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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

How to Break “Bad” News

During all of my years in the work world I’ve never met anybody who enjoys delivering “bad” news to people. I don’t like to do it either. Yet sometimes, as we all know, it needs to be done.

There have been occasions when I had to tell clients that (in my opinion) they aren’t well suited to the professional position they hold. Saying those words to folks I care about wasn’t easy. Nor was it comfortable to sit down with one of my star employees back in the late 90s and inform her that I intended to terminate her if I didn’t see evidence of serious changes in her verbal messages to organizational stakeholders within ten days.

Whether or not you’ve thought about it, “bad” news comes in several categories and



forms: Letting folks know they won’t be getting pay raises this year; cancelling

projects; announcing that bonuses won't be awarded at the end of the year; discussing the possibility of massive layoffs; identifying negative/inappropriate behavior; naming the consequences to chronic, poor job performance; firing a staffer; announcing a merger; reporting a death. Perhaps you can think of others.

Whatever "bad" news you must communicate soon or in the future, you may want to take a look at my feature article that provides a few guidelines for handling this task with grace.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Guidelines for Delivering "Bad" News

Recently I read an article about the theme of this ezine. One of the introductory paragraphs began with this sentence: "Refusing to talk about problems won't make them go away." How true. But often this is exactly what happens because people in leadership/management roles don't know how to do it.

1. Think about what you want to accomplish.

Gain clarity about what you hope you to achieve by the conclusion of the meeting. List your objectives, main talking points, and desired outcomes in advance.

2. Choose the right time and place.

Generally, you need to communicate "bad" news promptly. If you keep people in the dark, they blame you for hiding something. Just make sure you select the time wisely and a venue in which folks feel safe.

3. Be brief, clear, and direct.

Don't beat around the bush. Get to the point. Stick to the facts and the truth related to the situation as you understand it. Choose your words and tone carefully. Avoid deviating from your planned message.

4. Manage your own emotions.

Come to terms with how you feel about the "bad" news before you need to deliver it. Let your own emotions run their course. You can't afford to bring your negative energy to the table.

5. Demonstrate empathy.

Acknowledge people's emotions in a way that shows regard for their reaction to the news. Don't tell them they shouldn't feel however they obviously feel. Let folks know that you care. Then move on.

6. Create a learning opportunity.

Once people have absorbed the news, focus the conversation on what they can learn from the situation at hand. Ask them to share ideas about how to improve things, and be sure to talk about how they, as individuals, may grow from whatever is happening.

7. Invite questions.

If you're smart, you'll encourage folks to ask you whatever is on their minds. Let them know that no question is silly or off limits. It's always better to be aware of what others are thinking and worried about.

Sharing "bad" news can be the worst part of your job. Still, by learning to conduct yourself credibly, respectfully, and appropriately you can maintain strong, positive relationships with your staff, boss, Board, and/or volunteers—no matter what sort of news you deliver.

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What Clients Say

My biggest weakness as a supervisor is failing to initiate delicate conversations with the folks who report directly to me. I've been aware of this for years and kept sweeping it under the rug. When I finally found myself in the position of having to tell someone that her job was on the line due to performance issues, I recognized that I needed some help with how to approach this. I didn't want to make mistakes I'd later regret. Working with Sylvia was the answer! Together she and I developed a script that provided the focus I required once the conversation got started. Coming out of that situation, I now feel much more confident about how to handle these kinds of things in the future.

▪ Vicki T., Southeastern PA

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Offers and Opportunities

FREE Teleseminar on August 25

On August 25, 2015 at 12:00 PM EDT Sylvia will conduct a FREE 40-minute teleseminar entitled: The 5 Things Employees Need Most. In this audio event, which will be recorded for those who cannot participate “live”, Sylvia digs deep into her 38 years of professional experience to remove the mystery that seems to surround this topic. If you wish to learn more and sign up, please [click here](#).

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RESOURCES

Tough Talk in Tough Times

Want a roadmap that equips you to stop procrastinating over initiating “bad” news conversations? Check out Jenn Palmer Heck’s *Tough Talk in Tough Times: What Bosses Need to Know to Deliver Bad News, Motivate Employees, and Stay Sane*. Filled with case studies, life lessons, and solid insights, this 2009 resource comes highly recommended for all managers. Available in paper back on Amazon.com for \$16.

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TIP

Identify the “bad” news you sense or know you must deliver within the next thirty day period—or the news you should have delivered last week or last month. On an emotional level connect with the primary reason you dread having this conversation. Then, review the professionals in your life who you consider to be mentors. Reach out to them (or at least one) and schedule a time to talk about how they communicate unfortunate news to others, particularly to employees. Open yourself to their experiences and insights. Look for a golden nugget you can use in your own situation. Do not underestimate the potential value of the mentors around you.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

As you read this ezine, Sylvia is entertaining her 20-year old niece, Sarah, from Binghamton, NY. Sarah is staying with her aunt and uncle in Mechanicsburg for the entire month of August.

Sylvia is also preparing a one hour keynote presentation on the magic of influence for professionals representing several regional colleges and universities gathering for a conference at her alma mater, Lebanon Valley College, on September 9.

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Join Sylvia on these social networks!

About This Ezine

The purpose of this Ezine is to: 1) Provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to personal and professional growth as well as overall career development; and 2) Invite readers to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

Back issues are [available here](#). Send an email by [clicking here](#) to manage your free subscription. Sharing content with attribution is encouraged as is forwarding the Ezine email. Include launchinglives.biz in your list of safe senders or friends, depending upon your email software, to be sure you receive the monthly emailed issues.

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC, specializes in career development for both corporate and nonprofit executives and managers.

Based in South Central PA, she specifically supports clients as they upgrade their current job performance, seek a promotion, or plan/navigate a career transition. What makes her services unique is that Sylvia helps people to cope with change, loss, and grief as they work on developing their careers. Her professional background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, nonprofit community health program start-up, program evaluation, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A certified executive coach through The Rescue Institute in Golden, Colorado and Quantum Endeavors in Chicago, Illinois (plus a participant in extensive continuing education opportunities with several coaches of national notoriety), Sylvia offers individual and group coaching, assessments, teleseminars, workshops, keynote speeches, and retreats. She also has created tangible and downloadable products that augment her coaching and speaking services.

For more information and to connect with Sylvia try:

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at **717-761-5457**

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is a full service career development company for managers and executives located in South Central PA. Utilizing a holistic approach to service provision, Launching Lives focuses on supporting clients as they create the platinum level career they desire by upgrading their job performance, seeking a promotion, or planning/navigating a career transition

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching may be the SOLUTION to any of

these issues.

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