

## WHEN YOU CAN'T DELIVER

By Barbara Mencer  
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The poor little guy was bleeding all over the place.

To the emergency room!

Yup. It seems my 22 month old superhero grandson met his match after a daredevil, curb leaping fall off his toy 4-wheeler...when his chin met the pavement.

### TIMELINE:

- 8 pm ...Arrive. Long line of parents and kids at triage window.
- 9 pm ...Seen by nurse. "No food or drink till the doctor sees him." Bandage and numbing agent applied.
- 10 pm ...Waiting
- 11 pm ...Waiting
- Midnight ...Still waiting. Hungry, waaaay overtired toddler running through the waiting area and outside patio. Not crying...just hyper. "How much longer?" "Just a little while...you're next."
- 12:30 am ..."Uh, how much longer, since we're next and all?" "Just a little while. We're waiting for a certain treatment room to become available, since he has to have stitches. Yeah, it's okay if he eats."
- [Insert endless loop of Jeopardy theme music here.]*
- 12:45 am ...Other parents and sick children get tired of waiting and leave. We can't. Did I mention he needs stitches?
- 1:00 am ...Shown to a treatment room. Huh, looks like every other treatment room on the hall. Needed a special room, did ya? Credibility meter pinned on NONE. Another numbing bandage applied.
- 1:20 am ...After about 20 minutes of trying to occupy an active, over-tired toddler in the small 6' x 8' examining room, we finally open the door into the hallway and just let him run. He literally runs full speed circles around the halls, keeping the staff and patients entertained with his antics.
- 1:50 am ...Finally told that there's only one doctor on staff and that's why we had the long wait, and yes, we're next. Well, at least we finally know what the issue is.
- 2:20 am ...Doctor arrives. Grandson gets 4 stitches.
- 2:30 am ...Leave the hospital exhausted...a full 6 ½ hours after we arrive.

Look, I get that a hospital can't exactly send someone to address an emergency room full of sick and injured people and say, "Sorry folks, we're understaffed tonight and you'd be better off going home and waiting till tomorrow or trying to find another facility. We can't handle ya. You'd be waiting forever, 'cause there's just one doctor for 30 patients. It's gonna be a long night."

But just think of the position that puts the receptionists and nurses in. They can't tell the truth! They have to make up stories. Ugh. How awful is that?

Fortunately, in our businesses, we don't have to play those games.

When you can't deliver your products, services, or deliverables in a timely fashion, then tell folks. Explain why. Give them options for how you can meet their needs if they can wait or suggest other avenues that might be available. Don't leave 'em hanging. Don't leave 'em waiting and wondering. And, whatever you do, don't string 'em along with fabricated stories.

Such a simple, basic message. Who could disagree? But have you ever maybe kinda sorta been less than forthright about the real issue when you've been late with something?

It isn't always easy, but here's what you have to do.

*When you can't serve people and when you can't deliver on your promises, say so, apologize, and seek to make a new agreement or help them find alternatives.*

Everybody can understand that stuff happens and you get overwhelmed sometimes.

What they don't understand ... and won't easily forgive ... is being strung along or jerked around while being fed "stories."

It's just not how you treat a superhero ... or anyone else.

For more information and further reading on Accountability, visit our [online library](#).

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