



neu-Guide to: Delivering Bad News with Mindfulness

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Introduction

Delivering occasional bad news is one of the unpopular yet essential skills/ responsibilities of the leadership and HR executives. Needless to say, being both the bearer and the receiving end can be distressing.

To minimise the impact of bad news, incorporate the three effective and mindful steps: preparation, delivery and transition.



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1. Preparation

What Should I Do & What Should I Know?

Research & Prepare

Having some essential information can help you prepare the structure and set the tone for the conversation. It also enables you to answer any possible questions and explain the situation better.

Some essential information can include:

- The context behind the news
- Decision makers
- Different impacted parties
- How will the organisation and the employees be impacted?
- Questions that the team or employees would potentially ask

Having a complete picture and reasoning behind the news can make the employees more willing to accept unfavourable circumstances. Thus, covering all the bases before you start the conversation is necessary.

Process the News Yourself First

Many times, bad news can affect not only your team but you as well. Thus, before sharing the bad news with others, it is necessary to process your own emotions.

Emotions are important to convey the message properly. However, if you don't give yourself time to engage with them, you can be at risk of cloudy judgement, forgetting important details, and might be unable to deal with the receivers effectively. Hence, make sure you are calm and collected before you proceed to break the news.

2. Delivery

When, Where and How Should I Do It?

Make sure that YOU provide the information

When the people concerned hear the news from you directly, they feel dignified and respected. When you deliver the message, you can align it with your goals, values, and the amount of knowledge you want out there. Hearing the news from a third party can increase the scope of miscommunication which can sour relationships.

Deliver the News In-Person

Delivering the news in person is not only a mark of respect, but it also comforts the affected parties. Moreover, as a leader, you might enable a dialogue instead of dictating the information. Talking in person also gives you a chance to assess the body language, emotions,



and responses of the receivers which can help you steer the conversation in a less bitter direction.

Arrange for a Safe Space

Talk to the person or the team in a private space, preferably while sitting down. This gives the individuals security to process and react. Telling them privately also prevents them from being distracted and embarrassed. Since the news is unfavourable, though very rare, but in the heat of the moment, there might be chances that they out lash and openly blame you. Thus, privacy works both ways.

Language

Mental rehearsal and preparation is important because it helps you choose your words carefully. Direct and clear communication is imperative without excessive use of corporate jargon. Bad news can naturally evoke negative emotions which can cloud comprehension. Hence, the clearer and more precise you are, the more likely is the receiver to understand and process the news correctly.

Research has indicated that people value directness over extended attempts of politeness. Having said that, your language should not indicate a lack of compassion or empathy.

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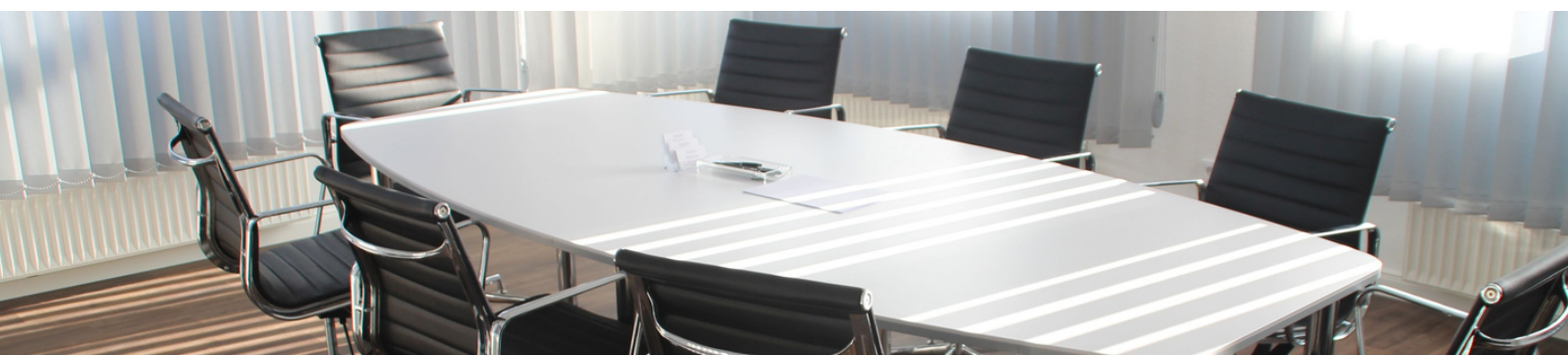
Show Empathy

Leadership and empathy go hand in hand. Many times, saying the right things and forming a connection with people by recognising their feelings can prevent social damage and the problem from cascading.

For situations such as downsizing and mass layoffs, problems do not have solutions. However, the way you convey the messages can help your employees not feel betrayed or abandoned.

“To those leaving Airbnb, I am truly sorry. Please know this is not your fault. The world will never stop seeking the qualities and talents that you brought to Airbnb... that helped make Airbnb. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart, for sharing them with us.”

Brian Chesky
Co-Founder and CEO at Airbnb



3. Transition

Can I Do Something After?

Give Employees an Opportunity To Express Themselves

Have patience and wait for them to express themselves after processing the information. Ask them if they have any questions or concerns while being empathetic.

Do not give false hopes

People do have a tendency of looking up to their seniors for guidance and hope. In the process of guiding them and making them feel better, it is important not to offer false hopes and downplay the severity of the situation. Having the right information can help employees plan aptly for their next steps instead of building on incorrect information. Here, honesty is the best policy.

Focus on the Future and Follow Up

End the conversation with positive hopes and actions for the future. It is also a good idea to follow up with your employees to gauge their situation and offer appropriate assistance. These steps will enable them to see the compassionate side of you.

The way an organisation or a team leader engages in crisis management can directly affect the employee's perception of the organisation. Needless to say that positive perceptions are likely to increase their engagement and organisational commitment in the future.



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Book a demo with us to explore how Neurum helps organisations bring mind health to life.

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