



DeYoung Consulting Services

Helping People Learn up to Their Potential

No one likes to get bad news. But delivering a negative message isn't enjoyable either. Here are a few things to keep in mind the next time you have to deliver unpleasant information to a customer, vendor or employee.

Think about your audience. Do you need to maintain good will with a customer or vendor? Are there cultural differences to take into consideration? Do you want to make sure your employee doesn't leave your company? Be sure to evaluate the bad news from the view of your reader and then convey your message appropriately.

Consider the format of the message. Email, faxes, memos or certified letters provide different connotations, so think carefully about the method you choose. In some cases, bad news shouldn't be put in writing, but must be delivered in person.

Find a middle ground in the tone of your message. There's no need to be overly blunt and further wound your reader. But too much sugar-coating can obscure the communication. Be respectful of your audience, but be clear and truthful, as well. Sometimes putting the bad news in the middle of a paragraph can buffer the reader from strong feelings.

Phrase things positively. Explain what you can do instead of what you can't do. This emphasizes goodwill and your willingness to work with the other party. Here's an example.

We regret to inform you we can't deliver your brochures until Tuesday morning.

We will deliver your brochures on Tuesday morning.

Which sentence would you rather hear?

Offer corrections, alternatives or compromises. Try to anticipate your reader's reaction to your news. Then think about what you can do to

maintain the relationship and remain professional and courteous. Offering alternatives can cushion the bad news.

Give specific examples of poor performance. If a vendor or employee has acted inappropriately or not met expectations, then explain clearly what is unacceptable. Remember to suggest ways the offender can remedy the situation, too.

Be accessible to your reader. Welcome any feedback or questions. This helps keep the dialogue flowing, facilitates resolution and promotes a professional relationship.

If you would be interested in a free consultation to begin the process of improving your employees' performance, please let me know.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

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