



Communication takes place in the mind of the listener, not the speaker.

COMMUNICATION TIP | Just Say “No”

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Just Say “No”

The way you communicate “no” is key to how it will be received. Saying “no” in a caring and compassionate manner can be productive and liberating. When we say “yes” to everything we become indecisive and inefficient and focused on the things that will not benefit our organization or ourselves.

1. If you are going to say “no” come up with a couple of suggestions.

“No I can’t help with that clothing drive. What I can do is recommend that you approach John, I know that the shelter is a pet project for him.”

“No I can’t get you that piece you need by Thursday. What I can do is phone the company and see how soon it will arrive.”

2. When someone asks you to do something, give yourself time to think before you answer.

“Let me think about that before I give you an answer. I’ll call you back in two hours or tomorrow.” Then you will have time to make a decision based on your needs.

3. Write down two or three goals and priorities that you must accomplish at work and at home this week and don’t get side tracked. When someone asks you to do something else, it will be easier to say “no” if it does not fit in with your goals.

“I will pitch that marketing idea to four customers.”

“I will write out four performance evaluations for my staff.”

“I will read one chapter in the new novel I received as a gift.”

4. If you feel pressure, stop, either by putting up your hand in the “stop” signal or looking directly into the person’s eyes and saying “what would you do if you were me?” You are working to find solutions and as a group.

“That is a great project. I understand it is important. My whole team is busy working on the conference. Each person has a role that is integral to the success. I wish I could help, any suggestions for what you would do if you were me?”

5. As you listen to solutions, do not use the word “but” or “can’t because.” Substitute with “and” and “sure right after” or “yes as soon as” and your conversations will progress.

Instead of:

“That is a great idea, but I’ve tried it before.”

try

“That’s a great idea and I’ve tried it before.” (Sounds like you are open to discuss it)

Instead of:

"I can't because you don't have the estimate to me"

try

"Sure as soon as you get that estimate to me, I can begin the calculations."

(Shift of responsibility to the person making the request)

6. If your boss is giving you another deadline or project and you know it can't be done in the timeframe given?

"I have these three things to complete. Which one do you want me to do first?"

(Shifts the responsibility to them)

7. If you say "yes" will the quality of work plunge?

"In order to do the kind of job, our company is known for, we need more time. If we push it through in five weeks, instead of the seven we need to be properly test it, we could run into negative issues. I can't, with a clear conscience say yes."

Then let silence do the heavy lifting so the responsibility shifts to the other person.

Saying "no" isn't easy. Practise it out loud for the first few times in the privacy of your home or office. Saying "no" will help you focus on what's important to yourself and your company or organization.

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