

Delivering Bad News, Apologies, Service Recovery and Error Management

Types of bad news

- Negative performance appraisals: uncomfortable situation. Can be abusive superior
- Disciplinary actions
- Layoffs - company restructuring so they have to layoff
- Pay cuts
- Denying requests e.g. promotions
- Introduction of organizational policies that are perceived negatively by employees - blocking websites, change in work times, security added, smoking ban, health and safety issues - people not following them

Why it's hard to deliver bad news

- Anticipated unpleasantness - easier when you're talking. Constantly thinking about is unpleasant (role play in your head)
- Emotions: fear, guilt, shame, anger - more likely to feel them both people will feel them
- Defensive behavior
- High levels of stress - if you don't think you have the skill to pass the message on
- Lack of communication skills
- Demanding and stressful work conditions (leads to win-lose framing of issues) - if there is a lack of time and it has to be done, no way to give emotional skills or positive spin
- Clip - topics which aren't normally talked about, plan too much, not enough, anticipate what will happen so were not in the moment. Have to remove yourself from the context to get a perspective of the patient. People tend to create explanation **Mistakes when communicated in difficult situations**
- Framing the situation or decision in a way that is too *narrow* (not considering alternatives) and **binary** (win-lose).
 - *The frame is a decision maker's image of a situation—the way he or she pictures the circumstances and elements surrounding the decision.*

- Negative emotions surrounding negative news - this narrows out focus don't see as many options.
- Binary - black and white, your wrong I'm right. Point of view. Need to avoid
- More likely to see the others point of view if not binary
- Refusing to change the frame during interaction. - don't want to change mind if they are correct
- Not listening and/or selective perception - can also happen when set agenda, perceptions made up - will stick to script
- Not paying attention to non-verbal cues - focused on yourself and delivery. Don't consider reaction of the other person
- Recognize the fact that you're not always correct before going in. acknowledge your limitations. Have cool off period and come back

refocused **Why we commit errors in**

- Fundamental attribution error (leads to overly simplistic interpretations)
- Subconscious mindsets that lead to binary framing
- False consensus effect (assuming that others see a situation as we see it)
- Stress

Erasing it

- The manager recognizes a situation/problem, crafts a solution, and then asks the employee a set of carefully crafted questions to help him/her reach the same conclusions.
 - Guide the other the person to your solution
- Problem:
 - The manager might not get the answers he/she seeks. - what happens if they never agree?
 - The manager is only prepared for the 'correct' answers.
 - Not considering the other person perspective
- Clip
 - Don't sugar coat it
 - Look at all perspectives before

- Ensure your direct and check that the other person understands what you are saying.

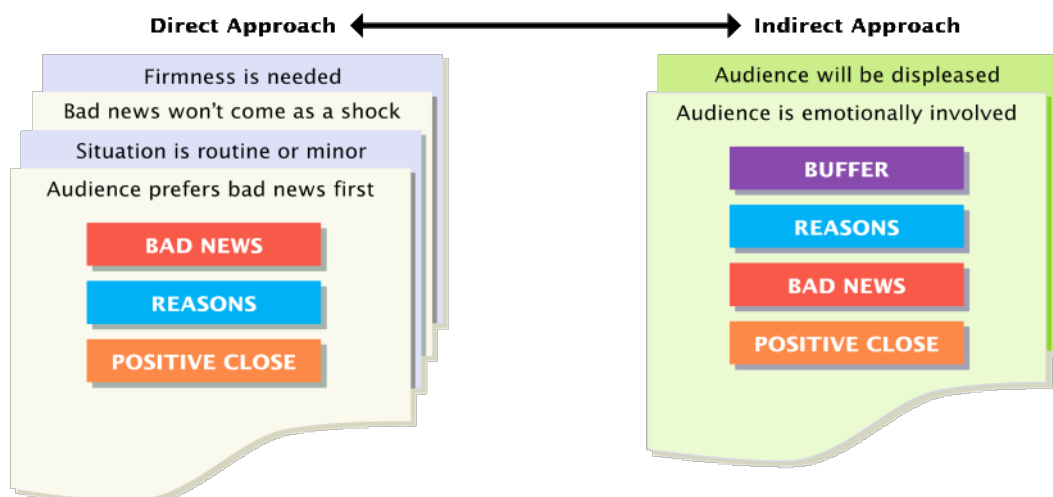
Crafting negative messages

- Consider your purpose thoroughly - **start with the end** in mind what need to happen/be fixed.
- Identify and gather information your audience requires in order to understand and accept the message - Think about other ideas, back up your argument to ensure that is correct and fair.
- Define your main ideas.
 - Rather than saying no to a subordinate who asked for a raise, explain how he/she can improve performance.
 - Frame it in constructive way
- Be diplomatic and use language that conveys respect. Avoid an accusing tone. - don't be disrespectful even if they are doing something wrong
- Establish credibility - give information and how you came to the conclusions, ask senior managers to come with you
- Select the right medium.
 - Best delivered in person whenever possible. Allows you to pay attentions to non-verbal skills. Not as important with good news.
- Make a clear statement of the bad news. Maintain a calm, professional tone that keeps the focus on the news and not on individual failures.
- Immediately and sincerely express sympathy and offer help if appropriate, without admitting guilt; then seek the advice of your company's lawyers before elaborating.
- No matter how trivial or serious the situation, if you do apologize, make it a real apology.

Choosing positive words examples

EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE PHRASINGS	POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES
Your request <i>doesn't make any sense</i> .	Please clarify your request.
The <i>damage won't be fixed</i> for a week.	The item will be repaired next week.
Although it wasn't <i>our fault</i> , there will be an <i>unavoidable delay</i> in your order.	We will process your order as soon as we receive an aluminum shipment from our supplier, which we expect to happen within 10 days.
You are clearly <i>dissatisfied</i> .	I recognize that the product did not live up to your expectations.
I was <i>shocked</i> to learn that you're <i>unhappy</i> .	Thank you for sharing your concerns about your shopping experience.
<i>Unfortunately</i> , we haven't received it.	The item hasn't arrived yet.
The enclosed statement is <i>wrong</i> .	Please verify the enclosed statement and provide a correct copy.

- Without sugar coating it.
- Using buffers if the news is a shock



Types of buffers

BUFFER TYPE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Agreement	Find a point on which you and the reader share similar views.	We both know how hard it is to make a profit in this industry.
Appreciation	Express sincere thanks for receiving something.	Your check for \$127.17 arrived yesterday. Thank you.
Cooperation	Convey your willingness to help in any way you realistically can.	Employee Services is here to assist all associates with their health insurance, retirement planning, and continuing education needs.
Fairness	Assure the reader that you've closely examined and carefully considered the problem, or mention an appropriate action that has already been taken.	For the past week, we have had our bandwidth monitoring tools running around the clock to track your actual upload and download speeds.
Good news	Start with the part of your message that is favorable.	We have credited your account in the amount of \$14.95 to cover the cost of return shipping.
Praise	Find an attribute or an achievement to compliment.	The Stratford Group clearly has an impressive record of accomplishment in helping clients resolve financial reporting problems.
Resale	Favorably discuss the product or company related to the subject of the letter.	With their heavy-duty, full-suspension hardware and fine veneers, the desks and file cabinets in our Montclair line have long been popular with value-conscious professionals.
Understanding	Demonstrate that you understand the reader's goals and needs.	So that you can more easily find the printer with the features you need, we are enclosing a brochure that describes all the Epson printers currently available.

Closing on a positive note

- Avoid a negative or uncertain conclusion
 - Refrain from expressing any doubt that your reasons will be accepted (e.g., "I trust our decision is satisfactory.")
- Limit future correspondence
 - Encourage additional communication only if you're willing to discuss your decision further.
- Be optimistic about the future
 - If the situation might improve in the future, share that with your audience.
- Be sincere
 - Steer clear of clichés that are insincere in view of the bad news.