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How to Repair a Tarnished Brand

Posted on [March 22, 2014](#) by [Leslie Truex](#)

It takes years to build a reputable brand; one that people trust and talk about positively. Unfortunately, a brand image can be ruined in an instant. Just ask Paula Deen or Mike Jeffries, CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch, whose careless remarks sparked outrage and damaged their otherwise positive images. It's Murphy's Law that says things will go wrong, even for businesses striving to do their best. While a misstep can hurt a brand, it doesn't necessarily mean it's ruined forever. It is possible to repair a tarnished brand.



Own the mistake

Denial and defensiveness never work, as Lance Armstrong discovered after years of denying use of banned drugs to improve performance and attacking those who pointed the finger at him. In the end, he was exposed and ultimately came off looking like a jerk. Businesses need to assume that the truth will come out, and understand that denial, blame and defensiveness will only make things worse. While it's difficult to admit making mistakes, it's the right thing to do, and is the first step to restoring credibility and trust.

Be sorry

Public acts of contrition are par for the course when brands seek to repair their reputations, but consumers aren't fooled by spin and obligatory apologies. It's one thing for a business to say it's sorry, it's another to mean it. It's important that those who

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suffered, as well as the public, believe the apology. Some people felt Tiger Woods' apology after his cheating scandal wasn't genuine; however, many felt that Reece Witherspoon's expressions of remorse and regret after her disorderly conduct arrest was. It's much easier to convince people you're sorry if you accept responsibility and are genuine in your apology.

Fix or try to make right what you can

While it's difficult to fix the vocal faux pas of Deen and Jefferies or the multiple affairs by Woods, many missteps can be remedied or at least made less bad through a fix. When a Virgin Blue flight attendant tried to join in a game of peek-a-boo with a 17-month old baby and his father by putting the baby in the overhead compartment, the airlines responded by firing the attendant and giving the family two free flights. Similar to an apology, offering to a right-a-wrong should be genuine and not just an attempt to stave off negative publicity. This is where stellar customer service can begin to repair the trust that was broken.

Rome wasn't re-built in a day, neither will your brand

Just like building a brand takes time, so will re-building it. In fact, it may take longer because consumers don't forget. And if they do, they're still researching you on the Internet and will learn about your mistakes. Because branding involves evoking positive emotions with consumers, your focus should be on creating positive experiences and feelings with your market. While words like "authentic" and "genuine" get thrown around a lot, they are important traits to strive towards as savvy consumers know the difference between businesses that truly care and those that are simply trying to manipulate for a buck.



About [Leslie Truex](#)

Leslie Truex is a career design expert who has been helping people find or create work that fits their lifestyle goals since 1998 through her website [Work-At-Home Success](#). She is the author of "The Work-At-Home Success Bible" and "Jobs Online: How To Find a Get Hired to a Work-At-Home Job". She's appeared on CNN.com, Fox Business, Redbook and a host of other media outlets discussing telecommuting, home business and other flexible career option. She speaks regularly on career-related topics, including telecommuting, home business, marketing, personal development and authorship. Learn more about her at [LeslieTruex.com](#).

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