

Too Late

On Friday afternoon Oscar told his assistant, Elizabeth, that they needed to get a report to Christine, the communications director, by the next Friday. The following Thursday, Oscar gave the report to Elizabeth with a few minor changes. He told her to make the changes and send it out the next day. Oscar had also given Elizabeth several other projects, including a high profile project for the president, on which he was very focused.

Monday rolls around and Elizabeth sends Christine the report, copying Oscar. This is the first that Oscar knows of the report going out late. He is stunned! He assumed the report went out Friday. In fact, the truth is that he forgot about the report until he saw the email. Oscar is upset because he is trying to work more closely with Christine and is worried about the impression the late report created. He thinks that Christine probably didn't notice or may not have even cared that she didn't receive the report until Monday, but he cares because he wants Christine to know she can rely on him. In fact, he's trying to gain her support so she chooses him for a special project.

Part 2

Using Win-Lose:

Angry and upset, Oscar calls Elizabeth into his office. He barks out: "Elizabeth, what is wrong with you? I asked you to get the report to Christine no later than Friday. This is unacceptable. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Flustered and upset, Elizabeth apologizes several times and can't look Oscar in the eye. She says, "But Christine said ..." Interrupting her, Oscar says, "I'm your boss not Christine. Is that clear? You do what I say, not what she or anyone else says."

She manages to eek out, "It won't happen again."

Part 3

Using Win-Win:

Oscar decides to address the issue with Elizabeth by creating a *Win-Win Conversation*.

Step 1: State the Facts: "Last week we told Christine we would send her the report. I saw you sent it on Monday."

Step 2: State Feelings: “I was concerned . . .”

Step 3: State Needs/Goals: “because I really need to make a good impression on Christine.”

Step 4: Make a Request: “Next time, we are going to miss a deadline, would you be willing to let me know before we miss the deadline?”

Step 5: Elizabeth: “Sure, no problem!”

OR, what if Elizabeth had said “No.”?

Oscar’s next step is to use his awareness of others, the “inner loop,” to understand Elizabeth’s needs and possibly make another request. In this instance, Oscar could respond, “Tell me why this doesn’t work for you.”

Elizabeth says: “If I had known it was that big a deal, I would have stayed late and finished it. I know you’ll just do the work if I don’t and I don’t want that. What I really need help with is understanding priorities and when deadlines are deadlines. My impression was that it wasn’t that important to Christine and that Monday was fine. Would you be willing to let me know when a deadline is really a deadline?”

Alternative Step 5: Oscar: “Elizabeth, I really appreciate your commitment and support. I’ll be more clear in the future. If I forget, just ask!”

Part 4

Christine walks into Oscar’s office as he is getting a few things done before he heads out for his son’s soccer match. Not one to waste time on niceties, she jumps right into the report. Oscar’s eyes dart between his email and Christine. He types as he looks at her, looking back to check for typos. Oscar remembers that he’s supposed to pick up dinner on the way home, and puts a calendar reminder in not to forget. He turns to the pile of bills to sign, and starts signing as he’s listening. He’s still paying attention to Christine, he tells himself.

In the midst of Oscar’s multitasking, Christine says, “Oscar, your data can’t be right, or if it is, your analysis is based on faulty assumptions.” She lists those assumptions. From the moment Christine said “your data can’t be right” Oscar started mentally listing all the reasons his data, analysis, and assumptions are all correct. Next, agitated, he reaches for his briefcase.