



By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST (www.AdviceChief.com)

On the surface it could be hard to believe that the words “I’m sorry” can ever be the wrong thing to say. But in business, that is often the case.

I think we can all agree that, in most situations warranting it, people don’t say “I’m sorry” enough, often out of ignorance or lack of concern. In other instances, someone who fears criticism or worries what others might think of them might use the words as a way to get out of being reprimanded. Even some psychologists have indicated that saying “I’m sorry” all the time can have a negative effect on one’s self image because the person can internalize it to

Substitute “I’m sorry” with “thank you”

mean that they are a sorry person.

Jeffrey Gitomer, the king of positive thinking, states in his book *The Little Gold Book of Yes!* that if you substitute “thank you” or “I understand” for “I’m sorry,” you change the content of the conversation from one of subservience to self-empowerment. By saying, “Thank you for bringing this problem to my attention” instead of apologizing for the problem, you are showing that you welcome criticism and want to move forward in a positive direction. Accepting criticism without apologizing also keeps your attitude upbeat because you aren’t concentrating on what you didn’t do right and then wallowing in self pity.

This is not to say that you should never say, “I’m sorry.” There are clear instances when “I’m sorry” is absolutely the only thing you should say--but such times might be less common than you can imagine. A personal mistake that is insensitive or insulting to another requires an “I’m sorry.” A business mistake, on the other hand, is normally not as personally offensive to another and a “thank you” is totally appropriate.

So take your criticism, be thankful, move forward, and learn the lessons that will enable you to do much better the next time around.

~ The End ~