

WEISS



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Think back to sixth grade.

Your teacher is standing in front of the room. She says to your classmates and you, “sit quietly for a few minutes, I’ll be right back. I have to speak with the principal. Don’t get up from your desks!”

She leaves the room.

Two minutes later, the science experiment housed in an open top aquarium on the table next to the flag bursts into flames, turning the flag into a 6-foot torch.

Do you listen to your teacher or get your ass out of the room? Considering you’re still alive, I assume you’d choose to get the hell out of there. Your survival trumps following the supposed rules.

Several years ago, when RFPs for exclusive hospital-based medical services were still a thing (don’t worry, they will be back), I reviewed the request document sent to my client by the outside firm hired by the hospital to manage the process. Right there, on page something or other, was an admonition that all information was to be submitted through the firm and that no action was to be taken outside of that procedure, including any attempt to contact hospital administrators or members of its medical staff.

Were these RFP managers afraid they’d be seen as emperors without clothes? Did they understand nothing about human decision-making, *actual* decision-making, or did they understand it so well that they were trying to prevent it from occurring? Did they honestly think that when *your* school room is on fire you will keep your butt in your chair?

The reality is this: When you're negotiating for any agreement, any deal, especially one that is creating an ongoing relationship, which is the hot molten center of services agreements such as exclusive contracts, you not only want to, but you need to, play to human cognitive biases in establishing that relationship. The hospital might be hiding behind the intermediary, but unless that firm is guaranteeing the hospital's performance under the agreement (that will never be the case so don't worry about it), that firm is just a gatekeeper through whom no relationship can be formed.

Humans like to think they make decisions based on data, but decisions are almost always driven by emotion, with supposed "data" used as backfill for mental coherence. Knowing that, and using it, is a tremendous advantage. Thus, the importance of building narratives, that is, causal stories that support your position. Thus, the necessity of using third parties, such as, in the case of an exclusive contract for medical services, allies on the medical staff, to play to attribution biases and to the need for coherence. Thus, the power of using framing effects .

You might spend \$100,000 or more on a strategic response to an RFP or on negotiating some other significant arrangement. Why compete with one hand tied behind your back? (Would you stay in the burning schoolroom just because your teacher told you to remain behind your desk?)

The object is to win the contract if it is worth winning and, if not, to walk away. It's not to play like an amateur, like the nice guy who comes in last.



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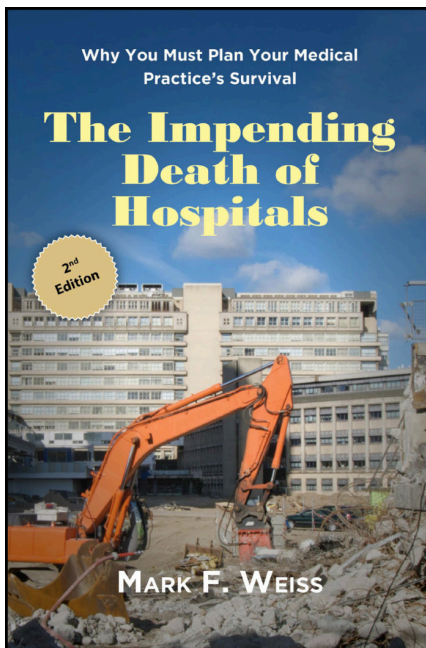


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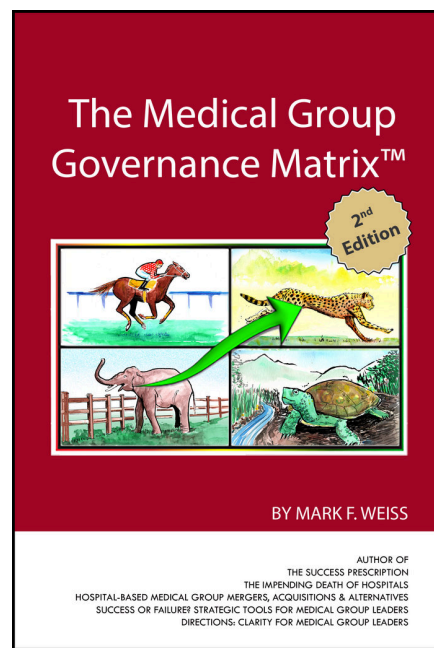
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