

# Decision Processes Colloquia

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**Monday, March 31, 2014**

Where: JMHH 265

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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## **I'll Be Honest, This Won't Be the Best Talk You've Ever Heard: The Use of Dispreferred Markers in Word-of-Mouth Communication**

**ABSTRACT:** Consumers value word-of-mouth communications in large part because customer reviews are more likely to include negative information about a product or service than are communications originating from the marketer. Despite the fact that negative information is frequently valued by those receiving it, baldly declaring negative information may come with social costs to both communicator and receiver. For this reason, communicators sometimes soften pronouncements of bad news by couching them in dispreferred markers, including phrases such as, “I’ll be honest,” “God bless it,” or “I don’t want to be mean, but...” The present work identified and tested in five experiments a phenomenon termed the dispreferred marker effect, in which consumers evaluate communicators who use dispreferred markers as more credible and likable than communicators who assert the same information without dispreferred markers. We further found that the dispreferred marker effect can spillover to evaluations of the product being reviewed, increasing willingness to pay and influencing evaluations of the credibility and likability of the evaluated product’s personality.



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