

Mastering
Management
Communication
November 6, 2013

Say Yes to Saying No

November 6, 2013 at 8:17 am | 6 comments

By Julie Moroney

I'm a people-pleaser. I'm a female entering the traditionally male-dominated business world. with the motto "work hard and be nice to people." I have just about everything working against me when it comes to saying no to people. However, learning to say no can be both refreshing and necessary, and if I have mastered the art of saying no, then so can you.



Hard-working and over-committed often go hand-in-hand in the business world. Leaders—and their employees—often find themselves over-worked and over-tired from taking on too much. We want to work hard and prove ourselves as reliable, conscientious employees, but we also want to have a life outside the office.

A New Perspective

Jill Savage, CEO of Hearts at Home, puts this dilemma into perspective by instructing us to change how we think about saying no. Saying yes to added projects and responsibilities means saying no to people and priorities that mean the most to us, she argues. So when you decided to stay late at the office the other day to help your co-worker catch up on a project he was falling behind deadline on, you essentially said no to a warm dinner at home with your roommate or catching up on the latest episode of *Scandal* with your best friend.



How to Say No

The next time your boss or co-worker swoops by your desk to make an attack (i.e. request), here are the tools you need to have to be prepared to say that two-letter word while still retaining your image and respect at the office.

Practice Until You're Perfect—With any seemingly insurmountable task,

start small and work your way up. Practice saying no when the result doesn't really matter—like when your roommate asks you to go see the latest romantic comedy and



Mastering Management Communication

November 6, 2013

you enjoy horror movies. By making a habit of saying no when it is easy, you'll be surprised at how comfortable you will feel saying no when it is harder.

Prioritize and Budget—*Forbes Woman* contributor Lisa Quast recommends meeting with your manager to prioritize the assignments that are the most important to complete and budget how much time you think each assignment will take. By having a realistic inventory of the tasks you need to complete this week, you'll know how much time you will have left to devote to other things outside your main responsibilities.

Let Them Down Easy—If you are like me, the hardest part about saying no to your co-worker or boss is letting him or her down. If saying no hurts your conscience, try going from "yes" to "no, not this time." Tell your co-worker that this week you are challenged to meet your own deadlines, but offer to help on the next project when you have more time to commit. Maintain your image as someone who is willing to help out, while avoiding becoming that person whom people take advantage of.

Leave the Excuses at Your Cubicle—Saying no needs to come with no strings attached. Adding excuses as to why you can't help only makes turning down the request more personal. If need be, keep excuses short and objective.

Delay, When Possible—How many times has someone asked you for a favor, you said yes, and then after he or she walked away you immediately regretted saying yes? The business world often requires quick decisions, but if the opportunity exists, ask your boss if you could think about his request and get back to him. If necessary, add that you want to make sure you are only committing to things you can definitely follow through on. By avoiding saying yes on impulse, you will be able to really think about whether you have the time to take on added responsibilities.

Say No to Guilt, Too—Saying no involves saying no twice. First, you have to say no to the co-worker who is asking for your help. Then, you have to say no to the guilt you might feel after deciding to say no. Remember Savage's advice and keep work-life balance in mind. Every added responsibility means less time for friends, family, and those things you always want to do, but never seem to have time for.

By learning to say no, you will find yourself happier and with more time. So go download that complicated recipe you keep looking at on Pinterest, or start a new happy-hour tradition with a friend. Saying no when you don't have the time or energy to commit doesn't make you a bad person—it makes you a valuable and trust-worthy worker.

