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The Successful Presentation

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Amy is a recent FSA working in pricing at Transaction Insurance.

7:00 AM – ALARM CLOCK GOES OFF

“I am sure looking forward to today.” Amy says. “I’ve prepared all week, and today I’ll share my experience study results with all the senior leaders. The analysis shows that a policyholder who consistently pays premiums on time has much better mortality and persistency than a policyholder who pays late. I’ll be recommending that we adjust our premium increases to reflect this finding.”

9:00 AM – PRESENTATION TO FIVE SENIOR LEADERS

Amy presents her analysis, “So, you can see clearly in this data that the members who are consistently on time with premium payments are more profitable and stay with us longer as customers. We should use the data as underwriting criteria for renewal premium adjustments.”

Senior leader1: “Interesting! Did you run this by the billing department to see if they can give us a monthly billing feed with payment timeliness? Also, who else will this impact?”

Amy: “No, I haven’t spoken with billing. I’ll ask them about the billing feed and provide you with an update.”

Senior leader2: “Amy, can you also expand this analysis to look at the results by age and gender? I wonder if the impact is more prevalent in older or younger individuals.”

Senior leader3: “Also, if we implement this, we’ll have to build this into our pricing tools. Amy, can you work with John to update the pricing tools accordingly?”

Amy: “Absolutely, I’ll add an analysis by age and gender and will set up the tables for filing with regulators and for updating our pricing tools.”

Senior leader4 (Amy’s Manager): “Amy. Good work on this study. Have you calculated how much additional profit this pricing enhancement is worth? Is the benefit more than the cost to implement? Also, when’s the earliest we could implement this?”

Amy: “I haven’t calculated the benefits or costs. I wanted to first run the idea by everyone before going into the details too much.”

Senior leader5: “Also Amy, your study goes back only 18 months. Have you looked at any time periods further back?”

Amy: “Not yet, the data was easily available for 18 months, but I can go back further.”

1:00 PM – MANAGER GIVES FEEDBACK TO AMY ON HER PRESENTATION

Amy’s manager: “Hi Amy, I’d like to give you some feedback on your presentation. Your analysis was excellent and it will make our company a lot of money; however, in the future, I think you’ll benefit from being more prepared for presentations.”

Amy: “Yeah, there were a lot of questions and aspects of the project that I hadn’t considered. Next time, I’ll prepare more in advance and anticipate the questions.”

Amy Thinking: “While I agreed to prepare more next time, I really felt I was prepared. What happened? How can I present similar recommendations more effectively next time?”

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

Here are the questions I want to answer in this article.

- 1.) What happened?
- 2.) How could Amy’s presentation have been more effective? What are some strategies for Amy’s next presentation?
- 3.) Did management effectively encourage Amy to continue to share ideas?

WHAT HAPPENED?

Amy's work could have easily distinguished her as a highly valuable employee who goes above and beyond to contribute to the success of the organization. Even though she had a good analysis, she came across as being somewhat unprepared. She fell into the common mistake of simply presenting findings. To succeed further, there are several additional steps she could have taken before presenting her findings.

What are some effective strategies for Amy's next presentation?

A. Set the expectations before or at the beginning of the presentation.

Clearly lay out each step in the process and identify when each step will be accomplished. The audience should know if her work was expected to be "preliminary findings." If so, all the recommendations, next steps and time frames should still be clearly laid out at the time of the presentation.

B. Cover the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How questions.

By addressing these questions in the presentation, Amy would have appeared more prepared, as if she had already anticipated questions. Most of the questions the leaders asked were about who would be impacted, how much impact and when the recommendations could be implemented. Amy could have foreseen these questions and impressed her audience by asking and answering them in her presentation.

C. Select the best analysis.

Amy chose to use 18 months of data. It's a good idea to talk about the data that is used, and why that data was selected and other data that's potentially available. It's also a good idea to talk about potential next steps and future enhancements.

D. Collaborate with others

Before presenting findings, Amy needs to show that she's collaborated with other people. When identifying who is impacted, she should reach out to the potentially impacted groups and determine if there are any barriers to her recommendation.



If she can get one of the groups to also advocate her idea, she'll appear much more prepared. She'll demonstrate that she's done her due diligence.

In addition, if her recommendation is potentially controversial or likely to have some of the leaders cautiously opposed, it would behoove Amy to share her findings with one or two of the key decision makers before the presentation. That way, she could make sure that she has at least one voice supporting her recommendations with her.

E. Calculate the costs and benefits of each recommendation as well as the pros and cons.

Calculating an expected benefit (or range of potential benefit) has two advantages. First, it creates more urgency around the recommendation. Second, it shows Amy's senior leaders the value that her ideas are adding to the organization. By identifying the pros and cons of the recommendation ahead of time, Amy can effectively anticipate and deal with potential concerns and

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objections. Also, listing the cons can help identify the risks. If there are risks, Amy should list ways to reduce the risks or the negative impacts to show initiative.

F. Identify the next steps and follow-up items for full completion. Think of additional innovative enhancements and implementations.

Rather than letting the senior leaders decide the next steps and potential enhancements, Amy should have this already mapped out. For example, she could have said, “On page five, you can see I’ve identified talking with the billing area as a next step, do you all agree?” When the leaders say yes, not only are they agreeing to the next step, they are also implicitly agreeing with the recommendation. By suggesting potential enhancements (such as the analysis age and gender) Amy will be both providing options and flexibility and demonstrating creativity.

G. Discuss the data quality and provide any caveats. Peer review work for the highest quality standards and make it easy for the next person who

uses the study by documenting all work and keeping the analysis simple and effective.

Did management effectively encourage Amy to continue to share ideas?

Amy was very motivated to contribute to the team. While the leaders appreciated her ideas, she might have been left feeling that her hard work was underappreciated. It’s possible that next time, Amy could feel discouraged and stall before sharing her great ideas. As managers, consider how your reactions impact employee motivation.

How could Amy’s manager have given feedback in a way that delivered the message, but still left Amy feeling proud of her contributions and wanting to contribute more? ●