

# The First 4 Steps to Repair Team Trust

*How to Share a Sincere and Effective “Sorry”*



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You cannot repair team trust unless you first share a sincere and effective “I’m Sorry.”

Just like a vase that has been broken, when trust has been broken between teammates it does not get better unless there is intentional action taken to repair it.

If you or a teammate have neglected a responsibility or broken a promise of some kind, the first step to “fixing” the problem is to share a **sincere and specific** “sorry.”



A heartfelt and effective apology is the glue that allows you to repair that broken team trust, and it involves more than the typical and disinterested phrases like “My bad” or “Wow... sorry about that” we sometimes hear from the people around us...

As I have shared earlier, [team trust is like a three legged stool](#).

But whether it is a stool, or a vase, or any other metaphor you want to imagine, that trust that has been broken requires glue and an intentional effort to make it right.

Well, it just so happens that there are four ingredients to making glue:  
(milk, water, baking soda, and vinegar)

You can find the recipe and directions for [homemade glue here](#).

And just like glue, there are **4 steps to a sincere “I’m sorry.”**

Just like the glue recipe, the 4 ingredients of a powerful apology are simple to find – but are seldom mixed together effectively because it requires effort.

Here are the 4 steps to a sincere and powerful apology:

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## 1. Own the mistake and actually use the word “sorry”

Great teammates aren't victims. They own their actions and, instead of avoiding the issue with vagueness or excuses, choose to directly express their feeling of regret.

They actually SAY THE WORDS “*I’m Sorry...*”

## 2. Explain what exactly you are sorry about doing

The second ingredient of a sincere apology is to acknowledge exactly what was done and describe the action or behavior that should not have occurred. Great teammates actually SAY THE WORDS “*I’m sorry for missing the deadline...*”

## 3. Acknowledge the impact it had on others

A sincere and powerful apology also includes an attempt to show that you empathize with and understand the effect your behavior had on the team. This involves considering their point of view and choosing to actually SAY THE WORDS “*I’m sorry I missed the deadline. I know that made your job much more difficult and caused a great deal of stress and frustration for the team...*”

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## 4. Ask for forgiveness and recommit to your role

The final ingredient of an effective “I’m sorry” script is to openly state your desire for forgiveness and then make it very clear that you intend to invest the time and necessary effort required to earn back the trust that you sabotaged.

You finish by choosing to actually SAY THE WORDS “I’m sorry I missed the deadline. I know that made your job much more difficult and caused a great deal of stress and frustration for the team. *I hope you can forgive me, and promise that I will make every effort to earn back your trust by communicating and planning better in the future...*”

As effective as a specific “I’m sorry” will be, it STILL will be only your words – and these first 4 steps must be translated into daily actions to truly convince your team that what you said was sincere. But if you will follow this recipe, you will be well on your way to repairing the break and rebuilding the team trust you desire.

Perhaps more importantly, you will also **gain a great deal of respect** for the way you handled yourself and claimed responsibility for the mistake.

Everyone makes mistakes and is imperfect.

The key is to deliver a sincere and powerful “I’m sorry” afterwards and work to make sure you continue to fortify the relationships that you depend on for your team to succeed.

If your team is having trouble with accountability or has been holding on too tightly to past grudges to move beyond them and work together successfully, perhaps I can help...



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Sean Glaze is an entertaining speaker, author, and team building facilitator who helps people have more fun laughing together so they can have more success working together.

As the founder of [Great Results Teambuilding](#), Sean has been inspiring rapid teamwork and developing team leaders for over 20 years.

He delivers interactive events and conference keynotes for clients interested in increasing their competitive advantage by building more engaged and connected teams.

