

The Power of an Apology

by [leonel](#)

In my experience, many conflicts are based on someone being offended – usually inadvertently by the other party. Diving into the facts of the conflict can enlighten a mediator as to possible age, gender, race, religion, sexual preference, national origin, or other misunderstandings. We can sum up all of these factors as a person’s individual “culture” and as humans we tend to forget, overlook, or just don’t understand another person’s “cultural” customs and norms. Knowing this helps us to understand how easily we can inadvertently offend someone – even if we think we know our business associates, employees, etc. really well.

As mediators, we are aware of the power of actively listening to the parties tell their side of the conflict – since it makes them feel “heard.” However, if the mediator can reach the genesis of the conflict and point out possible cultural differences, an “aha” moment may occur with one or more of the parties – and an apology may suddenly appear. Bringing that apology to the offended party (either via the mediator or by having the parties in the same room) can be quite powerful and immensely useful in helping the parties resolving their conflict.