

How to Say No to Anyone Without Feeling Guilty

Once mastered, it's a powerful tool for your arsenal of skills.

June 16, 2020 4 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

In business, it can seem sensible to say “yes” to as many requests as you can, because it's a way to look like a team player who's up to any task. But sometimes, saying “no” and declining a request can be the absolute best thing to do for your business. If you see the following signs, you can feel pretty confident that you can take a pass and not feel bad about it:

1. Not enough time

Taking care of everything that comes across your desk can provide a reassuring sense of competence and accomplishment, and it's never a smart idea to let good opportunities fizzle. But the reality is you'll reach a point where you simply cannot squeeze more into your calendar without sacrificing something. If you're so buried in meetings, phone calls, emails and neverending to-do lists that you can't give the new request the 110 percent it deserves, then feel free to say no in favor of your original priorities, especially if you've got an important deadline around the corner.

Related: 4 Things That Most Entrepreneurs Never Have Enough Time For

2. Not enough money

If the past few months have taught us anything, it's that smart business leaders need to have enough capital to cover themselves in emergencies – which they should spend strategically based on clearly outlined priorities. (Looking at you, Adam Neumann and Kevin Plank.) Look carefully at your objectives, and if a request threatens the budget for those priorities, be clear about your financial limitations rather than pretending that the money for everything will magically appear.

3. Better alternatives

Just because you get a request doesn't mean an offer that better suits your vision isn't already on the table or will be in the future. You don't want to sell a venture for \$5 million, for instance, if another buyer offers you \$10 million. Consider if any proposals might save time, money or both and have clear requirements that have to be met before you'll look at a request more seriously.

It all comes down to the ROI

Saying no without regret boils down to looking at the three points above as a checklist to determine your return on investment. Because your biggest job is to help your company grow and succeed, ask the person making the request to present a professional business case that demonstrates what you'll get back from accepting their proposal. For instance, how will completing their task be worth the time and money you put into it? How will it benefit the company, its shareholders, customers, employees or culture?

As a quick example, let's say someone on your team asks you to get food catered in every week at a cost of about \$2,000 a month. That cost might seem too high to you until the employee

informs you that:

- 60 percent of employees say free food is one of their favorite office perks.
- 90 percent of employers believe providing food and snacks helps create team bonds.
- The benefits of eating healthy include improved mood and memory.
- It could reduce time spent “going out to lunch.”
- Waste can be easily minimized by surveying employee preferences.

Here, the increase in productivity that comes from making the team feel happier and more connected might easily justify the \$2,000 a month you’ll spend. You can use specific KPIs to verify that people are in fact working better and improving your bottom line due to the catering.

Related: Your Employee Advocacy Program: Measuring the Right KPIs

The bottom line

Every request has a potential cost and return. Both good leadership and life satisfaction occur when you think logically about those costs and what they might yield. And when you learn to say no, to requests that don’t merit the cost, you by default also learn to say yes to the things that will truly help you thrive. Remember to consider your time, money and alternatives when someone approaches you with a request, and you’ll always find clarity about which answer to give.

loading...

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/351623>