

Effective Executive Apologies

Today it's not unusual to see company executives offering public apologies in order to assuage public concern about health, environmental, safety or other problems associated with their products or services.

After a pipeline company experienced a rather significant oil spill, its top execs found themselves speaking to reporters and holding town hall meetings – to explain the event and apologize for it. In the aftermath of that spill, the company decided its leaders needed some practice in delivering an effective, public apology. [The Ammerman Experience](#) created a two-hour, customized session, which it conducted for several small groups of executives.

The session began by having participants critique several recent CEO apologies that garnered widespread attention. That was followed by a brief tutorial on the characteristics of sincere apologies. Then, each participant took part in several simulated media press briefings – designed to test the executive's ability not only to say the right words, but also to deliver them in an empathetic, reassuring manner.

Effective communication involves more than merely transferring information from speaker to listener. If you want your message to be heard and understood, first you must “connect” with the listener. This session showed participants how to “connect.”