

Who's Sorry Now? Everyone!

Online apologies are all the rage. Plus: Check out our cheat sheet of celebrity mea culpas.

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(Clockwise from lower left) Jesse James: Lester Cohen/WireImage; Don Imus: Susan Watts/NY Daily News Archive/Getty Images; Bob McDonnell: Jacquelyn Martin/AP Images; Tiger Woods: Lori Moffett/UPI /Landov; David Letterman: WENN; Mark Sanford: Davis Turner/Getty Images; Roseanne Barr: Gregg DeGuire/WireImage

Tiger Woods did it to his fans. Governor Bob McDonnell of Virginia did it to his constituents. And adults 50-plus are doing it to everybody. "It" is apologizing—a trend fueled by the power of social media to track down those we've wronged.

Now people are posting apologies on websites such as [imsorry.com](#) and [perfectapology.com](#). And overall traffic to confession sites has increased 66 percent—with visits among those 55-plus up 172 percent—since February 2007. Ben Gubar, a 50-year-old chiropractor from Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey, used the Web to say "I'm sorry" to a woman he had humiliated 22 years earlier, while attending grad school: "It was a trivial dispute about who sat where in my car, but over the years I've felt so bad about screaming at her that I tracked her down." After searching [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#), he found her on the social site [43things.com](#). One surprise: "When I apologized, she typed back, 'I don't even remember that!'"

But Gubar still felt good—and he's not alone. The open forum at [thepublicapology.com](#) yields some classics of contrition. "I apologize for calling you 'domineering' all these years," writes one user to her mom. "I never knew what domineering really was till I met my mother-in-law!"

(Additional reporting by Awis Mranani and Greg Pelkofski)

The Cheat Sheet: Why are they sorry?

— By Leslie Quander Wooldridge

Jesse James

What happened: After he accompanied wife Sandra Bullock on red-carpet forays and was name-checked in the actress's tearful Oscar acceptance speech, another woman claimed to have bedded James. Caught, the tattooed biker 'fessed up in a statement to *People*.

Choice quote: "This has caused my wife and kids pain and embarrassment beyond comprehension and I am extremely saddened to have brought this on them. I am truly very sorry for the grief I have caused them."

Don Imus

What happened: This radio shock jock made racially charged and derogatory comments about black players on the Rutgers women's basketball team. A media frenzy—complete with multiple mea culpas—ensued, leaving Imus fired in 2007.

Choice quotes: “So I apologize. ...Sometimes we go too far, and sometimes we go way too far. In this case, we went way too far.”

Bob McDonnell

What happened: After declaring April Confederate History Month in the southern commonwealth—and excluding any mention of slavery in his original seven-paragraph proclamation—the Virginia governor backtracked in the face of nationwide criticism.

Choice quote: “The failure to include any reference to slavery was a mistake, and for that I apologize to any fellow Virginian who has been offended or disappointed.”

Tiger Woods

What happened: The fresh-faced golf star became even more famous after the world learned of his affairs with multiple women. Forced to abandon his penchant for privacy, he apologized via a televised news conference. His scripted statement spanned 13 minutes and 37 seconds.

Choice quote: “I have made you question who I am and how I could have done the things I did. I am embarrassed that I have put you in this position. For all that I have done, I am so sorry.”

David Letterman

What happened: On the heels of an extortion threat, the then-newlywed *Late Show* host confessed to multiple affairs with female staffers. Vowing to repair his marriage, he put jokes aside for his televised apology.

Choice quotes: “I’m terribly sorry that I put the staff in that position. Inadvertently, I just wasn’t thinking ahead.”

Mark Sanford

What happened: After disappearing from office for a supposed hiking trip on the Appalachian Trail, the South Carolina governor was found to be cavorting with a mistress in Argentina. Speaking out at a press conference, Sanford’s 18-minute rambling explanation—full of way too much information—became a classic confession.

Choice quote: “I’ve been unfaithful to my wife. I have developed a relationship with a...what started as a dear, dear friend from Argentina. ...And all I can say is that I apologize.”

Roseanne

What happened: No stranger to controversy, this brash comic put her foot in her mouth again when she claimed that Marie Osmond’s son Michael Blosil had committed suicide because he was gay. In an exclamation point-filled statement, she insisted that Osmond’s Mormon faith had contributed to her son’s death. She later made nice via a layered blog post.

Choice quote: “I never intended for my comments to be picked up and broadcast on sleazy gossip TV shows, or on other blogs. ...I am sorry to have hurt Marie Osmond, who is the most open-minded person in her whole family.”