

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS: THE DEAD ELEPHANT SYNDROME

Imagine you're giving a dinner party in your home. You retire to the living room for coffee and dessert and—lo and behold—there's a dead elephant in the middle of the floor. Now there are two ways you can treat this dead elephant. One is to ignore it, tiptoe around it, hope your guests won't notice it, and ask if they'd like cream or sugar with their coffee. The other is to acknowledge it and make it disappear.

Problems are like dead elephants. In presentations, they can be addressed in two ways:

- Acknowledge the dead elephant and deal with it. This defuses the issue and, in many cases, makes it go away. In most cases, this is the correct strategy.
- Let the dead elephant lie there until the question and answer session and see if the client points it out. In some cases, it is best to let the client raise the issue.

No matter which course of action you take, you must *strategize*, *plan* and *rehearse* how you intend to deal with a problem.