

Top Considerations in Relaying Bad News: An Issues Management Primer

1

STAY ON MESSAGE. Focus on a crisp key message and ensure that you relay it clearly and consistently as often as is required by the conversation.

2

KEEP THE MESSAGE SHORT AND SIMPLE. Resist the urge to provide too much detail or get engaged in extensive descriptions or defenses of your position.

3

DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE. In difficult conversations, there are often awkward moments of silence which may seem to last forever. Be comfortable sitting with the silence with empathy and be careful not to feel compelled to fill that void.

4

THE "BRIDGING TECHNIQUE" IS YOUR BEST ALLY. Keep your key message top of mind and deliberately "bridge" to it, regardless of the questions or comments you hear. Eventually your consistent repetition of the same message will shut down the conversation and you will be confident that your communication objective has been achieved.

5

PLAN AN EXIT STRATEGY. Consider an absolute worst-case scenario and plan an exit strategy based on that situation. Remember that you can always get up and leave a conversation if it has escalated to a point of no return. While it is highly unlikely that you'll need to use your exit strategy, having thought about it in advance will help give you confidence in dealing with a difficult situation.