



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE

"To make no mistakes is not in the power of man, but from their errors and mistakes the wise and good learn wisdom for the future." -- Plutarch

Everyone makes mistakes. If you think about it, you've probably made your share of them over the years - a misdirected package, a misrouted file, a forgotten deadline. Typical reactions? Embarrassment, anger, and frustration.

There is great virtue in making mistakes, learning from them, and improving along the way. Why don't people realize that mistakes are really great opportunities? When you fix a problem, you not only get a chance to right a wrong, but you can build a strong working relationship, too.

You can recover from blunders and be a winner. Here's how:

- **Make things right.** Your first responsibility is to correct the mistake. The faster you address the problem, the more credible you'll appear to others.
- **Apologize.** When you make a mistake, you'll usually gain stature by apologizing in a direct way. You won't appear incompetent, only human. And you send the message that you're big enough to admit it.
- **Let the matter rest.** There is no need to beat a dead horse by bringing up the matter over and over again. One apology suffices.
- **Learn more about operations.** If you have to track down a goof, use the occasion to learn more about the intricacies of your department or campus operations. This knowledge will come in handy over time. And it can prevent mistakes down the line.
- **Ask if you can do something else.** After resolving your mistake, ask if you can help in any other way. Perhaps an "I'm sorry" doesn't seem sufficient. Offering something extra can build good will.
- **Let others know you've learned something.** Assure those affected by your error that it won't happen again. If you have learned something from the experience that would be helpful for others in your office to know (such as application deadlines, etc), share the information!
- **Keep records.** Keep a record of errors made, the causes, and their solutions. Review the list of mistakes to prevent their recurrence.