



Op-ed Spotlight: Toyota CEO Begg Forgiveness

By *BENJAMIN F. CARLSON* on February 09, 2010 9:04am

Criticized at first for [giving a late apology](#), CEO Akio Toyoda is making up for lost time. As the carmaker's bad-news parade crests in a recall of 437,000 Priuses and hybrids, Toyoda is trying to smooth things over with consumers with an [op-ed in the Washington Post](#). He does manage to work in some corporate patting-on-the-back, as [Douglas A. McIntyre](#) notes, but the tone is otherwise contrite and constructive.

Meanwhile, the government's role investigating Toyota's crisis has won the company some defenders, with one Cato Institute commentator, [Dan Ikenson](#), insisting the government's G.M. stake clouds its judgment.

On Taking Responsibility

The past few weeks, however, have made clear that Toyota has [not lived up to](#) the high standards we set for ourselves. More important, we have not lived up to the high standards you have come to expect from us. I am deeply disappointed by that and apologize. As the president of Toyota, I take personal responsibility.

On the Magnitude of the Problems

While problems with our cars have been rare over the years, the issues that Toyota is addressing today are by far the most serious we have ever faced.

On Ensuring This Doesn't Happen Again

We will establish an Automotive Center of Quality Excellence in the United States... We will ask a blue-ribbon safety advisory group composed of respected outside experts in quality management to independently review our operations ... The findings of these experts will be made available to the public, as will Toyota's responses to these findings. ... We fully understand that we need to more aggressively investigate complaints we hear directly from consumers and move more quickly to address any safety issues we identify

On the Slow Response to Complaints

With respect to sticking accelerator pedals, we failed to connect the dots between problems in Europe and problems in the United States because the European situation related primarily to right-hand-drive vehicles.

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