



# SkillSharpener Web Extra

## I've got some good news and some bad news

**Social scientists have answered the age old question of which news to deliver first.**

Researchers at University of California-Riverside tested the order in which they delivered news to subjects, and gauged their responses and behavior.

First, they asked both the people giving the news and the people receiving the news what sequence they preferred — good news then bad news or bad news then good news.

The results showed that 54 percent of news-givers said that they would rather give the good news first. Their reasons were generally focused on their own feelings such as nervousness about delivering bad news.

However, news-recipient overwhelmingly said that they would prefer to get the bad news first, with 78 percent choosing this option. Among their reasons were such things as, It makes me feel better ... and I like to end on a high note.

Next researchers focused on how the sequence

of news delivery affected the recipient's emotions and behaviors.

Participants who received the bad news first showed an upward emotional trajectory, with mood improving and worry decreasing after they heard the second and final set of news — suggesting that they did indeed end on a high note.

In contrast, those who heard the good news first had a downward emotional trajectory, developing a worse mood.

The takeaway for your frontline reps is to gird themselves and deliver the bad news first, then to be ready to follow up with some kind of good news in the form of positive solutions and alternative options.

*Source: Angela M. Legg, PhD, assistant professor of psychology, Pace University, Pleasantville, New York. Her research was conducted at the University of California, Riverside, and published in Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.* ■

