

Leadership: The Power of Apology

Marshall Goldsmith is the executive coach of executive coaches. And I came across a line of his recently about a topic on which I personally am very passionate and have been passionate for a long period of time. But let me read you this, this—fabulous to me—fabulous, fantastic, powerful line of Goldsmith's: "I regard apologizing as the most magical, healing, restorative gesture human beings can make. It is the centerpiece of my work with executives who want to do better."

The most magical, healing, restorative gesture human beings could make. Amen. I agree. Apologizing. Nothing more powerful and nothing that is often harder to do, especially for men. This is, incidentally, one of the areas where gender differences are incredible.

Now, here's my suggestion, here's my command. John Kador wrote an entire book on the topic of apologizing. It's called *Effective Apology: Mending Fences, Building Bridges and Restoring Trust*. Is it a perfect book? No. No book is. Is there such a thing as reading a 300-page book on the topic of apology? You bet there is because I agree with Mr. Goldsmith. Very few, if any, things are more important. And as he said, it's the number one thing, arguably, factor for success, or the lack thereof, in senior executives.

There's another one, too, that I found while I was looking for the Kador book. Psychiatrist Aaron Lazare wrote a magical book on the topic, the title of which is *On Apology*. Seriously.

I mean, this is my great gripe with business schools—I have so many, though—you know, we teach accounting and we teach marketing and we teach everything except what's important. What about a whole course on apologizing? You may say it's absurd. I say— See, my point is, it is stuff like learning how to apologize effectively that is the real essence of strategic strength. *Strategic* strength. It's not a tactic. It's a strategic strength.

Seriously, become a *professional*, become a *student* of apologizing. Just like playing the piano or playing the cello, it is something that you can learn, you can study, and you can get better at. Trust me, or more important, trust Marshall Goldsmith. The most magical, healing, restorative gesture a human being can make.

