

Delivering the Goods

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Introduction

You've met the client, discussed the problem, negotiated an agreement, and done the work.

Now you have to give them the results!

This step is part presentation, part writing, part one-on-one meeting, part teaching, part soothing ruffled feathers; we must bring together all that we've learned.

This lecture follows Chapters 7 and 8 from Derr (2000).

Evil Dr. Derr Delivers

Watch video 6.

What did you see?

- Lots of unexplained jargon
- She just drones on
- Not paying attention to client
- Not teaching
- Not interacting/communicating
- No collaboration

Teaching

Your role now is like leading a short course for the client.

Lots of learning styles.

Use "high-impact" teaching methods.

Active learning: some learn better when involved in projects or other activities.

This is your brain on statistics

“Whole-brain theory” posits four learning styles:

- **Cerebral left-brain** thinkers like to quantify, analyze, and theorize; that is, us.
- **Limbic left-brain** thinkers like to organize things, find their structure, and practice.
- **Cerebral right-brain** thinkers like to explore, discover on their own, and conceptualize.
- **Limbic right-brain** thinkers rely on feelings and like personalized activities.

Neurolinguistic programming theory

Some learners are:

- **Visual learners** who learn more from reading a report, or looking at tables and graphs. Inaccuracy in a report may derail them.
- **Auditory learners** who learn more from discussing the project with you. Inaccuracy in a report won't derail them, because they didn't read it.
- **Kinesthetic learners** who learn more with hands on exposure, manipulation, and participation. They just keep hacking away until they get it to work.

Where she went wrong

Evil Dr. Derr used **only**

- Passive learning strategies.
- Cerebral left-brain.
- Auditory.

Obviously, this didn't work for poor Mr. Johnson.

The Match Game

Try to match your style to your client, or at least used varied styles:

- Did she bring references, tables, graphs, computer disks? Respond in kind.
- Did he draw diagrams or write out words or phrases? Respond in kind.
- Does he want to use the computer to demonstrate something? Respond in kind.
- Does she use abstractions or concrete examples? How about analogies or metaphors? Respond in kind.

Now the good Dr. Derr

Let's look at video 7.
What did you see?

- Showed things (visual and verbal)
- Spreadsheet (active and whiz-bang)
- Interactive and collaborative
- Explained things
- Gave examples

It also took about twice as long.

The plot thickens!

Things don't always go smoothly.
Watch video 8.

What did you see?

- Different expectations about what was wanted.
- Talking past each other.
- Johnson is frustrated, Derr is defensive.
- Johnson wanted a final report, Derr wanted a working session.
- Everybody loses.

Circling the drain

These situations can form a negative feedback loop, or downward spiral.

She doesn't understand what I want.

He doesn't understand these simple tables.

We've wasted a lot of time and money.

He doesn't appreciate all the work that went into this.

Communication breaks down, they start to avoid each other, and it only goes down from there.

Break the mold

Keep an eye on your internal thoughts.

If you start thinking negative things about the client, the breakdown is about to happen.

Stop. Pull back. Try to identify the underlying cause and work it through.

Conflict resolution

- 1 Openly discuss the problem.
- 2 Frame the problem in neutral terms.
- 3 Try to find the source of the client's dissatisfaction.
- 4 **Listen!**
- 5 Acknowledge your contribution to the breakdown.
- 6 Work towards a win-win resolution.

Try again

View video 9.
Kiss, kiss.

OK, that was pretty easy. Just a miscommunication they could work through. What else might go wrong?

Long-term issue

Extends beyond current problem.

May involve policy or other people.

For example, the guy consulting for the doctor through the go between.

Step back from immediate problem.

Identify root causes.

Identify ideal solution.

Identify unacceptable solutions.

Identify acceptable solutions that could be reached through negotiation.

Try for one of them.

Teams

Problems often increase with the number of individuals involved.

“Cooperative conflict” is good; it helps avoid group-think.

“Competing conflict” is not good; people choose sides; communication breaks down; authority and status come into play; people undercut others.

Here be dragons. Try to build bridges between groups, try to keep or open communication channels, but cover your backside.

Project troubles

What if design was flawed, or data were lost, or someone makes an error?

- 1 Who gets the bad news first? (The boss.)
- 2 Good setting for the discussion (face to face or telephone may be better than memo or email).
- 3 Use appropriate language (I am concerned, not you screwed up; positive suggestions).
- 4 Relate to goals of the project (e.g., what can't be done).
- 5 Balance a negative with a positive (soften the blow).
- 6 Offer options.
- 7 Take responsibility for your errors.

Non-negotiable Position

Ethics, for example.

Try to work it out, but if you can't work it out, your best course may be to withdraw from the project.

This can be costly.

Try to withdraw professionally; don't burn your bridges. See the previous section.

If it's really bad, like you need to blow the whistle, take steps to preserve your professional reputation (e.g., document your actions and reasons; make sure that others are present and aware of interactions with party of interest).

Unprofessional behavior

Professional: I can't use this.

Unprofessional: You wasted all of our money on this project.

With well-intentioned client:

- 1 Describe client's behavior.
- 2 Describe your reactions to behavior.
- 3 Describe your view on consequences.
- 4 Request a change in behavior.
- 5 Request client's reaction.

On a team, you may need to go through a team leader.

Harassment

Never attribute to malice that which can be explained by stupidity.

Sometimes things get really bad.

You have legal protection against harassment. You may need confidential, even legal advice.

Document communications and behaviors. Make sure that others witness them too.

Have others present when meeting with the subject.

Try to get out with your career intact.

Summary

- Deliver results so that the client can understand.
- Match your clients style.
- Catch the breakdown early.
- Work through to a win-win.
- Protect yourself.