

On-time Delivery

Sanjay works for the maker of a high-end battery that is favored by many electronics manufacturers. Two weeks ago one of their high volume- but also high maintenance – clients placed a larger order with Sanjay for these batteries. Sanjay promised four-week delivery, as that is what he was told by manufacturing. The client called today, saying he just wanted to confirm the batteries would be delivered on time, as he would have to shut down his assembly line if they were late. Sanjay knows, due to shortages elsewhere in the supply chain, that there is a 50/50 chance the batteries will now be late. He is sure the client would go ballistic if he knew, cancelling the order, even though Sanjay still hopes the deadline will be met. He is thinking of just saying “everything is on track” until he has more specific information that the shipment will be late.

Is that the right thing to do? If not, what should he do?

(Case prepared by Kirk O. Hanson, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University, USA)