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14 Tips For Delivering Bad News To Customers Or Employees



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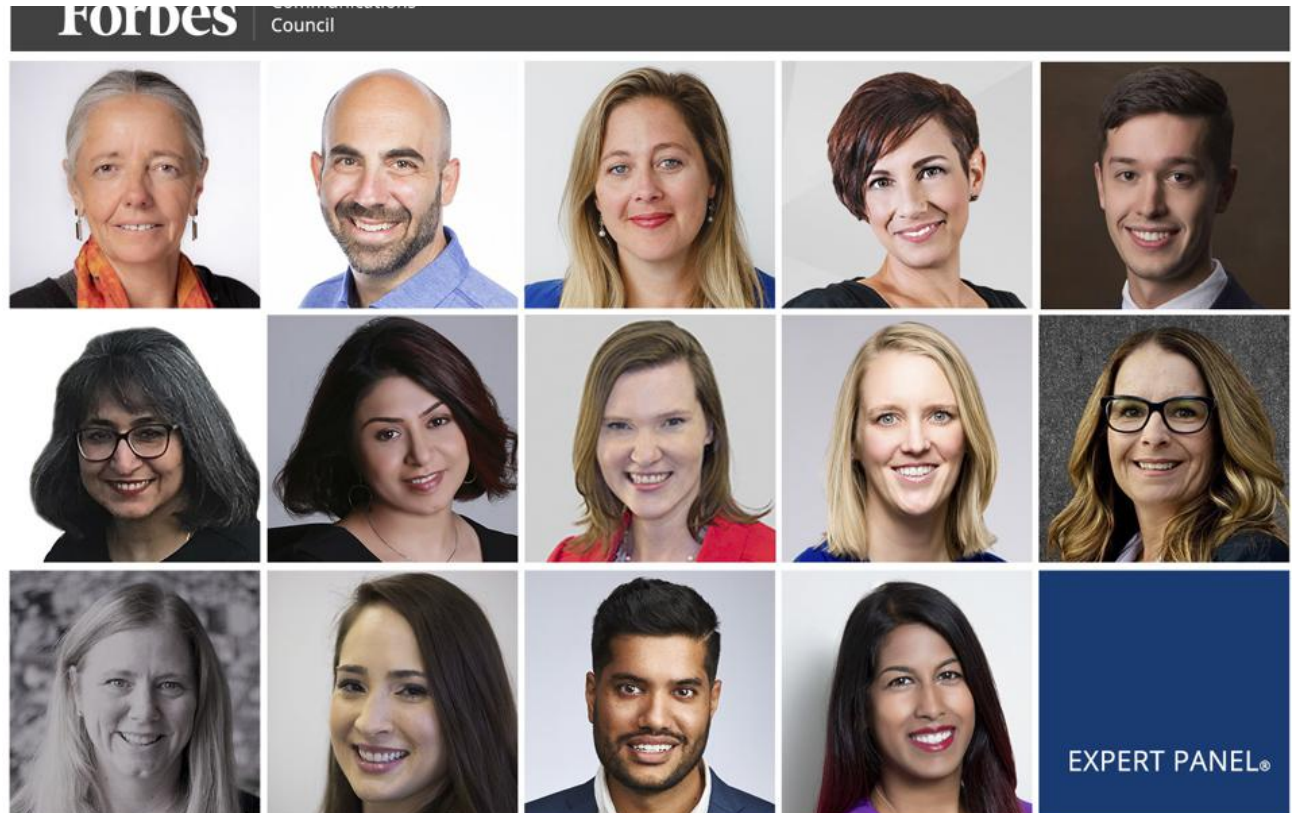
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No matter how well things may be going right now, there will be times when you'll have to deliver bad news to your team or your customers. This is never an easy task, but it's an inevitable part of leading a business.

It's important to find ways to soften the blow and support people receiving news that may upset them. To that end, 14 members of [Forbes](#)

[Communications Council](#) shared their tips for preparing to have an unpleasant conversation with your team or customers. Follow their advice to ensure these discussions go as smoothly as possible.



Forbes Communications Council members share tips to help leaders prepare to have unpleasant conversations.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

1. Be Transparent About The Decision

Start by being transparent about the goal that led to the decision. This shows respect for the individuals in your audience and gives them more solid ground to stand on when they receive the “bad news” part of the communication you’re sending. - [Marya Roddis, The Santa Fe Group, Shared Assessments Program](#)

2. Be Straightforward and Compassionate

Focus on being straightforward and compassionate. Bad news is negative by nature, so don't dress it up or try to make it seem better than it is. Anticipate feelings and questions the news will create and come prepared to provide moral support and helpful information. Treat it as if you were delivering unpleasant news to your own family and be emotionally available. - [Cord Himelstein, HALO Recognition](#)

3. Get To The Point Up Front

The most respected delivery of bad news is getting to the point quickly. While context and background are important and should follow later in your message, the first priority is saying up front what is actually happening. In preparation, spend the most amount of time on those first few sentences of your message. Make sure it's transparent, easy to follow and empathetic in its impact. - [Camille Weleschuk, ATB Financial](#)

4. Lay It Out Honestly And Clearly

Delivering bad news is a daunting task, but it's more important to be honest and lay out the news clearly for the person to receive it. It's also important to have a solution to put on the table so that it can be a productive conversation. Going into an unpleasant situation or conversation, I like to remind myself that in order to grow into something great, unpleasant moments will come and go. - [Ami DeWille, Perform\[cb\]](#)

5. Practice Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is key. Entering the conversation with empathy is of utmost importance. You should be prepared to relay concise and transparent information without presenting yourself as brash or indifferent. Relay your information, listen to the concerns stated in the receiving party's response, exhibit empathy, and then reiterate your position as a conclusion to the conversation. - [Mason Burchette](#), [Best Buy Metals](#)

[Forbes Communications Council](#) is an invitation-only community for executives in successful public relations, media strategy, creative and advertising agencies. *Do I qualify?*

6. Contextualize It With Empathy

Contextualizing with empathy and being authentic with a caring attitude go a long way in explaining tough situations and subjects. It's important to listen from the heart and address questions calmly and with patience. - [Arati Mukerji](#), [Tata Communications Ltd](#)

7. Be Aware Of Your Timing

Timing is key when delivering unpleasant news. Let the customer or employee hear it from the business first, before they hear it from any external channels. Equally important is being honest and open with answering any questions. - [Jyoti Khan](#), [Bricks & Clicks](#)

8. Don't Sugarcoat The News

Going into the conversation, practice delivering the news in a straightforward way. Is it uncomfortable? Heck yes. But I believe it's the most respectful thing to do for the person or people receiving the news. They deserve the truth, not a sugarcoated version of it. - [Kathy Sucich](#), [Dimensional Insight](#)

9. Don't Wait Too Long

With bad news, it's best to think through what you'll say, and then have the conversation. Nothing stays secret for long anymore, so it's far better to hear the news from the source than hear it on the street. Not to mention, you run the risk of overthinking it and stressing yourself out when you keep it to yourself for too long. - [Kate Barton](#), [Clearview Advisory](#)

10. Come With Your Facts And A Solution

Nobody enjoys delivering bad news. In fact, a lot of people dread it, which can lead to a delay in delivering the news, making the outcome worse. It's best to come with your facts, be direct and offer a solution to the problem. You may not be able to come with a solution to "fix" the problem, but I've found most people respect honesty and a genuine effort to move forward. - [Megan Ruszkowski](#), [CoreSite](#)

11. Share A Plan With Respect And Transparency

In any uncomfortable conversation, the recipient needs to feel respected and appreciated. If the team tried hard to avoid the bad outcome, then acknowledge the effort. Recognize the contribution. Be transparent with the bad news to establish trust and make understanding details easier. But most importantly, don't forget to share a future plan as well. - [Cynthia Sener](#), [Chatmeter](#)

12. Be Quick And Clear

Don't bury the lede! Getting straight to the point and being clear and concise is an effective way to deliver bad news. Avoid dancing around the subject or taking too long to explain it. Quick and clear wins! - [Lyndsi Stevens](#), [Celerium](#)

13. Prepare Your Speech

It can help to prepare and practice what you are going to say so that you can deliver the news or feedback with confidence. Empathy is important, but you also need to stand firm and be straightforward. People can ramble when they are uncomfortable. Don't say more than is necessary at the time. Let your employees, customers, etc. know how to reach you or who to contact for follow-up questions. - [Haseeb Tariq, Disney, Fox, Guess](#)

14. Check In With The Recipients

Deliver tough news with empathy. This should be a two-way dialogue, so listen to them, and if they're not saying anything, check in to see how they're feeling. It's also important to think about how the news will impact them by putting yourself in their shoes and giving them time to process and respond. - [Roshni Wijayasinha, Foxquilt](#)

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