

SAY NO TO THOSE NEEDY COWORKERS



Summary: Being able to say "no" when a favor or task becomes burdensome is the smarter option for your career success.

Have you ever had that co-worker that is always asking for "favors?" You might be knee-deep in a big project that they know about but still come to you continually for help. Being the nice person that you are, you typically say "yes", but we are here to tell you it is okay to say "no."

Saying "no" to a boss or coworker can be very difficult, because you may feel like you are missing out on possible opportunities. However, taking on too much will make possible opportunities and successes disappear.

Here are a few circumstances when saying "no" is the better choice:

- The deadline to finish the "favor" or task is unrealistic. For example, having to give a presentation the next morning when it would normally take a week to prepare for is unfair. Trying to cram a good presentation into that tight frame will leave you looking unprepared and possibly unprofessional.
- The task interferes with your other primary responsibilities. If you already have a busy schedule that leaves little time to fit other things in, taking on a task that has to be done in the next five minutes doesn't fit in. (See **Managing Time is a Fast Paced World** for more information.)
- The task is beyond your capabilities. While learning new things is great, having to do so in an hour may not result in the best result. For example, if you are asked to write a technical report on tax law or OSHA and you are unfamiliar with it, don't take this task as your first attempt at the topic.
- You are on vacation. Enough said!
- You are being taken advantage of. Doing a favor for a coworker every once in a while is fine, but when a coworker starts coming to you daily to do their job, then it is time for you to put your foot down.
- The task is unethical or unsafe. If the task you have been asked to do makes you uneasy for any reason then pass.

If saying "no" is something that is very hard for you to do, just remember to take a deep breath, apologize for not being able to help and offer an alternative. Don't add in a "if I get time" or "maybe" clause, because then you are right back in the situation of taking on a task that you shouldn't have.

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