

Case 3: What should a group do after a public mistake?

The crew's recap caption blamed younger neighbors for a late start, but the event log shows the projector failed.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the caption and the time the projector failed. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who checks the log's times before the correction goes up. **New skill:** Correct a public mistake.



Gia and Jordy sit at a table with a laptop and a printed page.

What happened

It is Sunday at the edit desk. Caio, 24, edited a short recap of Friday's screening. The crew posted it on Saturday morning. Gia's caption, "Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized," sounded believable, because a few people did arrive late.

Then Jordy checks the setup log. The projector failed at 5:40 p.m. The replacement was not running until 6:20, twenty minutes after everyone was seated. The log also says Anika and Dec helped carry chairs before the doors opened.

Anika sends the group a voice note asking why she and Dec are the problem in the post. Gia wants to take responsibility. Her first draft of a correction is mostly about how bad she feels, and the recap caption is still up.

Your question: What should the correction say, and what will the crew do differently next time?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Claim A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.

En español: afirmación

In this case: The caption claims the late start happened because “the younger crowd” was not organized. Jordy’s setup log checks that claim.

Correction A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

En español: corrección

In this case: Gia edits the original caption, not just her story, so people who saw it learn what was wrong.

Accountability Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it.

En español: rendición de cuentas

In this case: The crew names who fixes the caption, who contacts Anika and Dec, and who checks the next recap against the log.

Who is involved



Gia

Wrote the recap caption

“I wrote ‘once the younger crowd finally got organized.’ A few people did come in late, so it felt true. I never checked why we started late.”



Jordy

Kept the setup log on Friday

“My log says Anika and Dec were carrying chairs before doors opened. The caption turned them into the reason we started late.”

Before you look at the evidence, what should Gia's correction say first?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Corrections, repair and responsibility

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Correction:** A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.
- **Accountability:** Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it.

The story: A believable caption

After the crew's first neighborhood screening, the one saved from a cropped clip in Case 1, the crew posted a recap on Saturday at 11:08 a.m. Caio, 24, edited the video, and Gia, 21, wrote the caption: "Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized." The caption was plausible for an ordinary reason. Some people did arrive late, and the event did start late.

Jordy's setup log from Friday tells a different story. A projector failure was reported at 5:40 p.m. Attendees were seated by 6:00. The replacement was connected at 6:20. The log also records that Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, helped carry chairs before the doors opened. The caption had turned two volunteers into the cause of a delay they had no part in.

Anika responds with a voice note: "We were helping you set up. Why are we the problem in this post?" Gia's unpublished first draft reads, "Sorry if this came across wrong. We love our younger neighbors and would never want anyone to feel excluded." Its conditional "if" shifts responsibility to the reader. It also omits the facts, which leaves the false explanation standing.

 **Stop and think.** Gia's draft uses the word "if." How does a conditional apology shift responsibility?

Anatomy of a repair

The caption contains a causal **claim**, a statement that something is true that can be checked with evidence. Applying the Case 1 skill, finding the original source, the crew checks the claim against the log, and the log refutes it.

Anatomy of a repair, continued

A **correction** is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. Three design choices determine whether it works. The first is placement. Caio insists on editing the original post rather than publishing a new one, so the correction reaches the same audience. The second is content. The correction names the specific error and states the documented cause. The third is order. The facts come before the author's feelings, which may not belong in the correction at all.

Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it. The crew converts that principle into assigned tasks: Gia corrects the post, Caio keeps a visible correction note with the edit and Jordy adds a pre-publication source check. The case also marks the boundary of accountability. The people harmed are not recruited into the repair. Anika is not asked to approve the correction publicly or to reassure Gia. She is offered a private channel and left to decide how she feels. Finally, Jordy defines success by audience understanding rather than reach. If people who saw the original post still attribute the delay to "the younger crowd," the correction has not worked.

 **Stop and think.** Why should the people harmed by a mistake be kept out of the work of repairing it?

Evidence from research and practice

Research on apologies supports the crew's priorities. Lewicki and colleagues identified six elements of an effective apology and found that acknowledging responsibility and offering repair carried the most weight (Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, April 6, 2016). Research on misinformation reaches a compatible conclusion. Walter and Murphy's meta-analysis of 65 studies found that corrections are more effective when they give a clear explanation rather than a bare denial (Communication Monographs, May 15, 2018).

Professional codes translate these findings into obligations. PRSA members commit to "act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible" (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). The RTDNA code requires "giving corrections as much prominence as the error itself had" (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). The National Communication Association's credo states, "We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same from others" (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024).

Corporate cases show the gap between regret and repair. Dove expressed regret after an ad played into a racial stereotype (NPR, October 8, 2017). H&M hired a diversity leader after outrage over its "monkey hoodie" ad (NBC News, January 17, 2018). Whether such steps count as repair is a fair question to put to any organization, including your own.

The film connection shows the same error at a larger scale. In *Zootopia* (2016), Judy tells a press conference that a set of incidents has a biological explanation tied to one group.

Evidence from research and practice, continued

Nick's reaction shows a personal cost that her official answer overlooks. In our reading, good intentions do not erase the effect of an unsupported claim about a group, and the animal groups in the film are not a scientific model of human race. Your job in this case is to check the log's times before the correction goes up.

 **Stop and think.** Choose one of the brand apologies. Using the six-element research, what would count as repair rather than regret?

Sources

Real source | Negotiation and Conflict Management Research (Lewicki et al.) | April 6, 2016
An Exploration of the Structure of Effective Apologies

Real source | Communication Monographs (Walter & Murphy) | May 15, 2018
How to unring the bell: A meta-analytic approach to correction of misinformation

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | October 2000
PRSA Code of Ethics

Real source | Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) | 2015
RTDNA Code of Ethics

Real source | National Communication Association (NCA) | 2024
Credo for Ethical Communication

Real source | NPR | October 8, 2017
Dove Expresses 'Regret' For Racially Insensitive Ad

Real source | NBC News | January 17, 2018
H&M hires diversity leader after outrage over 'monkey hoodie' ad

Real source | Critical Media Project | No date listed
Zootopia: the press conference

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Recap caption, posted Saturday 11:08 a.m.

The caption

Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized.

Look closely: Which group does this caption ask readers to blame, and on what evidence?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Setup log, Friday evening

Jordy's event log

5:40 p.m. Projector failure reported. 6:00 p.m. Attendees seated. 6:20 p.m. Replacement projector connected. Note: Anika and Dec helped carry chairs before doors opened.

Look closely: What happened at 5:40 that the caption never mentions?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Voice note to the crew

Anika’s message

“We were helping you set up. Why are we the problem in this post?”

Look closely: What fact does Anika add, and what is she asking the crew?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Draft correction, Saturday 2:15 p.m., not posted

Gia’s first correction

Sorry if this came across wrong. We love our younger neighbors and would never want anyone to feel excluded.

Look closely: What fact does this correct? Who does the word “if” put the problem on?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: corrections

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Gia's caption did two jobs at once. It explained the late start, and it blamed a group of people for it. A **claim** is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence. Jordy's setup log checks the caption's claim and shows a projector failure instead.

A **correction** is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. It should appear where people saw the mistake, so the crew should edit the recap caption itself. A 2016 study of apologies found that taking responsibility and offering to repair the harm mattered most. Gia's first draft talks about loving younger neighbors, and it does neither.

Accountability is owning a mistake and doing what you said you would do to fix it. That means naming who corrects the caption, who contacts the people it blamed and who checks the next recap. Anika does not have to comfort Gia or approve the correction in public. The crew can offer her a private way to respond.

Professional standards

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

PRSA Code of Ethics: Free Flow of Information

"Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible."

In plain words: Public relations professionals who belong to PRSA agree to fix their own mistakes quickly.

Question: The recap caption went up Saturday at 11:08 a.m. What should the crew change first, and where?

Your answer

The first change is ____, made in ____, because ____.

How a real newsroom corrects mistakes: name the error, fix it on the story and keep a public list.



A real brand apology after an ad played into a racial stereotype; compare the words with what changed afterward.

[illegible]

Sort the evidence

On your own Compare the four accounts. Mark where they agree, where they differ and which one was written at the time. About 6 minutes.

Place the four accounts side by side. Where do they agree, where do they split, and which one was written down at the time?

Account 1
Caption: the night went well once the younger crowd got organized.

Account 2
Event log: projector failed at 5:40; replacement connected at 6:20; Anika and Dec carried chairs.

Account 3
Anika: “We were helping you set up.”

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Which account was recorded at the time rather than remembered afterward?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what goes first in the correction and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 6 minutes.

What should go first in the correction?

☐ **A** An explanation of how bad Gia feels about the caption.

☐ **B** The wrong claim, and what the event log shows.

☐ **C** Delete the post and stay quiet.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

We want to apologize for our last post. We didn't mean to offend anyone and we love having younger people at our events. It was a really stressful night and **1** things were hectic so we said something we shouldn't have. Honestly we were all tired and trying to get everything set up on time, and it's been a lot. We are sorry if anyone was hurt. **2** We promise it won't happen again and we hope everyone keeps coming! Thank you all for your support and understanding, it means a lot to us.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a corrections policy for a student club's social accounts, then use it to write the correction for the crew's recap caption.

Use: Case documents: the recap caption, Jordy's setup log, Anika's message and Gia's unposted first draft. Real sources: the PRSA Code of Ethics summary, the RTDNA rule on prominent corrections and the NPR Public Editor's column "That was wrong" (October 21, 2022).

You'll make: Corrections policy, 250—350 words, plus a posted correction of 70—100 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A, B, C and D. List what the crew's process missed.
- 2 Decide who writes corrections, where they appear and how quickly.
- 3 Choose whether the club edits the original, posts a new one or does both.
- 4 Write a repair step with an owner and a check.
- 5 Draft the policy, 250 to 350 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Write the correction for the recap caption, 70 to 100 words.
- 7 Cite the PRSA or RTDNA code and say whom it applies to.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Who writes corrections

Where corrections appear, and how fast

Edit, new post or both, and why

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your draft, continued

Your correction, 70 to 100 words

Correction:

Notes

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your policy say who writes corrections, where they appear and how quickly?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it include a repair step with an owner and a check?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your correction name the error and state what the log shows?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you cite a code accurately and repeat no stereotype?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No evidence about the delay.	☐ Mentions “technical issues” vaguely.	☐ Cites the projector failure from the log.	☐ Cites specific times and corrects who actually helped.
Reasoning	☐ Apologizes for feelings only.	☐ Admits error but not what it was.	☐ Names the inaccurate claim and replaces it.	☐ Explains why the claim harmed a group and how the repair prevents a repeat.
Audience & purpose	☐ Does not consider who saw the post.	☐ Speaks to readers in general.	☐ Reaches the people who were blamed.	☐ Reaches the original audience and the blamed group through appropriate channels.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens tone only.	☐ Adds facts and a repair.	☐ Adds facts, an owner, a check and removes shifting of blame.

I changed ___ because ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

- 1 The caption felt true to Gia because a few people came in late. Why was that not enough evidence?

- 2 What evidence would show that the repair happened?

- 3 After the correction goes up, what is still up to Anika and Dec to decide?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 3: What should a group do after a public mistake?

In this case, a group of friends posts a caption that wrongly blames younger neighbors for a late start. Your student compared the caption with an event log and wrote a correction and a plan to repair the harm.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What makes an apology feel complete?
- 2 Where should a correction appear so the people who saw a mistake will see it?
- 3 How can a group check a claim before it posts about an event?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.