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The art of delivering bad news

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For those who like to eat challenges for breakfast, compliance doesn't disappoint. Risk management is not always welcomed with open arms, and our guardian role often requires us to be the bearer of difficult news to stakeholders. And while it may be a somewhat routine affair for professionals in a governance role, it's critical for all of us to understand the behavioral science that can affect our careers and reputations when we don't deliver bad news effectively.

A recent study demonstrated that bad news messengers are not only deemed unlikable and less competent, but also that others will perceive the messenger to have some level of ill intent toward them.^[1] In other words, bad news messengers are subconsciously viewed by others as *enjoying* when bad things happen. Further, since our professional roles often involve rules, obstacles, or reporting on negative events, recipients of the bad news may even view us as deserving of their negativity. A case of perception is reality.

I'll never forget one of my first executive roles, when I had recently joined the management team as the company's first compliance officer. My boss, the president of a \$90 billion business division, asked me if we could get rid of our internal auditor: "That guy who sits in my team meetings just taking up space."

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