Breaking Bad News Effectively
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Breaking bad news to your colleagues is never fun, but it doesn’t have to be quite so painful.

Let’s learn an effective way to give bad news at work.
Here are two models for how to break bad news effectively.

Prepare the other person for the bad news with a brief "buffer."

Be direct and clear when stating bad news.

Give details if appropriate (offer reasons but no excuses).

State next steps (alternative options, solutions, or what to expect next).

Hi Joyce,

I am sorry to say that I am not feeling well, so I won’t be coming to the company party tonight after all. I know I was supposed to act as the DJ, but Tom has agreed to take over for me.

I hope you all have fun tonight!

Best,

Manuela

Hi Aaron,

I have some bad news about the point-of-sale system. We won’t be able to place any orders for new equipment from the vendor for at least a couple of weeks while they hire a new manager for our account. I know this is frustrating, but I’ll let you know as soon as I get confirmation from them that we have a new account manager and can proceed with our plans.

Thanks,

Jun
In this mini lesson, you worked hard with an intensive practice partner to understand how to break bad news effectively.

**Let’s Review**

Four tips for breaking bad news effectively:

1. Deliver the bad news after a brief buffer.
2. Be direct and clear.
3. Give details if appropriate.
4. State next steps.

**Let’s Practice**

**Role-Play Scenarios**

1. You have to miss an important meeting with your team.
2. Your team will not be able to meet the deadline of a project.
3. Your company’s product or service cannot fulfill one of your customer’s wishes.
4. Due to low sales, your corporate office will close the branch that you manage.
5. Think of times when you have had to deliver bad news to colleagues or clients in the past. Practice breaking that bad news using this approach.

**Discussion**

Discuss the difference between explanations and excuses. Come up with examples of when giving reasons for bad news would be an effective strategy and when it would be a bad idea.