

July 1987

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Bad News Eradicator

How does bad news start? Often, from our defensive, negative answers to media questions. Defensive responses guarantee tough, embarrassing, irritating, even insulting, follow-up questions. How do you avoid being defensive? First, try to eliminate the use of negative words -- can't, shouldn't, won't, don't, mustn't, not, no. Second, try to use positive power words -- interesting, unusual, different, unique, powerful.

To reduce your bad news, eradicate these defensive answers:

1. It won't work.
2. It didn't happen that way.
3. It's too expensive.
4. It's not my responsibility.
5. Not my job, unfortunately.
6. We're just too busy, we can't.
7. We can't change that fast.
8. We don't have the time.
9. That would kill our product.
10. We don't have enough studies.
11. We don't have the resources.
12. That's not our fault.
13. Our people would never do that.
14. We can't talk about it.
15. It's against company policy.
16. We didn't know.
17. We couldn't have known.
18. That isn't our problem.
19. We don't care.
20. I don't like that idea.
21. We're not ready for that.
22. We aren't a bad company.
23. We won't have the money.
24. I wouldn't say that.
25. Our boss would never buy it.
26. Not that again.
27. We did all right without it.
28. It's never been done before.
29. Why won't you use everything I say?
30. Our customers wouldn't like it.
31. I don't see the connection.
32. What you're really saying is . . .
33. It can't be done.
34. It's too much trouble.
35. That's not a good question.
36. That's impossible.
37. No comment.

Remember: There are only three ways to answer questions. You can be positive, negative, or blah. No matter which style you use, it takes about the same amount of energy to answer. Why not be positive? The benefit? It's nearly impossible to be positive and defensive at the same time.

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