



Leadership Discussion Guide: Horses Will Not Always Drink

You are a statistical consultant. You work with scientists who seek your expertise in statistical analysis. Most of the time, however, they do not like your answer and will do the analysis their own way. You are generally credited on their research when it is published, whether or not they took your professional advice. So far most of the people do good work, however, the most recent study used techniques that were fundamentally misaligned with the data. What do you do?

Issues

Looking foolish
Potential problems with data keeping
What do you really know?
Do you want to work somewhere else?
Do you have other options for work?

Rules and Regulations

Federal research integrity regulations
University's regulations

Resources

Campus and federal regulations
Research integrity officer on campus
Mentor
Colleagues
Parents
National ethics center website

Options

Take your name off the paper
Talk to upper management
Talk to the researcher in question
Talk to adviser or other trusted mentor

Questions

Had the researcher done anything? What? With what results?
If your name was not on it would you care as much?
Assuming you like the company you are working for how would you deal with a researcher that ignored your advice?
What steps would need to be in place to allow you to ensure the quality of research being done?
What is the source of funding for this project?
Is there any possibility that you could retreat to and regroup in your office?





Takeaway Lessons:

- 1) **Information gathering.** You know that several times the person that you give advice to does not want to take your advice, however, you would need more information before going forward
- 2) **Seeking resources.** How are you addressing the way they do research. Do you have an advisor that can help you learn how to deliver unwanted information in a way that ensures research standards. Are you on close enough terms with your Ph.D. advisor or any member of your committee to seek confidential advice from one person? Does your new camps have an ombudsperson who might be able to provide confidential advice?
- 3) **Asking questions.** Once you have gathered the facts so you have a fuller sense of the situation, One option is to talk with previous researchers that have not listened to you and ask why. Explain the benefits to your methodologies and shoe the weaknesses of their current methods. In the end offer aid. Furthermore give them a chance to explain why they are using the methods that they are using.
- 4) **Follow the rules for having a dispute professionally.** Before you have your conversation with researchers you should read and absorb the [rules for having a dispute professionally](#).
- 5) **Possible Consequences.** You have two main options: ignore it or take steps to ensure that the problem does not happen again. If you ignore it your name is on several papers that did not run the proper statistical analysis to get the answers provided. If you take steps to ensure that tis problem is a thing of the past remember that you do not have authority. You need to relate this closer to change management. The support of your superiors needs to be present and you need to be able to have a consequence for the people that do not take your advice, either being your name is not longer on the paper or you will be against them when they are trying to publish. Remember that just because you're are advising them to do one thing does not mean that that is the best action to do. There is a difference between being wrong and having an opinion.
- 6) **Resolution.** The statistician would rarely see the end result and would allow the numbers to be incorrect. They were not happy about it but they were trying to get their superiors on their side before they decided to not help their peers with statistical advice.

