



CONVERSATION STARTERS

Bad News is Good News

FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVES

1. In what ways do you currently “porpoise” within your organization, making sure that you’re hearing from all departments at all levels? How have you made staff comfortable with sharing bad news when you porpoise?
2. How do you ensure that bad news is a focus at every board meeting? How do you integrate the board’s advice and counsel into your actions and communicate outcomes back to the board?

FOR STAFF TEAM MEMBERS

1. How comfortable are you sharing bad news with your manager? In what ways do you see porpoising as being different from being micro-managed?
2. How do you and your colleagues work together to turn bad news into good news? What practices could strengthen your teamwork even more?

FOR BOARD MEMBERS

1. At board meetings, what process is in place to enable the chief executive and senior staff to comfortably discuss bad news and seek out constructive advice? How will meeting agendas shift to accommodate these discussions?
2. How does feedback from clients, employees, key stakeholders and donors influence the board’s planning and implementation work?

FOR INDIVIDUAL DONORS

1. How do you go about “porpoising” to learn about a nonprofit before making a donation or deciding to volunteer?
2. How might hearing a bad news story about the nonprofit sector impact your behavior as a donor?

FOR INSTITUTIONAL PHILANTHROPIES

1. How do you “porpoise” with grant applicants when conducting due diligence and in-person site visits?
2. How do you encourage grantees to share bad news with you? How does bad news from grantees impact your funding commitments?

