

Who Counts?

Prepared by Shannon Warren for the November 2015 edition of The Journal Record.

Stuff happens. Dilemmas develop at work. Kids and co-workers get sick. Technology can fail. All of these things can compromise our integrity and reputation.

How so? When the pressure is on and frustration is high, we may be tempted to put our own priorities at the top of the list and break promises without regard for others' well-being. In our minds, we minimize their needs as our own pressing deadlines loom large.

It is true that sometimes situations arise that make it impossible to fulfil our obligations, but these should be rare occasions. When we blow it, a caring approach is important for several reasons. First, it speaks volumes about how much we value our relationships. To behave otherwise can compromise team members' confidence in our dependability and cause them to be unwilling to work with us. More importantly, it reflects our individual character and reputation.

Poet Maya Angelou once said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but *people will never forget how you made them feel.*" So true. We may not recollect the exact circumstances of the broken promise, but we will surely remember how we reacted when the problem was dumped in our lap. Nobody is eager to work with someone who left us hanging, especially if they were insensitive about any problems, inconveniences or irritations they caused.

Wisdom dictates that we use discernment before making an agreement. When inviting someone to depend on us, weigh all the factors that could affect the accuracy of the promised time frame. While one doesn't have to disclose a pharmaceutical-like warning label on every potential problem, it is crucial to provide a heads-up about anticipated challenges.

Before renegeing, call those affected and try to work something out. Perhaps a deadline can be adjusted. Don't send an impersonal email indicating *this-is-your-problem-not-mine* approach. They'll remember what you did to them. On the other hand, most people feel an affinity for those who sincerely apologize and are willing to make amends for a broken promise.

A consideration for others is more than valuing what they can do for us. Ultimately, we must strive to make our words count by showing that others truly count, too.