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Songwriter Confessions #3

By Bill Dollar

How do you fit a \$500,000 recording studio into a small box? Easy. You buy a decent PC and

\$1000 worth of software. You can blame this as the start of the Golden Age of the songwriter, because before this evolutionary step-up, people like me used to write maybe four songs a year, badly recorded on the first Sony cassette recorders. I'd save my pennies, and once a year, I'd negotiate a deal with a local studio for a special Saturday morning demo rate. I'd pay four reasonable musicians a straight cash fee and try to get three songs done in a three hour session. It didn't help that I wrote the skankiest chord charts in the world. So I had to get across to the musos how the songs went, while the clock ticked away, and like the man said, it was like dancing about architecture.

Nowadays the best player on my songs in my own studio is a guy I've never actually met. He plays rhythm guitar, keeps perfect time, learns the song immediately, and doesn't bring his girlfriend to the session. He lives in a binary cloud of 1s and 0s, and is the best piece of software I ever bought. Because I live on a small farm, good guitarists are hard to come by, and this is a bad and a good thing. Good because it forces me into a minimal style of song construction. My software gives me 99+ tracks if I want them, but lacking the handy players, I make do with what I have, and it turns out that less is often more...and sounds better.

Looking back through the tequila haze, I always had a special liking for Leo Sayer's records. They were minimal, but always had exactly enough to deliver the song and nothing more to get in the way. They were about the song, not the guitar solo. And in painting terms, they were a portrait of four friends rather than the main grandstand at Manchester United.

While we're taking about musicians, I was working in a studio in south London back in the day, and few miles away, Rod Stewart was recording his next chart-topping album at Olympic studios. Parked in the street outside the front door was Rod's ride home - a shocking pink Lamborghini. Inside, the session was running overtime and into the evening. The assembled musos - (19 with string section) were getting restless and checking their watches. The producer took Rod aside and said: Why don't we send out for tippie for the lads to keep them happy?.. Great idea said Rod, putting his hand in his pocket: Send someone out for a bottle of Cinzano and 20 glasses...

And that's how fortunes are made....and a—one...two...three...

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Bill Dollar is a survivor of the record company wars. He currently lives on a small farm somewhere in the southern hemisphere, amongst cats, dogs and cobras. He writes songs he likes, because he's not hearing anything worthwhile on the radio. Hear what Bill calls music:

<http://www.billdollarmusic.com>

A Winning Motto: No APOLOGIES, No EXCUSES, No CONFESSIONS

By Debbie Bailey

A Winning Motto: No APOLOGIES, No EXCUSES, No CONFESSIONS by Debbie Bailey

Presenters say the darndest things...

- "I'm sorry but I have a cold today so my voice may sound a little funny."
- "I just found out about this presentation yesterday, so I didn't have as much time to prepare as I would have liked."
- "I wanted to get copies of our reports, but couldn't..."
- "I meant to bring..."
- "Oh, I should have told you about it earlier..."

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

I call these APOLOGIES, EXCUSES, and CONFESSIONS. It is always surprising how often and how easily presenters use these kinds of NEGATIVE phrases in their presentations.

Up until now, that is.

If you want to WOW your audience, you have to adopt and live by the motto:
NO APOLOGIES, NO EXCUSES, NO CONFESSIONS.

I can tell you from experience, it isn't easy to do—but it will serve you well in your business career.

Here's why you should avoid these kinds of negative comments. When you APOLOGIZE, MAKE AN EXCUSE, or CONFESS at any time during your presentation, you are in essence saying to the audience, "Don't expect a lot from me today because I'll probably disappoint you." It never fails to amaze me how many presenters do this before, and often many times throughout, their presentations.

DOING YOUR BEST MEANS NEVER HAVING TO SAY "I'M SORRY"

The kinds of APOLOGIES I often hear in presentations go something like this: "I apologize if you can't hear me too well, but I have a cold today." OR "I'm sorry I didn't bring in a sample, but I couldn't arrange it on such short notice." OR EVEN "I'm sorry, I forgot to tell you that earlier in my presentation."

The truth is, if you have a cold or don't feel well, sooner or later the audience will figure it out and because you didn't use it as an EXCUSE for why you might not perform well, they will respect you for your effort. I have given some of my best presentations when I wasn't feeling 100%. I attribute it to the fact that I overcompensated by really being "on." It is possible to perform well despite feeling poorly. And, at minimum, you owe it to your audience to try!

Instead of the statement "I'm sorry I didn't bring in a sample, but I couldn't arrange it on such short notice," try framing it in the positive, "I am working on getting you a sample and I can deliver it next week." Isn't it just as easy to PROMISE, rather than APOLOGIZE?

As for the statement, "I'm sorry, I forgot to tell you that earlier," my question is, why would you APOLOGIZE to the audience for forgetting something they had no idea you'd forgotten? If they think you've done it exactly as you were "supposed" to, what possible benefit do you receive from clueing them into your error? I advise you never to APOLOGIZE for making a mistake that the audience didn't notice first.

In the presentation context, APOLOGIES are almost always unnecessary. NEVER APOLOGIZE for anything, except perhaps if you step on an audience member's foot or if you have so much energy that your booming voice blasts in their ear. Even then, your APOLOGY should be framed positively... "I am sorry. I am so excited to be here, I nearly broke the microphone!"

"PARDON ME," AND OTHER LAME EXCUSES YOU HATE TO HEAR

EXCUSES are things we say to eliminate the responsibility we have for our success (or lack there of it). Like APOLOGIES, EXCUSES tell your audience not to expect a lot from your presentation because you have very good reasons (i.e. the EXCUSE) for not being able to deliver.

"I just found out about this presentation yesterday so I didn't have much time to prepare," is a common and frankly, over used, EXCUSE. Other than telling the audience NOT to expect a lot from you because you aren't prepared to deliver, what positive purpose does this EXCUSE serve?

Before you make another EXCUSE, remember what it feels like to be on the receiving end of someone else's excuses. If that doesn't stop you, I don't know what will!

"FORGIVE ME FOR I HAVE SINNED" AND OTHER CONFESSIONS TO AVOID

The CONFESSION is what happens when the presenter tells the audience something they have no business knowing. My favorite confession goes something like this...

Songwriter Confessions #3

"I'm really nervous today."

The CONFESSIOIN "I'm really nervous today" lets the audience know right off the bat that you will probably be a disappointment because you aren't a very good presenter. It's our strange attempt to set the bar really low.

So why do we make the CONFESSIOIN? CONFESSING your nervousness to your audience lets you off the hook for performing well! While the audience may chuckle politely at your CONFESSIOIN, many audience members stop listening carefully because they know that you are probably too "nervous" to meet their needs.

NEVER CONFESS to the audience your nervousness and chances are, they will not know. Remember that while anxiety feels bad, the truth is, it rarely shows. In fact, while you are worrying about your anxiety, the audience is concentrating on your message and whether or not you are meeting their needs.

I challenge you to live by the vow, NO APOLOGIES, NO EXCUSSES, NO CONFESSIOINS. Your audience will thank you!

For much more about this and other Presentation Secrets, check out the book "15 Presentation Secrets: How to WOW Even the Toughest Audience," by Debbie Bailey available at trainer2go.com/ebooks.html.

Debbie Bailey is author of the book "15 Presentation Secrets – How to WOW Even the Toughest Audience." She is well known for her life changing presentation skills classes. In addition to training at some of the most successful companies in Corporate America, Debbie has also taught Presentation Skills for United States Marines, San Diego State University, and UCLA Extension.



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