Delivering Difficult Messages

½ day workshop

A passion for the truth is essential for a tester. But the truths we uncover in the exercise of our craft can be bad news to our co-workers or to people who hold more power in the hierarchy than we do.

Testers are paid to deliver unwelcome messages. Too often, the interaction doesn't go as well as we'd like and we have to deal with adverse reactions ranging from merely disbelieving to downright hostile.

Delivering bad news well takes courage and skill, as does dealing with many of the recipient's reactions. For most people, the ability to do these things at all—let alone well—does not come easily.

In this tutorial, we will practice delivering difficult messages and addressing the fallout, building relevant skills and knowledge along the way. We will explore the factors that can inhibit us in delivering a message, as well as those that might influence a recipient's reactions.

Topics we'll cover include:

- Common pitfalls in delivering difficult messages, and how to avoid them

- Questions to ask and things to do before we speak

- Strategies, models and techniques that can help us understand and deal with difficult conversations successfully

Delivering unwelcome news isn't fun, but we can have fun exploring and practicing how to do it. This tutorial will consist primarily of experiential exercises and debriefs. We will practice with real situations that have happened for real testers, including past or current problems brought by participants.