Turner et al., 2002), reduced workplace injuries (e.g., Barling et al., 2002, trust in leadership (Dirks and Ferrin's, 2002), follower satisfaction with supervision (e.g., Erkutlu 2008), leadership effectiveness (e.g., Erkutlu 2008), follower trust in the leader (e.g., Liu et al. 2010) and follower organizational commitment (e.g., Ismail et al. 2011). Transformational leadership theory is primarily distinguished from other theories of leadership by its focus on follower development (Avolio, 1999).

Currently, lots of empirical researches merely focus on transformational leadership, but few of them study on the relationship between leadership and apologizing.

To Apologize or Not to Apologize

Empirical evidences demonstrate that there will be an eternal discussion on the necessity for a leader to issue an apology.

Supporters list benefits of reasonable apologies from leaders. First, from victims' perspective, leaders' apologies indicate that they care about customers and stand by their sides (Kador 2012). As Mills (2001) suggests: leaders are "humanized by apologizing in a way that a wrongdoer who remains silent and appears indifferent to public opinion is not" (p. 115). Second, when leaders voluntarily apologize for their misdeeds, they can make a powerful impression on followers who were not anticipating the apology (Tucker, 2006). Researches from business angles have presented that apologies can improve customer satisfaction post-service failure (Wirtz and Mattila, 2004), and compensate for unattractive boasting behavior (Levine and West 1976).

Arguments of objectors are multifold. First, organizational leaders are often counseled that apologizing to the aggrieved could expose the individuals or their organizations to litigation (Neckers, 2002). Then, many leaders regard the admission of fault as an embarrassing sign that threatens their authority (Jackall, 1988). Even if they perceive a call for an apology, they find it difficult to get through the psychological transition required to change their public identity and behavior (Corner, 2009).

Scholars also alarm that in some cases, silence beats stupid expression of regrets because thoughtless apologies trigger terrible aftermath. Kellerman, B. (2006) delivers concerns from both academic and business world: Mary Frances Luce, a marketing professor at Wharton, points out that although apologies can moderate customers' anger, they can also reinforce the negative associations between the brand and the issue. Her colleague Stephen Hoch mentions that a mass apology can be risky simply because not everyone requires an apology. Large numbers of customers are likely not even to know about the problem (Kellerman, 2006). From a real life angle,

Chris Nelson, the vice president of Ketchum, cautions that unless apologies are extended wisely and well, “[t]hey might only ensure that the company will face huge legal judgments.” He adds, “That’s a shame because proper communications often can drain significant amounts of public animosity from a situation.”

Theories on Psychological Barriers to Change

Apology is a subset of a much larger category: actions that require changes in entrenched attitudes, beliefs, or habits. The human tendency to resist change has been the subject of considerable academic study in many fields. Conner R. and Jordan P. (2009) explain why leaders seize the opportunity for the effective use of apology based on cross-disciplined knowledge of public health, social psychology, political psychology, public policy, and business management. From the angle of behavioral health and psychological resistance, they provide a "trans-theoretical" model: Individuals move through six stages to achieve sustainable change: (1) pre-contemplation, (2) contemplation, (3) preparation, (4) action, (5) maintenance, and (6) termination. From the angle of cognitive and emotional resistance, they emphasize that powerful unconscious psychological mechanisms preserve the stability of the self-concept. Finally, they also state that pressure within their own groups such as group members and group norms slow down leaders’ tempo to change (Conner R. and Jordan P 2009).

Theories on Psychological Barriers to Forgive

Apologizing is a “forgiveness-seeking strategy” (Waldron and Kelley 2008, p. 112). Forgiveness is often described as a trust-building process (Waldron and Kelley

2008), but heads of organizations tend to undervalue it. Posner and Schmidt (1982) found that managers ranked forgiveness as 15th in importance out of 18 values.

The “splitting of the self” theory (Goffman 1971, p. 113) describes apologies as functioning to disassociate an offender’s bad self from his or her good self. By apologizing, a person strives to separate the part of the self that committed the wrongdoing from the part of the self that is sympathetic and remorseful, thus allowing the good self to be forgiven.

Non-Apology Apology

Bruce McCall (2001) from The New York Times defines a Non-Apology Apology as something “you can get what you want by seeming to express regret while actually accepting no blame”.

Chapter 2: The 10C-Checklist

Most current empirical researches randomly discuss why some leaders apologize, and some don't. And no systematic categories of apologies are provided for leaders to recognize, no well-organized guidelines are offered for leaders to follow, no lists of components that affect the efficiency of an apology are conducted for leaders to study. This problem in the academic field turns out to be an opportunity for this dissertation. Overall, a 10C-Checklist for evaluation of leaders' apologies is created to explore the possibility to evaluate existed cases and anticipate guidelines for leaders in the future.

First of all, the conception of an apology needs to be redefined. The new definition should include the core value in general and the optional elements for customized scenarios. Second, apologies need to be classified according to different variables. Then, the relationship between leadership and apologizing will be elaborated. Although this topic appears to be hot nowadays, few studies start with a scientific methodology and end with an organic outcome. To what extent does the charisma of the leader enhance credibility and authenticity to the apology? To what extent does the apology affect the charisma of the transgressor? When is the effect positive, when is it negative? Last, the psychological theories help heads of organizations to understand stakeholders' mindset, conquer their own inner barriers and thus initiate strategic apologies.

Potential Research Questions --- A 10C-Checklist

This dissertation will evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' apologies through an original 10C-Checklist :

1. Characteristic (of the mistake): Is the mistake intentional or unexpected? Is it natural or manmade?
2. Consequence (of the mistake): How severe is the issue? What does it cause? Economic loss? Reputation damage? Product recall? Casualty?
3. Culture (of the mistake): What's the culture background of the issue? Where does the issue happen? Where do leaders, followers and stakeholders come from? Is apologizing popular, forbidden or sensitive in this place?
4. Channel (of the apology): Where and when does the leader express the contrition?
5. Content (of the apology): All core components should be encompassed. All optional ones should be carefully evaluated before appearing in a statement.
6. Customization (of the apology): Is it a general or a customized apology? How does the leader tailor the message? Are there any promises or following actions?
7. Change (of the apology): Does the apology change audiences' attitudes towards the issue? Does it affect the leader himself / herself or the organization?
8. Control (of the leader): When does the leader express the contrition?
9. Cause (of the leader): What's the psychological incentive of the leader? Is it a sincere apology or a non-apology apology? What's the motivation behind stakeholders' forgiveness?
10. Charisma (of the leader): Does the leader enjoy good reputation? How many times does the leader (the person or the same position of the organization) apologize before?

Chapter 3: Standards and Criteria

The chapter will gauge the 10C-Checklist and provide a standard for the use of the list in order to evaluate the effectiveness of classified apologies made by leaders. Each C will be assessed separately.

10C-Checklist		Background	Standard
Characteristic	Of the Mistake	Acute or chronic	Balance the timeframe and the statement
Consequence		4 level metaphor	The gravity of the crisis
Culture		Meaning of apologizing in each country	The transgressor, the place and the receiver
Channel	Of the Apology	Thousands of platforms to say sorry	Meet the target audience
Content		Definition of an apology	Checkbox of Key elements of an apology
Customization		The sociopolitical environment	Needs of different stakeholders
Change		Expectation of the target audience	Don't repeat the same mistake again and keep promises
Control	Of the Leader	The Golden Hour	The rule of 45 minutes, 6 hours, 3 days, and 2 weeks
Cause		Psychological motivation of apologizing	Honest/obliged/involuntary
Charisma		Transformational leadership	Reputation and history of apologizing

[Mistake], Characteristic

Just as no two snowflakes are the same, no two crises are the same. Before expressing anything publicly, leaders should clarify different types of crises in order to make the right decision. According to Helio Fred Garcia, crises could be differentiated as an acute crisis and a chronic crisis: The former one arises unexpectedly and has potentially significances. In such scenario, the absence of quick and proactive engagement puts the reputation of a company or a person at risk. The second one arises with notice, involves a series of ongoing issues. In such scenario, the absence of careful monitoring, consideration, and investigation will also threaten

the reputation of a company or a person. Not every stakeholder expects a mea culpa; not every situation needs an apologia. Leaders should follow the right prescription for their own condition.

A swift and comprehensive apology following with promised actions in an acute crisis is smart:

On Oct 5, 2013, Fox & Friends anchor Anna Kooiman claimed that even as the World War II memorial remains closed to most visitors, President Obama is personally funding the "Museum of

Muslim Cultures" out of his own pocket. The next morning, within 20 hours, Kooiman tweeted an apology and promised that it won't happen again.



Anna Kooiman
@annakooiman



Follow

Just met w producers- I made a mistake yday after receiving flawed research abt a museum possibly closing. My apologies. Won't happen again.

People forgave her, and she did not lose her job because of this mistake. The reason: This is a short tweet but a standard apology. She took the responsibility, explained the reason, and promised that the problem won't occur again. Furthermore, she responded within one day after her words in live video. It is not that fast but proved to be legitimate---If we search the issue in mainstream media outlets, what we found are mostly about Kooiman's apology, instead of merely her aired parody. It could be a huge backlash if she never apologized, or she apologized in random words, or she responded one week later. But her rapid and complete apology saved her from further unexpected and uncontrolled troubles.

A thorough and timely reply in a lasting crisis is also strategic. Some cases such as food contamination, a medicine recall, and a car explosion do not happen all of a sudden, need time for following investigations. Victims of such tragedies expect a thorough statement with every detail about what happened, who took the

responsibility, how much is the compensation, how to avoid further accidents. Therefore, they will balance the thoroughness and the speed.

But a lagged response in an acute crisis or a hasty response in a chronic crisis definitely causes reputational damage. The longer the leaders wait in a sudden issue, the less chance they win back broken hearts of victims and other target audiences. On the same token, no receivers of an apology could tolerate a hasty announcement in a lasting crisis, because that is not the reason they give the transgressor so many times and not what they expect from experienced elites.

[Mistake], Consequence

Strategic Issues Management---Organizations and Public Policy Challenges (Robert L. Heath and Michael J. Palenchar, 2008) defines a crisis as an untimely event that can be anticipated to occur. It may prevent management from accomplishing its effort to create an understanding and mutually beneficial relationship with interested parties needed to negotiate the mutually beneficial exchange of stakes. The authors make metaphor for 4 levels of crises for the reference of wrongdoers:

1. Bed rest---An event that might catches public attention, receives top-of-the-hour coverage or attracts online traffic for a while, but it will not threaten the business of the organization.

Example: Prada has been accused in a discrimination lawsuit from its former employee in Japan. Several years ago, Rina Bovrisse sued Prada Japan for discrimination, sexual harassment and unfair dismissal. She claimed in an interview that Prada Japan executive David Sesia fired females he thought are "old, fat, ugly, disgusting, or did not have the Prada look." Even the U.N supported the woman and

urged Japan to outlaw sexual discrimination in the workplace. In the end, the Tokyo court ruled that there is discrimination in this case but it is acceptable in the fashion industry. Even if this case went big that time, people still love Prada and buy its new handbag.

2. Medication---An event that requires the organization to respond to media inquiry and demand changes to avoid the likelihood of recurrence of the mistake. Usually a sympathetic announcement and a slight change could smooth the crisis.

Example: In 2012, a 23-year-old man called Sheldon Stephens accused Kelvin Clash, the longtime voice and the Emmy-winning puppeteer behind “Sesame Street’s” Elmo character. He alleged that they had been in a relationship since Stephens was 16. Clash acknowledged the relationship with the accuser but insisted that it is not underage but between consenting adults. On November 12, 2012, the Sesame Workshop, a nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street, posted a statement regarding Kelvin Clash on company’s official website. Later, Kelvin also released an announcement and resigned.

3. Chronic---An event that demands communication and change to prevent reoccurrence. In contrast to the category 2, medication crises, which could be settled down with a kind statement or a little change, chronic crises require more communication and changes. Otherwise, stakeholders will lose their confidence and allocate their resources to other competitors of the company.

Here chronic means differently compared with that from “acute and chronic.” The first chronic means a lasting crisis that could not be solved within a short period, whereas chronic here has much more to do with the aftermath---like a chronic disease. If the disease is not seriously cured in the early stage of the issue, it will cause complication that needs extra treatment, extra time and money.

4. Fatal---An event that ends the existence of the company or damages the company badly. It is very hard for a leader to restore mutual trust with stakeholders.

Example: The fall of Arthur Andersen and the bankruptcy of Arthur Andersen are the most notorious cases in the financial industry. These crises not only lead the collapse of the company, but also trigger a change of public policy and the standardization of the industry. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) was introduced to Congress as a result of the deceit and fraud taking place at Enron and other corporate financial scandals, including those affecting Arthur Andersen and WorldCom.

Different severity requires different responses. Apart from the perspective of the leaders who apologize, the perspective of the victims who receive these apologies should also be considered.

Sometimes there are no direct victims. Companies and leaders figure out the problem before it really breaks out. So it is sufficient for them to claim that the issue is controlled and will never happen again. Sometimes there are specific target audiences who expect an apology from the company or the leader, but no one dies. It could be, deteriorated bread, “100 percent beef” with horsemeat (Burger King), sexual harassment (HP), a broken guitar (United Airlines), a wrong-targeted mail (Four Seasons Hotels to Seitel), a data breach (Target) or an improper joke (Kenneth Cole). In these cases, the people who suffer from an issue anticipate a response of the wrongdoer. It does not have to be a formal apology or press conference, but it has to include the sorry and compensation that are expected from the victims. If handled well, the company still enjoys a good reputation: When Fraser Seitel received the email from Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, apologizing for their former email that incorrectly identified him as someone else, he felt flattered and still trust that brand.

When United Airlines informed Canadian musician Dave Carroll that he was ineligible for the compensation of the damaged guitar that was caused by UA staff because Carroll had failed to make a claim within its stipulated "standard 24-hour timeframe", Carroll wrote that famous song "United Breaks Guitars", which went viral and triggered incalculable reputation damage towards the airline company.

Sometimes there are groups of people who are involved, injured or even died. It could be exploded phone batteries (iPhone), a slipped and shitty cruise (Carnival Cruise), medicine recall (Tylenol), poisoned milk powder (Sanlu Group), spilled oil (BP), nuclear leak (TEPCO), or disappeared airplane (Malaysia Airlines). In such cases, what victims and their family members or even the public expect to receive is a former apology and serious treatment. The transgressor has to accept the responsibility for the mistake, express regret and sorrow, request for forgiveness, compensate and promise that the act won't occur again. If the leader wants to save the business and the company, they should never mishandle the crisis or downplay it.

If the crisis causes severe aftermaths such as casualty, harassment, leak of information and product recall, a formal apology, whether oral or written, whether spoke by the leader or signed by the leader, is needed. If the situation is not that serious, for example, a slip of the tongue or a false business decision (which does not trigger threaten to anybody), the leader could use social media to say sorry and promise not to do it again.

[Mistake], Culture

Although people around the globe use the same phone, eat the same food and follow the same news, the meaning of apologizing varies widely across different cultures, especially between western and eastern countries. Bruce Sidebotham wrote

in his article “A Lesson on Apology for Soldiers and Diplomats” that when Arabs or Pashtuns hear apologies from Americans in American forms rather than in their own cultural form, they question American sincerity. On the other hand, if Americans were to apologize to Arabs or Pashtuns in the primary Arab and Pashtun cultural forms, then reconciliation would be more attainable. William W. Maddux, Peter H. Kim, Tetsushi Okumura and Jeanne M. Brett point out in their study “Cultural Differences in the Function and Meaning of Apologies” that Japanese reported apologizing more frequently than Americans, whereas Japanese were more likely than Americans to apologize in situations for which they had little or no responsibility. Japanese were less likely to equate apologizing with accepting responsibility for the event than Americans and also less likely than Americans to use apologies to re-establish their sense of self-worth and credibility.

Apologies should be cautiously considered and constructed with the cultural background of the transgressor who initiated statements; the place where the crisis happened and whom these words were spoken/written to in mind, to ensure that “I’m sorry” reduces rather than exacerbates conflicts.

Apologizing in the position of target audience without contradiction of the position of the transgressor is strategic. Whoever apologizing should bear in mind that they should not only say something followed their heart, but also listen to the heart of the receiver of their mea culpa and the tradition and perception of apologizing in that culture. In some countries such as the States, you made a mistake. You felt sorry and expressed it to the victims. That’s it. You move on. In some countries such as Germany, you have to face the fault with introspection, acknowledging it and apologizing for it again and again. People will not frame it as your guilty. Instead, they will appreciate your decision to turn over a new leaf. In some countries such as

China, people will trust the leaders if they stand out and accept the responsibility of the fault because lots of companies delete their evidences of a blunder or even a crime in order to whitewash and prevent saying sorry to anyone. In Japan, leaders' apologies tend to be more self-critical than those from Chinese leaders. Therefore, apologizing in the position of target audience is qualified. Apologizing merely in the position of the wrongdoers themselves could be ineffective.

[Apology], Channel

Although the history of public relations is only about 100 years, the rapid development of the technology in the past century has revolutionized the way of we communicate---paper (rarely hand-written), email, press conference, website, radio, TV and social media. Leaders could choose only sending out the words or appearing on screen. Statements could be read through a press conference or be displayed through SNS websites. Nowadays, apologies can occur in thousands of outlets and in hundreds of ways:

Some franchised chain stores put notices whenever there are closed for interior decoration; MTA apologized via voice messages: "We are delayed because of train traffic/a train ahead of us, we apologize for any inconvenience." Kenneth Cole posted his regretful words on Facebook; Anna Kooiman tweeted her apology of her lack of sufficient research; Netflix's co-founder and CEO Reed Hastings sent emails to its subscribers, apologizing with the sentence: "I messed up. I owe you an explanation." Dior CEO Sidney Toledano announced to employees and the media that he fired talented designer John Galliano who opined intolerable words about the Holocaust and its victims and apologized that the Dior name was associated with the disgraceful statements; Sesame Workshop released an official announcement regarding Kelvin

Clash on its corporate website; TV host Melissa Harris-Perry made tearful apology on TV for his offensive segment mocking Mitt Romney's adopted black grandson; Toyota's high-rank executives, including Jim Lentz, president of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., and Jon Williams, commercial director of Toyota Great Britain, chose YouTube as the channel to apologize for massive safety recalls; Chinese former Premier Wen Jiabao said he felt "very guilty" about the poisoned milk, adding, "I sincerely apologize to all of you." In a personal meeting with the parents of children who had fallen sick because of tainted milk;

There is no unified platform for apologies, but the leader should pick up the most suitable channel for different cases. For example, it is reasonable for Burger King's CEO to say sorry about the horsemeat issue through Twitter account because it first broke out there, and their target audiences of this issue are there. It is also proper for Japanese government to express regret towards victims of nuclear leak through an international press conference since the nuclear crisis not only caused casualty but also potentially harmed neighbor countries. Just the opposite, it would be weird for them to switch the channel of their apologies. Can you imagine the head of a fast food brand holding an international press conference and announcing that everything is still under investigation? A press conference about horsemeat might trigger unnecessary chaos. By the same token, if the head of Japanese government or the CEO of Tokyo Electric Power Company opened a Twitter account and tweeted his apology one month after the breakout of the Chernobyl-level accident, they will definitely be blamed or even condemned for downplaying the severity of the crisis, the life of the victim, and the safety of the country.

Where the apology occurs should be assessed based on the gravity of the crisis. An apology through a safe channel is qualified. An apology through a place that

attracts stakeholders' attention is strategic. An apology through an inappropriate platform is ineffective, sometimes counter-effective.

[Apology], Content

The Five Languages of Apology wrote by Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas (2008) provides a reasonable definition of key components of an apology. An apology should contain an acceptance of responsibility for the mistake; an expression of regret, a request for forgiveness, a form of restitution or compensation, a credible commitment to change and a promise that the act won't occur again. It seems to be easy to include all of them in one statement, but lots of apologies only have several elements, and others look long but only have one or two elements there. For example, the first and second transcripts of Anthony Weiner's apologies are as long as short stories. But if we analyze the components of those two statements, we will find that they are full of his proudness of his political career and his middle-class story, his endeavor to engage his fans and how regretful he felt, although he started sexting and sending sexually seductive selfies after his apologies. It seems he tried hard to win the Oscar Academic Awards of Best Actor, but he forgot what does his target audience expect in his apology and what an apology should look like.

Leaders should not any of them because no one knows which element does the audience lay emphasis on. Even if the leader expressed his regretful mood, asked for forgiveness, provided restitution and promised that the mistake will never happen again, the receiver of the audience might still doubt him because what they want to see in that statement is simply the acknowledgement of the wrongdoing. If there is no acceptance of the responsibility, they will not believe the leader and take the apology.

Apologies with all five categories could be qualified, but the key of evaluation is not only how many categories are covered. The top priority is to find which element or elements does the receiver value and expect. If leaders could figure out the need of the receiver, they can simply include it. If they can't, they have to include the acknowledgment of the responsibility, the request for forgiveness, the compensation or restitution, the expression of genuine remorse and the promise that the mistake will not happen again.

[Apology], Customization

Apologies are made towards the human being rather than robots or animals. Leaders should understand each group of target audience and specify their words to each of them. Corporate Public Affairs---Interacting With Interest Groups, Media, and Government (Otto Lerbinger, 2005) points out the gravity of sociopolitical environment in terms of a leader or a corporation. It is a pool of various target audiences: Subordinates, employees, customers, investors, community, government, media and interest groups. Different stakeholders have different needs and expectations. The transgressor has to aim at the right group of people with tailored messages. In a crisis setting, victims and their families are also counted as key audiences, whose needs should be taken seriously.

Apologies with customized messages towards the right group of target stakeholders are strategic. In Jan 2011, Groupon's CEO Andrew Mason's apologized via YouTube for the poor condition and late delivery of a New Year deal in its Japanese market. Groupon Japan cooperates with the food delivery business of Bird Café to deliver "Osechi" in the New Year holidays. The order "osechi" is a traditional Japanese New Year's meal and is viewed very important among Japanese people. It

should include a variety of Japanese dishes and is beautifully presented. Groupon sold 500 orders, but unfortunately, the restaurant was unable to process so many orders. Many of them arrived late, others in terrible condition, according to the reviews of customers. To apologize for the business failure, Andrew Mason uploaded a video on YouTube subtitled in Japanese. The video starts with his “Konichiwa” (“Good Afternoon” in Japanese). He states that the company had “really messed up” the deal in question and outlined steps it was taking to rebuild its image in Japan, and beyond. Mason not only customizes his words but also his language.

General statements towards the general public might work, but if leaders miss the group of people they must apologize, the failure comes as expected. When JetBlue encountered a breakdown of the airlines operation in February 2007 that stranded 1000 planes and more than 130,000 passengers, the then CEO David Neeleman talked in a YouTube video for nearly 3 minutes but never explicitly apologized to the affected passengers. And undoubtedly he was fired.

[Apology], Change

Words matter, but words plus following actions work even better. Whenever people are offended or hurt, an apology does make them feel better. It shows that the wrongdoer is realized that he or she cause harm towards others and react to his or her own mistake.

When Patrick Doyle, the president of Domino, apologized for the disgusting video posted by two employees on YouTube, he took it incredibly serious and said that the company is trying hard “to make sure that people like this don't make it into our stores.” When John Blyth, the President off Fleishman-Hillard Canada, apologized for taking advantage of a body parts killer in a news release, he promised

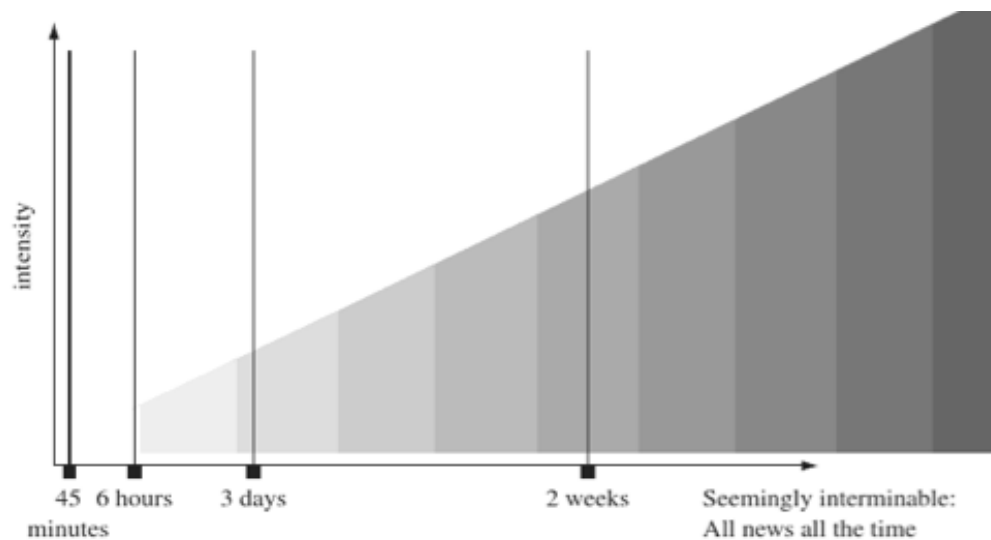
at the end of his statement that shocking headlines “should never come at the sacrifice of common sense and good taste.”

Everyone likes fulfilled promises. By the same token, every receiver of an apology wants to see the change promised by the wrongdoer really happens. However, victims expect more than a “sorry” in many cases. First, the wrongdoer should at least never repeat the same fault again. Falling in the same mistake not only makes the wrongdoer stupid, but also showing that the wrongdoer does not care about the issue and undermining the seriousness of the apology the wrongdoer made before the following change. The perfect example is still Anthony Weiner who broke his promises again and again: He apologized for sending out sexually seductive photos and swore that he will never do it again. But evidences have shown that he started sexting strangers via social media platform after he cried publicly in press conferences. No change at all. Second, sometimes victims expect more than just stop wrongdoing. They expect the departure of the transgressor or the compensation and restitution or even more. If a food safety problem occurs, people will expect that the company not only removes the contaminated ingredient but also reduces the possibility or other food safety issues. If a product recall occurs, people would expect the elimination of the same issue and a new technology that upgrades the assembly line. If a data breach occurs, people would hope that it won’t happen again, and expect that the company will not only compensate their lost, but also attach importance to online safety and apply an updated system.

[Leader], Control

Reputation Management---The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication (2011) refers The Golden Hour as a concept, indicating

that incremental delays can have a greater-than-incremental impact on trust, confidence, and reputation. In chapter 12 (P329), Helio Fred Garcia lists the rule of 45 minutes, 6 hours, 3 days, and 2 weeks. These time periods match specific points of a news cycle today and allow public relations practitioners control media agenda and minimize the negative impact of a rumor or a partially true story. Social media will be the first cradle for news for about 45 minutes, and then more and more people will notice and spread the news. Within 6 hours, journalists and bloggers will recognize the news as something worth reporting. Within 3 days, radios and television stations will cover the story regionally or even nationally. Within 2 weeks, magazines will conduct deep interviews and investigations. Missing any of these points will trigger reputation damage.



(Source: Reputation Management by John Doorley and Helio F Garcia)

But the key point of the Golden Hour is not to calculate the exact timing, but to understand the magnitude of the timeframe. In his book *The Power of Communication*, Garcia elaborates the idea and emphasizes the sequence of disproportionate effects that arise in particular intervals in the cycle of visibility. So,

the longer the leaders wait and remain silent, the harder they can control the media agenda. More and more people get to know what happened by the mouth of the media and the article of journalists, instead of the voice of the company and the statement of the leader. People make their own conclusions and judgments based on what they believe. What is easy to explain and to react in the first stage of the time period might be very hard to do so in the later stage of the Golden Hour. When leaders lose the priority to meet the netizens, they have to spend more time to mend their hearts. However, at time, journalists smell the clue of eye-catching news and start investigating what's going on, which means leaders have to mend the heart of online audience and allocate more other resources to deal with reporters. Then they are facing the interested television stations that have more audiences national wide, along with following the update in social media platforms and contacting journalists. Expectedly, more in-depth investigations and interviews conducted by magazines affect their subscribers. Again, the later the leaders find themselves in the Golden Hours, the less they can save the reputation of themselves and their organizations. Therefore, statements prior to the proliferation of the news/crisis will be evaluated as strategic; reactions within the Golden Hour will be evaluated as qualified, and lagged apologies are ineffective.

[Leader], Cause

There must be reasons behind every expression of sorry. The psychology of apologizing and forgiveness plays an important role. Forgiveness is often described as a trust-building process (Waldron and Kelley 2008). If the receiver of the apology does not believe the motivation of the transgressor, it will be very hard for them to accept the expression of the remorse. Some leaders view apologizing as a

“forgiveness-seeking strategy” (Waldron and Kelley 2008, p. 112) and pray that no one knows that they apologize simply because there is an expectation of one, rather than do it from the heart. Unfortunately (to them), it is easy to recognize whether leaders apologize sincerely, involuntarily or merely out of duty.

Let’s compare two famous apology letters.

To all iPhone customers:

I have received hundreds of emails from iPhone customers who are upset about Apple dropping the price of iPhone by \$200 two months after it went on sale. After reading every one of these emails, I have some observations and conclusions.

Related Story

- Apple Offers \$100 Credit to Early iPhone Customers

First, I am sure that we are making the correct decision to lower the price of the 8GB iPhone from \$599 to \$399, and that now is the right time to do it. iPhone is a breakthrough product, and we have the chance to 'go for it' this holiday season. iPhone is so far ahead of the competition, and now it will be affordable by even more customers. It benefits both Apple and every iPhone user to get as many new customers as possible in the iPhone 'tent'. We strongly believe the \$399 price will help us do just that this holiday season.

Second, being in technology for 30+ years I can attest to the fact that the technology road is bumpy. There is always change and improvement, and there is always someone who bought a product before a particular cutoff date and misses the new price or the new operating system or the new whatever. This is life in the technology lane. If you always wait for the next price cut or to buy the new improved model, you'll never buy any technology product because there is always something better and less expensive on the horizon. The good news is that if you buy products from companies that support them well, like Apple tries to do, you will receive years of useful and satisfying service from them even as newer models are introduced.

Third, even though we are making the right decision to lower the price of iPhone, and even though the technology road is bumpy, we need to do a better job taking care of our early iPhone customers as we aggressively go after new ones with a lower price. Our early customers trusted us, and we must live up to that trust with our actions in moments like these.

Therefore, we have decided to offer every iPhone customer who purchased an iPhone from either Apple or AT&T, and who is not receiving a rebate or any other consideration, a \$100 store credit towards the purchase of any product at an Apple Retail Store or the Apple Online Store. Details are still being worked out and will be posted on Apple's website next week. Stay tuned.

We want to do the right thing for our valued iPhone customers. We apologize for disappointing some of you, and we are doing our best to live up to your high expectations of Apple.

Steve Jobs
Apple CEO

First, I am sure that we are making the correct decision to lower the price of the 8GB iPhone from \$599 to \$399, and that now is the right

To our customers,

At Apple, we strive to make world-class products that deliver the best experience possible to our customers. With the launch of our new Maps last week, we fell short on this commitment. We are extremely sorry for the frustration this has caused our customers and we are doing everything we can to make Maps better.

We launched Maps initially with the first version of iOS. As time progressed, we wanted to provide our customers with even better Maps including features such as turn-by-turn directions, voice integration, Flyover and vector-based maps. In order to do this, we had to create a new version of Maps from the ground up.

There are already more than 100 million iOS devices using the new Apple Maps, with more and more joining us every day. In just over a week, iOS users with the new Maps have already searched for nearly half a billion locations. The more our customers use our Maps the better it will get and we greatly appreciate all of the feedback we have received from you.

While we're improving Maps, you can try alternatives by downloading map apps from the App Store like Bing, MapQuest and Waze, or use Google or Nokia maps by going to their websites and [creating an icon](#) on your home screen to their web app.

Everything we do at Apple is aimed at making our products the best in the world. We know that you expect that from us, and we will keep working non-stop until Maps lives up to the same incredibly high standard.

Tim Cook
Apple's CEO

In September 2007, Steve Jobs apologized publicly to a flood of emails complaining about a surprise iPhone price cut, and stated that Apple will offer a \$100 credit at Apple stores to all iPhone users who paid the original price. He was still sure that they were making the right decision and the whole statement is full of his reasons of his belief. People love his talent, but they will also doubt the cause of his apology--

-Was

he issuing a non-apology apology just for responding complaining emails?

5 years later, in the same month, Jobs' s successor Tim Cook posted a statement on Apple's website regarding the Apple's new mapping service. He mentioned the customer in the first sentence of the statement and there are 4 more in the statement. He felt "extremely sorry" and begged for forgiveness and understanding. The statement is kind, low-key and sincere. That is his style---not as talented as his predecessor, but much more easygoing and sincere in apologizing---and his way to lead a company.

Proper statements out of duty are qualified. An honest or touching apology could be very strategic. If leaders say anything unwillingly or even worse, refuse to apologize at first and then compromise under pressure, his words are useless.

[Leader], Charisma

Scholars have provided empirical researches on the definition of leadership and how to analyze leadership. The function of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1997) has been proved by different researchers on various contexts, chronologically including: higher business performance (e.g., Barling et al., 1996), increased motivation (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2001), higher socio-moral reasoning (Turner et al., 2002), reduced workplace injuries (e.g., Barling et al., 2002), trust in leadership (Dirks and Ferrin's, 2002), follower satisfaction with supervision (e.g., Erkutlu 2008), leadership effectiveness (e.g., Erkutlu 2008), follower trust in the leader (e.g., Liu et al. 2010) and follower organizational commitment (e.g., Ismail et al. 2011). Transformational leader tends to enjoy good reputation and solid trust among target audience; therefore, their words are more credible compared with statements from unknown or even notorious leaders. Apologies from trustworthy

elites are more likely to be accepted because of their positive personal image, whereas statements from disreputable leaders are invalid or counterproductive because people doubt their reputation, hence doubt the apologizing statement they make.

Apart from leaders' perception among stakeholders, their apologizing history is also a crucial reference value to evaluate the effectiveness of their future apology. If a leader issued a bad apology or even several bad apologies before, the new sorry is hardly to be accepted. Worse, if the leader lied before, the new apology is very likely invalid. When Anthony Weiner apologized with the accompaniment of his wife in his third press conference after the "Weinergate," everyone doubted his sincerity. He promised he would stop sexting and photos in his first two press conferences, but later evidences have shown that he start contacting strangers and sending sexually suggestive photos. If a leader has decent apologizing history, people tend to believe the words one more time and give the wrongdoer one more time. Chinese former Premier Wen Jiabao was renown for his gentle style and sincere words. He made personal conversation with the parents of children who had been sick after drinking tainted milk and apologized to all of them. He used his annual press conference at the National People's Congress to apologize for his insufficient endeavor and for "the problems that have occurred in China's economy and society during my term of office." People are convinced by his self-critical political style and sincere apology.

If a leader never says "sorry" in any channels, then we should calculate his or her charisma based on his or her reputation and public image. Apologies from leaders with a positive image are trustworthy. Words from anonymous or low-key leaders might work. Announcements from disreputable leaders could be counter-effective. How many times do the leaders apologize before, either the person or the same

position of the organization also plays a role in the perception of receivers of the once-again-mea-culpa.

Chapter 4: Case study

Based on the analysis of chapter 3, the 10C-Checklist could be applied by evaluating the effectiveness of leaders' apologies. Following is the criteria table of how to calculate an apology' effect on an existed crisis:

10C-Checklist	Standard	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)
Characteristic	Acute or chronic	A swift and comprehensive apology	A quick & proper statement in a sudden crisis / a thorough & timely reply in a lasting crisis	A lagged or hasty response
Consequence	The gravity of the crisis	Serious issues with serious treatments	Serious issues with normal treatments	Downplay serious issues
Culture	The transgressor and the receiver	Cohere with the culture of the receiver without contradiction with that of the transgressor	Cohere with the culture of the receiver	Contradict with the culture of the receivers
Channel	Where is the target audience?	Control the media agenda	Meet the audience	Cannot control the media agenda
Content	The key elements of an apology	Include all essential components	Fair words, possibly missing one or two elements	A random statement
Customization	Needs of different stakeholders	Messages are tailored to different target audiences	A general statement without customization	Target the wrong audience
Change	Any change of behavior after apologizing	Change and other compensation	Change	Repeat the same mistake
Control	The Golden Hour	Quicker than the Golden Hour	Meet the Golden Hour	Slower than the Golden Hour
Cause	Honest/obliged/involuntary	Sincere	Obliged	Non-apology apology
Charisma	Reputation and history of apologizing	Good History	None	Bad History

Basically, the thesis tests cases based on the 10 C categories. Each C counts 10%. In how many categories have the leaders done a good job means how much percent they can win back from a crisis by apologizing; On the contrary, if they have failed to meet the qualification, their score will be deducted. The criteria “0%” describe the average performance when leaders say sorry for an issue, which would not affect the final score. And the score of “+X%” could be offset by “-X%.” For example, if a leader got +10% in 4 Cs, deducted -10% in 3 Cs and have 0% in 3 Cs, his or her final score would be +10%. That means his or her apology did 10% positive effect on his or her misbehavior; if a leader has -10% in the scorecard, his or her apology negatively affected how the public and the target audience viewed the transgression.

Case 1: Anthony Weiner

I - Anthony Weiner’s First Apology

Anthony Weiner, an upcoming Democrat star, a once-promising congressman from Queens, a charismatic face on cable TV, had the ambition and ability to replace Michael Bloomberg as mayor of New York City in 2013. Unfortunately, his arrogance ceased his own political career and triggered his own tragedy.

At midnight of May 28, 2011, Rep. Weiner tweeted that his Facebook account was hacked and a sexually suggestive photo sent in his name to a 21-year-old woman from Seattle.

(Source:

[https://twitter.com/rep](https://twitter.com/repweiner)

[weiner](https://twitter.com/repweiner))



Hours later on the same day, Weiner's spokesperson David Arnold said Anthony's accounts on both Facebook and Twitter were hacked and the photo of a man's erect penis inside gray pants was not of the congressman, nor was it taken by him. However, the immediately removed photo intrigued reporters. They kept asking Rep. Weiner about the issue and he kept denying and being both circumspect and combative. On June 1, 2011, he appeared on 3 TV interviews, insisting that his accounts were hacked and never confirming or denying the photos.



(Video source:

<http://abcnews.go.com>)



Karl: "Is it inappropriate for a member of Congress to be following young women on a Twitter account?"

Weiner: "That's outrageous. Ya know, that's really outrageous. The implication is outrageous. Your question had a pretty charged supposition, 'Do you think there's

anything wrong with following young women on Twitter?’ Do you really think that’s a fair question?”

On June 6, 2011, the marathon of asking and denying ends until conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart claimed to have more sexually suggestive photos sent from the congressman’s Twitter account. Weiner held a press conference in New York on the same day, apologizing with exaggerating body language of wiping his tears.

Following is the full transcript of his apology at that press conference:

REP. WEINER: Thank you very much for being here, and good afternoon. I’d like to take this time to clear up some of the questions that have been raised over the past 10 days or so and take full responsibility for my actions.

At the outset, I’d like to make it clear that I have made terrible mistakes that have hurt the people I care about the most, and I’m deeply sorry. I have not been honest with myself, my family, my constituents, my friends and supporters and the media.

Last Friday night, I tweeted a photograph of myself that I intended to send as a direct message as part of a joke to a woman in Seattle. Once I realized I had posted it to Twitter, I panicked. I took it down and said that I had been hacked. I then continued with that story — to stick to that story, which was a hugely regrettable mistake. This woman was unwittingly dragged into this and bears absolutely no responsibility. I am so sorry to have disrupted her life in this way.

To be clear, the picture was of me, and I sent it. I am deeply sorry for the pain this has caused my wife Huma and our family and my constituents, my friends, supporters and staff. In addition, over the past few years, I have engaged in several inappropriate conversations conducted over Twitter, Facebook, email and occasionally on the phone with women I had met online. I’ve exchanged messages and photos of an explicit nature with about six women over the last three years. For the most part, these communications took place before my marriage, though some have sadly took place after. To be clear, I have never met any of these women or had physical relationships at any time.

I haven’t told the truth, and I’ve done things that I deeply regret. I brought pain to people I care about the most and the people who believed in me. And for that I’m deeply sorry. I apologize to my wife and our family, as well as to our friends and supporters. I’m deeply ashamed of my terrible judgment and actions.

And I’d be glad to take any questions that you might have.

(Source: <http://nypost.com/2011/06/07/full-transcript-of-weiners-news-conference/>)

II - Anthony Weiner's Second Apology

The story did not end here. Rep. Weiner did not want to step down, but his fellows did; his wife forgave him, but other women did not. Democratic National Committee Chair Reince Priebus and House Democrat Nancy Pelosi called him to resign. News outlets kept reporting on his other sexts and photos from his online accounts to other women. Remember, Rep. Weiner married Huma Abedin, a longtime personal aide of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in July 2010, which means "Weinergate" broke out less than one year since their marriage.

On June 16, 2011, Rep. Weiner held another chaotic four-minute news conference, announcing that he would resign his seat in Congress. Following is the full transcript:

"Good afternoon. About 20 years ago, I stood in this very same room here at the Council Center and asked my neighbors for their help to take a chance on me in electing me to the City Council. And then some seven years later, I asked those same people to join with people in Queens in sending me to Congress. There is not higher honor in a democracy than being sent by your neighbors to represent them in the United States House of Representatives.

"It is particularly humbling to represent this district because the communities and families of the 9th Congressional District are hardworking, patriotic, opinionated, they are authentic. I have never forgotten my neighbors because they represent the same middle-class story as mine. I went to public school my whole life. My mother was a schoolteacher for 32 years. My father went to law school on the GI Bill.

"The middle-class story of New York is my story, and I'm very proud of that. I'm here today to again apologize for the personal mistakes I have made and the embarrassment I have caused. I make this apology to my neighbors and constituents, but I make it particularly to my wife Huma. I had hope to be able to continue the work that the citizens of my district had elected me to do, to fight for the middle class and those struggling to make it. Unfortunately, the distraction I have created has made that impossible. So today I am announcing my resignation from Congress, so my colleagues can get back to work, my neighbors can choose a new representative, and most importantly, so that my wife and I can continue to heal from the damage I have caused.

"To repeat, and most importantly so that I can continue to heal from the damage that I have caused, I want to thank my colleagues in the House of Representatives, Democrats and Republicans alike. They come from different places around the country, but fundamentally, we all agree. They're all patriots and I will miss them all. Thank you. I also would like to express my gratitude to young members of my staff. They are young people who are not paid very much. They are people who have worked very hard and very long hours. Ultimately those people define the notion of service. I'd like to thank of course the many people who've helped me. The people who have volunteered, the people who have given advice, the many of my constituents who have offered me good ideas. And of course I want to express my gratitude to my family.

"And of course I want to express my gratitude to my family. To my mother and family who instilled in me the values that have carried me thus far, to my brother Jason, and of course to my wife Huma who has stood with me in this entire difficult period and to whom I owe so very much. I got into politics to give a voice to the many who simply did not have one. Now I'll be looking for other ways to contribute my talents so that we live up to that most New York and American of ideals. The ideal that a family, a community, and ultimately a country is the one thing that unites us. The one thing that we're all focused on. With God's help and with hard work we will all be successful.

"Thank you"

(Source: <http://www.newsmax.com>)

III - Anthony Weiner's Third Apology

The story has to end here, but it did not. In April 2013, Weiner announced his return to politics as a candidate for mayor of New York City. Interestingly, he and his wife were featured first in April by The New York Times and then in July by The New York Magazine for their post-scandal life. Both publications positively presented this couple, saying that they went through a hard time and got back to normal life. The Times featured Weiner as a sweet daddy who spent much of his time at home with their son Jordan and picked up his wife's dry cleaning and did the grocery shopping. The NY Mag positioned him as a househusband who gave his son a bottle, changed his diapers and watched him grow when Weiner's wife still often travelled with Hillary.

Fine, people made mistakes and moved on. But on July 22, 2013, TheDirty.com released more and more sexting and photos by Weiner. Evidences proved that Weiner still sexted with several women after his resignation from Congress in late 2012 until as late as April 2013.

On the next day, July 23, 2013, accompanied by his wife Huma Abedin who gave birth to the couple's first child in December 2011, Weiner apologized the third time for lying and admitted sexting and sending photos at a news conference. It was

one of the weirdest speech because his wife, the receiver of his apology, appeared to be happy and smiled several times during the conference.



(Source: <http://www.politico.com>)

On September 10, 2013, Weiner has conceded in the Democratic primary race for mayor of New York City.

SUMMARY:

Score for Anthony Weiner's First Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	%
Characteristic			A lagged response	-10
Consequence		Serious issue with normal treatment		0
Culture		Cohere with the culture of the receiver		0
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Fair words, missing one or two elements		0
Customization		A general statement without customization		0
Change		No change		0
Control			Slower than the Golden Hour	-10
Cause			Non-apology apology	-10
Charisma	Good Reputation			+10
Summary				-20%

Weiner's first apology looks like an I-am-sorry narrative from a child. He did accept his responsibility of the mistake, though in the fourth paragraph and after seven days of his denial. He described every detail of his expression of regret and request for forgiveness, but did not provide any promise of change or compensation of his misbehavior, not to mention that he did not want to resign at all.

Score for Anthony Weiner's Second Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic			A lagged response	-10
Consequence		Serious issue with normal treatment		0
Culture		Cohere with the culture of the receiver		0
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Fair words, missing one or two elements		0
Customization	Messages are tailored to specific target audience			+10
Change		No change		0
Control			Slower than the Golden Hour	-10
Cause		Obligated		0
Charisma			Bad apologizing history	-10
Summary				-20%

Compared with Weiner's first draft, this time he added a specific sorry section towards his family. He tried to remind the public of his glorious politic career. We can see from his choice of words and the place. There is simply too many unrelated stuff in his statement, which not only undermines his sincerity, but also proves his arrogance.

Score for Anthony Weiner's Third Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic		A swift and comprehensive apology		0
Consequence			Downplayed serious issue or overreact to unserious issue	-10
Culture		Cohere with the culture of the receiver		0
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Fair words, missing one or two elements		0
Customization	Messages are tailored to specific target audience			+10
Change			Repeat the same mistake	-10
Control		Quicker than the Golden Hour		0
Cause			Non-apology apology	-10
Charisma			Bad apologizing history	-10
Summary				-30%

Weiner's third and last apology press conference happened the second day since the Thedirty.com released more evidences of his sexting and photos. His response is faster than the former two statements. He tried to engage his wife in his public appearance, but his wife kept smiling and nodding towards certain people from the audience, which downplayed the seriousness of the issue.

Case 2: Japanese Nuclear Crisis

On March 11, 2011, Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plant was badly hit by the devastating earthquake with magnitude 9.0 and a tsunami with 10-meter-high waves. It has been the biggest nuclear incident since Chernobyl disaster and has been measured the same level as that of Chernobyl (level 7) on the International Nuclear Event Scale.

Nobody can anticipate the natural disaster, but the public blames the government and Tokyo Electric Power Company for what they have done after the catastrophe broke out:

1. Different sides have different "facts." --- On March 12, 2011, Japanese trade minister Banri Kaieda warned that a small radiation leak could occur at the plant, but a spokesperson from TEPCO said that radioactive substances might have leaked at Fukushima, and Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said radiation near the plant's main gate was more than eight times the normal level.

2. Authorities made decisions under the table. --- On Mar 22, 2011, Prime Minister Kan made a request to the Chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, Shunsuke Kondo, to provide a hypothesis of the worst-case scenario for the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi NPS, and the measures to be taken in the event of such a scenario. Three days later, Dr. Kondo submitted the Sketch to the government, but no one did ever release the Sketch publicly.

3. The Japanese people are always the last one to know what is going on. --- On March 22, 2011, TEPCO compiled a radiation map of the surroundings of the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant, which monitored the radiation at 150 spots around the buildings. TEPCO shared this map with Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information and Japan Meteorological Agency's, and on the same

day with the United States and other international institutes. A day later, almost every day TEPCO officials continued to share updated versions of the map by e-mail. A month later, media reported the map that has been kept secret to the public.

Above is just a snapshot of the reason TEPCO and the Japanese government have been criticized, and the both sides apologized separately after the nuclear crisis. On March 13, 2011, 29 hours after the first explosion, TEPCO's CEO Masataka Shimizu apologized and bowed. On March 25, 2011, the then Prime Minister Naoto Kan apologized to farmers and business owners near the plant. On April 13, 2011, one day after the issue was designated a Chernobyl-level nuclear accident, Masataka Shimizu said again in a public statement: "I regret the fact we are inconveniencing all these people, I want to take this opportunity to apologize." On May 28, 2012, Naoto Kan apologized again for the insufficient role he and his office played during that period of time: "I believe the biggest portion of blame lies with the state. As the person who was in charge of the country at the time of the accident, I sincerely apologize for my failure to stop it."

These seem to be reasonable apologies, but the public does not trust them hundred percent. "I don't believe a word they say," said Yukio Otsuka, 56, a private school owner whose home is about three miles from the power plant. "I don't trust them. I don't believe it is possible. We have really drawn the short stick on this one." Critics like Hiroko Ike, one of Sunday's marchers, say the close ties between the utility and the government make it hard for her to believe official pronouncements about the crisis. "I can't believe the government anymore," said Ike, a 32-year-old Tokyo woman. "I want to escape Japan."

This is not the first time TEPCO involves in a trouble and apologizes for what they have done. In 2002, the president, vice president and chairman of TEPCO were quitting following a nuclear safety scandal. TEPCO was found to have falsified nuclear safety data at least 200 times between 1977 and 2002. The company admitted to falsifying its records of nuclear inspections and hiding the facts for more than a decade. At that time, TEPCO issued a statement and apologized on behalf of the company, which means no leaders stood out and took the responsibility.



(Source: www.theatlantic.com)

SUMMARY:

Score for Masataka Shimizu' Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic			A lagged or hasty response	-10
Consequence	Serious issue with serious treatment			+10
Culture		Cohere with the culture of the receiver		0
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Fair words, possibly missing one or two elements		0
Customization		A general statement without customization		0
Change		No change		0
Control			Slower than the Golden Hour	-10
Cause			Non-apology apology	-10
Charisma			Bad apologizing history	-30
Summary				-20%

TEPCO was criticized even after the CEO apologized. The reasons why the public doesn't trust them anymore are obvious: They played blame game; they conceal important information; they involved with scandals 12 years ago. Japanese people bow when they apologize, but not every bow wins back broken hearts.

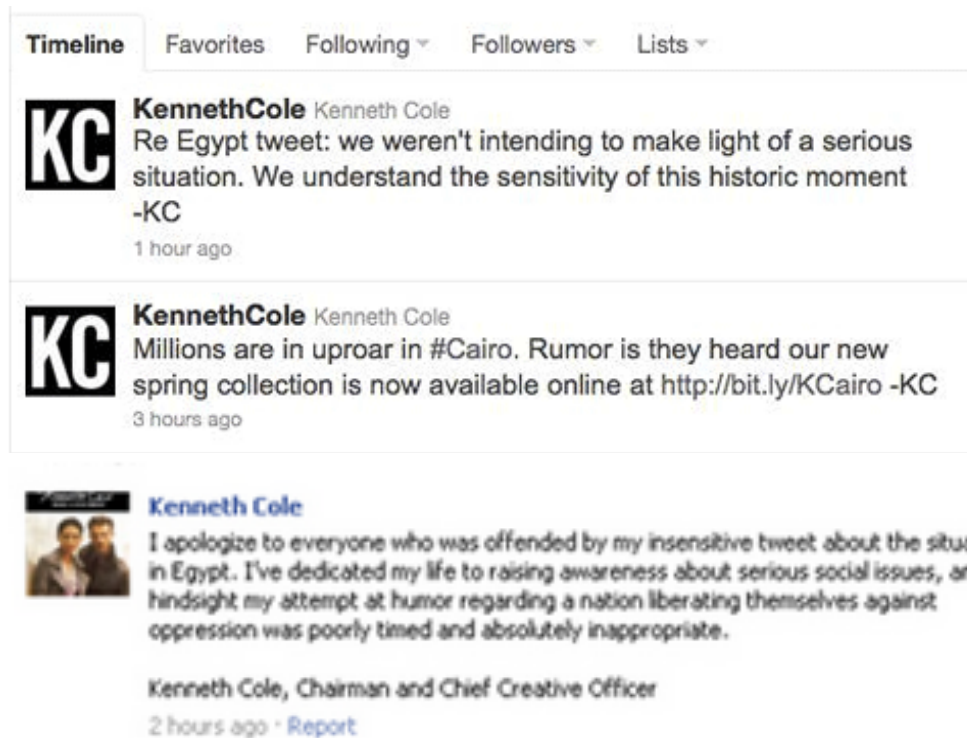
Case 3 - Kenneth Cole's Apologies through Twitter

Kenneth Cole promoted his shoes on Twitter by mocking the phrase "boots on the ground," which has been used by President Barack Obama with regards to military actions in Syria on September 2013. He apologized later and tweeted an Instagram video link 7 hours after his first tweet, but his tweet still triggered a huge wave of backlash. Some followers blamed him on his lack of social responsibility and humanity; others even boycotted the brand.



(Source: <https://twitter.com/KennethCole>)

Worse, his boots tweet is linked back to his Egypt tweet. Two years ago, he tweeted his spring collection by joking about escalating protests in Egypt. At that time, he also apologized for his insensitive tweet, but his boots tweet seems to prove that he does not learn or does not want to learn at all.



(Source: <https://twitter.com/KennethCole>)

Kenneth Cole personally tarnished his own brand. No companies should use any marketing ploy to sell any products using wars, disabled people or any international tragedies. Offensive Tweets are not good business strategy. Customers take CSR seriously before they make purchase decisions. More often than not, fashion taste and love towards a read-to-wear brand are subjective; therefore it is hard to win back fans' broken heart. Worse, this is not the first time he downplays a situation in the Middle Eastern country to promote his own brand. His tweets are more intentional than a pun. He apologizes and hopes no one remembers, but his again and again misbehaviors make people doubt how sincere his apologies are.

SUMMARY:

Score for Kenneth Cole's First Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic	A swift and comprehensive apology			+10
Consequence			Downplayed serious issue	-10
Culture			Contradict with the culture of the receivers	-10
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Fair words, missing one or two elements		0
Customization		A general statement without customization		+10
Change		No action		0
Control	Quicker than the Golden Hour			+10
Cause		Obligated		0
Charisma		None		0
Summary				+10%

A Lesson on Apology for Soldiers and Diplomats (Bruce Sidebotham) points out that when Arabs or Pashtuns hear apologies from Americans in American forms rather than in their own cultural form, they question American sincerity. It is definitely not a good idea for American brands to involve in such racial issues. Apart from that, Kenneth Cole did a good job in meeting the Golden Hour, controlling media agenda on both Twitter and Facebook with a proper statement.

Score for Kenneth Cole's Second Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic		A quick statement		0
Consequence		Serious treatment		0
Culture			Contradict with the culture of the receivers	-10
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content			A Tweet with contradicted Instagram video	-10
Customization		A general statement without customization		0
Change			Repeat the same mistake	-10
Control	Quicker than the Golden Hour			+10
Cause			Involuntary	-10
Charisma			Bad apologizing history	-10
Summary				-40%

The link of the video posted on his Instagram was actually not an apology at all. He clarified his intention of leading the online conversation of sensitive social topics such as AIDs. But people still viewed this as a non-apology apology rather than merely an explanation based on his historical precedent, the Cairo Tweet. The Boots Tweet let people doubt his intention of tweeting about Cairo. Why did he response so quickly after controversial tweets? Why didn't he apologize this time?

Case 4: Target

Target confirmed on Dec. 19, 2013 that a data breach of 40 million credit and debit card accounts occurred during winter holiday season. On Jan. 10, 2014 it said hackers also stole personal information from 70 million customers, including names, phone numbers as well as email and mailing addresses.

On Dec. 20, 2013, the day after the data breach broke out, Target's CEO Gregg Steinhafel posted a statement on the pressroom section of Target's official website, apologizing for what had happened, showing that they care about their customers and announcing following steps. According to Associated Press, the enormous data breach triggers a 46 percent slump of the retail giant's fourth-quarter profit, compared with the same quarter of 2013.

On Mar 5, 2014, the highest-ranking technology executive at Target stepped down one week after the company revealed bad financial performance caused by the massive data breach. Beth Jacob, who has overseen Target's internal computer systems, and worked as chief information officer and executive vice president for technology services since 2008, has resigned.

In a statement to PR Daily, Target CEO Gregg Steinhafel explained how the company would move forward: "We are undertaking an overhaul of our information security and compliance structure and practices at Target. As a first step in this effort, Target will be conducting an external search for an interim CIO who can help guide Target through this transformation." Target built a section of its website devoted to providing facts, solving problems and offering help. The company will take further steps to recover from the data breach and change the way it deals with web security and system sustainability. Internally, it will reselect a new CIO and elevate his or her

responsibility; externally, it will cooperate with technique experts and enhance online safety of the website:

A Message from CEO Gregg Steinhafel about Target's Payment Card Issues



MINNEAPOLIS — December 20, 2013

"Yesterday we shared that there was unauthorized access to payment card data at our U.S. stores. The issue has been identified and eliminated. We recognize this has been confusing and disruptive during an already busy holiday season. Our guests' trust is our top priority at Target and we are committed to making this right.

We want our guests to understand that just because they shopped at Target during the

impacted time frame, it doesn't mean they are victims of fraud. In fact, in other similar situations, there are typically low levels of actual fraud. Most importantly, we want to reassure guests that they will not be held financially responsible for any credit and debit card fraud. And to provide guests with extra assurance, we will be offering free credit monitoring services. We will be in touch with those impacted by this issue soon on how and where to access the service.

We understand it's been difficult for some guests to reach us via our website and call center. We apologize and want you to understand that we are experiencing unprecedented call volume. Our Target teams are working continuously to build capacity and meet our guests' needs.

We take this crime seriously. It was a crime against Target, our team members, and most importantly, our guests. We're in this together, and in that spirit, we are extending a 10% discount – the same amount our team members receive – to guests who shop in U.S. stores on Dec. 21 and 22. Again, we recognize this issue has been confusing and disruptive during an already busy holiday season. We want to emphasize that the issue has been addressed and let guests know they can shop with confidence at their local Target stores."

To hear more from Gregg Steinhafel, please visit [A Bullseye View](#).

*Valid in store only. Limit one offer per guest to be used in a single transaction. Void if prohibited by law. Not valid in Canada. No cash value.



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(Source: www.target.com)

[home](#) / [about](#) / [shopping experience](#) / [payment card issue FAQ](#)

data breach FAQ

Answers to commonly asked questions for guests impacted by the recent data breach.

A message to our guests

We truly value our relationship with you, our guests, and know this incident had a significant impact on you. We are sorry. We remain focused on addressing your questions and concerns.

- You have zero liability for any charges that you didn't make.
- No action is required by you unless you see charges you didn't make.
- Because we value you as our guest and your trust is important to us, Target is offering one year of free credit monitoring to all guests who shopped U.S. stores. Visit creditmonitoring.target.com to request an activation code. View our FAQ on credit monitoring [here](#).
- Be wary of call or email scams that may appear to offer protection but are really trying to get personal information from you.

Read on for answers to some common questions, and check back as we continue to update this list with more details.

About the breach

[What happened?](#)

[Has the issue been resolved?](#)

[Does that information include social security numbers?](#)

SUMMARY:

Score for Gregg Steinhafel's Apology				
10C-Checklist	Criteria (+10%)	Criteria (0%)	Criteria (-10%)	
Characteristic	A thorough & timely reply in a sudden crisis			+10
Consequence		Serious issue with decent treatment		0
Culture		Cohere with the culture of the receiver		0
Channel		Meet the audience		0
Content		Include lots of key components of an apology		0
Customization	Messages are tailored			+10
Change	Over-deliver			0
Control		Meet the Golden Hour		0
Cause	Sincere			+10
Charisma		No big historical mistakes		0
Summary				+30%

There is an expression of regret, a request for forgiveness, a form of compensation (The discount), a credible commitment to change (will be in touch with customers with extra service) and a promise that the act won't occur again. Target followed this issue even three months later, there is a FAQ section for the data breach on the website. CEO Gregg Steinhafel also explained the departure of Target's CIO.

Chapter 5: Anticipated Findings

Original Achievement and Contributions to the Field

Currently, most scholars in this field mainly study from a micro-approach. Some focus on apologizing effects on followers, some focus on one component of a statement, some intensively dig out case studies. This dissertation combines macro-perspective with micro-approach. It creates a 10C-Checklist, the first tool in this field to scientifically categorize and evaluate leaders' apologies. It will help to study apologies in a systematic way and trigger new insights from a new angle. It extends audience scope beyond the follower to bystanders or even the public and considers the impact of different components on an apology by using mixed methods.

Target Audience

- 1) Scholars who have strong interest in analyzing the value of leaders' apology;
- 2) Students who are eager to study the relationship between leadership and apologizing;
- 3) Practitioners in the crisis management field;
- 4) Leaders who hesitate to apologize when they or their organizations transgress.

This thesis targets these groups of people because they share the same interest of this topic, or they are involved in this topic. They know the context of this topic; they are in the frontline of this field; they might have unique idea and insight to comment or even further the study of this thesis.

Limitations For Future Study

Using a standardized scenario-based design approach might trigger potential risks of missing significant components. Features other than the 10C-Checklist might have a crucial impact on leaders' apologies.

Personal preference could play a role when collecting results from participants. For example, Democrats might have bias towards George W. Bush.

Apology is useful only post hoc. How could it help leaders to make better choices in advance or predict crises?

What is the next step after figuring out the relationship between leadership and apologizing? Should leaders be trained to issue a strategic apology? The ethicality of such training is questionable. Leaders, armed with the knowledge about how to optimize communicate sincerity, might use these techniques to “dupe” their followers into forming attributions of sincerity.

Conclusion

This thesis studies on the effectiveness of leaders' apologies using the initial tool called 10C-Checklist. The 10Cs are Characteristic, Consequence, Culture, Channel, Content, Change, Customization, Control, Cause and Charisma.

The thesis examines each C with corresponded theories and elaborates them with examples of hot issues from different industries. It also thoroughly analyzes 4 cases and provides scorecard for each leader.

The 10C-Checklist is a new way full of ideas and insights about how to scientifically study the organic relationship between leadership and apologizing, how to sort and categorize cases in a well-organized way and how to calculate the impact of various elements on a specific apology. It could be a guideline for leaders who wonder before they initiate an apologizing statement. It could also be a study for scholars and students who want to intensively study the apologizing branch under crisis communication.

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