Category

Consulting

Managing Difficult Conversations & Giving Candid Advice Playbook

Delivering unwelcome truths in a way the client can actually hear and act on

- Practitioner
- Intermediate
- Template Included

- Mithun A. Sridharan

- 03 July 2022
- 4 minute(s)

Overview

A framework for delivering candid, unwelcome advice or difficult news in a way the client can genuinely hear and act on — structured delivery, appropriate directness, and follow-through — rather than either softening the message into ambiguity or delivering it bluntly without regard for how it lands.

Isn't it safer to soften difficult news to protect the relationship?

Excessive softening often backfires — the client may not fully register the seriousness of the message, which can be more damaging to the relationship long-term than direct, well-delivered candor, especially if the softened message leads to a worse outcome the client feels wasn't clearly flagged.

How direct is too direct when delivering difficult news?

Direct enough that the core message is unambiguous, delivered with genuine care for how it's received — bluntness without regard for delivery can be as counterproductive as excessive softening, and this playbook's framework addresses both failure modes.

{ "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "FAQPage", "mainEntity": [{ "@type": "Question", "name": "Isn't it safer to soften difficult news to protect the relationship?", "acceptedAnswer": { "@type": "Answer", "text": "Excessive softening often backfires — the client may not fully register\nthe seriousness of the message, which can be more damaging to the\nrelationship long-term than direct, well-delivered candor, especially\nif the softened message leads to a worse outcome the client feels\nwasn't clearly flagged." } }, { "@type":

"Question", "name": "How direct is too direct when delivering difficult news?", "acceptedAnswer": { "@type": "Answer", "text": "Direct enough that the core message is unambiguous, delivered with\ngenuine care for how it's received — bluntness without regard for\ndelivery can be as counterproductive as excessive softening, and this\nplaybook's framework addresses both failure modes." } }] }

Subscriber access

Unlock this playbook

This playbook — including every framework, template, and step-by-step section — is available free to Think Insights subscribers. Enter your email to unlock it instantly and get our weekly insights newsletter. No account needed, and access is remembered on this device.

First Name

Last Name

Email

Country - Select -

■ I agree to data processing in accordance with GDPR

Submit

Leave this field blank

References

Related playbooks

Consulting

Cross-Functional Trusted Advisor Playbook

A framework for becoming a genuinely trusted advisor across business, technology, and operations stakeholders simultaneously — building real fluency and credibi

- Practitioner
- Advanced
- Template Included

Read playbook

Consulting

Framing Client Problems & Co-Creating Solutions as a Trusted Advisor Playbook

A framework for collaborative problem framing and solution co-creation with clients — genuinely involving them in shaping both the problem definition and the so

- Practitioner
- Intermediate
- Template Included

Read playbook

Consulting

High-Stakes Executive Conversations for Trusted Advisors Playbook

A framework for preparing and navigating the rare, acute high-stakes executive conversations — a crisis update, a difficult recommendation with significant cons

- Practitioner
- Advanced
- Template Included

Read playbook

Talk to us about delivering difficult news

Tags

- Difficult Conversations
- Candid Advice
- Consulting Skills

Author

Mithun A. Sridharan Thought Leader

I'm Mithun A. Sridharan, Founder of this website - Think Insights - on Strategy, Management Consulting, Leadership, Digital Transformation, and Data Literacy. Follow me on social media or connect with me on LinkedIn for updates.