

LEADING SELF SERIES

PEEPLCOACH TIPSHEET NO: 20

Successful and impactful leaders have learnt the skill of when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no'.

As humans, most of us like to say yes. We like to help people, to add value and to be part of a group or community where we are all moving forward. When we start our first job we have to say yes to every request. Firstly, we are the junior and are expected to complete all tasks as requested. Secondly, that is how we learn.

But as we advance in our careers, we need to stop doing some things and start doing others and this is when the skill of knowing just when to use those important words 'yes' and 'no' becomes critical.

Saying yes to too many requests can leave us feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, resentful and guilty due to our inability to decline requests or set boundaries. This can lead to being constantly overcommitted and stressed. And, most importantly, we end up not spending enough time on the most important and critical priorities.

Saying no to the wrong project, task or person, or in an inappropriate way, can be damaging to the business or your reputation. But not knowing when to say no can be even more damaging. When you say yes instead of saying no, when you work on lower-level activities that don't make an impact or, even worse, when you consistently miss deadlines, submit lower quality work or constantly seem busy and overwhelmed, your reputation of being reliable and trustworthy will be ruined.

And of course, how you say no will be different depending on who you are talking to – CEO or manager versus colleague, friend or child.



**THE POWER
OF NO**

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 **PEEPLCOACH™**
UNLOCK PEEPL POTENTIAL

We all have the same amount of time every day. How we allocate that time, and ensuring we spend that time on the most value-adding priorities, is what transforms a busy leader into an impactful and successful leader.

Why do we say yes or no?

'Yessers' tend to agree before even considering if something is an appropriate use of their time or if it is actually their job to do.

And why do we say yes instead of no? To be nice, to avoid conflict, because we like being busy, because we like to be needed, because we don't know how to say no or just out of habit.

If any of this resonates with you, the next time you feel yourself about to say yes, STOP, then ask yourself the following questions.

- Is this task in my remit and is it my responsibility?
- What other tasks would need to be deprioritised to achieve this OR does this mean I will be working another late night or weekend?
- Where else could I be spending my time that would be more beneficial to myself, my team or my organisation?
- How critical is this activity? What is the real benefit?
- What is stopping me from saying no – guilt, fear, habit, wanting to be liked?

HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS TO SET YOU UP FOR SUCCESS.

1. Pause, ask, listen.

You don't need to respond to everything straight away. Take the time to understand the scope of the task and then consider if you want to or should say yes or no.

2. Be clear, polite and open.

Use responses like the following.

- I would love to but I can't at this time.
- I can but what needs to be de-prioritised to fit this in?
- Wouldn't this be a great opportunity for X person to work on this?
- Thanks for the opportunity but this is not in my top five priorities for this week.

3. Briefly explain why you are saying no.

You don't have to feel guilty about it. If a task is not part of your role, or you have ten other deadlines that week, these are valid and fair reasons.

4. Don't be sorry.

Explain your reasons for saying no without excessive apologising.

5. Don't say yes if you mean no.

This will cause you to feel guilty when this is exactly the feeling you're trying to avoid when giving a negative response.

6. Choose your timing wisely.

Depending on the person you are saying no to and the reasons why, you may need more time to explain your decision. For example, saying no to your boss when they offer you a promotion, the opportunity to travel or a special project will require more time to thoughtfully discuss than saying no to a request to join a spur-of-the-moment meeting.

7. Be rational about feelings.

Remember, it is better to feel discomfort now versus resentment and overwhelm later.

8. Help the requester find other solutions.

Maybe you can't fulfil what they are asking for, but you can still offer them something. If not you, then who or how?

9. Practice makes perfect.

If you know something is coming up to which you want to say no, you can practise or prepare in advance. The more you learn to prioritise and say no when necessary, and realise that the sky won't fall, the easier it will get every time.

10. Consider your impact.

Remember that every time you say yes when you should be saying no, you are taking time from something potentially more important, which might be another task at work or time with your friends or family.

**NOW GIVE YOURSELF
PERMISSION TO SAY 'NO'
AND START CREATING A
MORE BALANCED,
IMPACTFUL AND
PRODUCTIVE EXISTENCE!**



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