

Building Higher Trust 12 Admit Mistakes

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



When you admit an honest mistake, it usually increases rather than reduces trust. This law does not hold for all types of mistakes. For example, if you have repeated the same mistake several times, admitting you did it again will not enhance the trust others have in you.

Likewise, if you made a mistake that shows you were careless or just stupid, you should not expect that admitting it to others will

enhance trust.

Most of the mistakes we make in life are situations where we were caught off guard or there was a special circumstance blocking our view. In those instances, freely admitting the blunder will normally enhance trust rather than reduce it.

Of course, if you are prone to making a lot of mistakes, you will be viewed as careless or clueless, and that will diminish trust.

I made a significant blunder early in my career. After I realized what had happened, I immediately went to my boss, hat in hand, and told him what had happened. I prefaced the admission by stating “You would never know this happened unless I told you.” My boss agreed with me that what I had done was not the smartest thing I ever did. Then he said something remarkable. He said, “The smartest thing you ever did is tell me about it.”

From that moment on, my career took care of itself. My boss knew he could count on me to be honest, even if I had done something embarrassing.

When you willingly put yourself in a vulnerable position, it makes a positive statement about your character and integrity.

Intentionally hiding mistakes is a poor strategy. Sure, you might get away with it in certain circumstances, but information often leaks out in ways we cannot anticipate. Once you have been detected trying to duck the accountability for a mistake you caused, the damage is major, and it lasts a long time.

Bonus video

Here is a brief [video about the concept of admitting mistakes.](#)

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals (2003), 2. Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online (2006), 3. Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind (2009), and 4. Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change (2014). In addition, he has authored over 1000 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations