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## How to Say "No"

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### Introduction

Imagine a conversation like this taking place between you and one of your good friends, Richard.

**Richard:** "I need to ask you a favor."

**You:** "Sure, what's up, Richard?"

**Richard:** "As you know, I'm on the board at the local Chamber of Commerce. Our speaker at our monthly dinner tonight just called me and he has the flu and won't be able to speak."

**You:** "Mmm, okay?" (as you get an idea of where this is going)

**Richard:** "Since you have over 1000 fans on Facebook and have gotten business from it, would you be able to talk about using Facebook for business? It would really help me out."

As Richard says these words, your mind starts to fragment a bit. You knew what he was going to say before the words came out. You may feel yourself getting some anxiety. You have a major deadline. Besides that, why didn't he ask you to talk before this? You not only don't have the time to attend the dinner and speak, you also don't have the time to prepare. It could be an opportunity for you - after all, some of the attendees may be potential business prospects for you and you also want to get some speaking experience in. It would be a nice thing to add to your resumé. You really don't have the time. But you like Richard. You don't want to let your friend down.

Before you know what hit you, you respond, "Sure thing!" You hang up the phone and find yourself asking what just happened.

Have you ever had something like this happen to you? It might not have been a request to speak. It might not have been a request to do something that could have been beneficial to you in some way. But if you're like people, it's not uncommon to find yourself agreeing to do something - especially for free - when you know you should have said no.

Why do we do this? There are a lot of possible reasons, but the primary ones for most of us is that we just don't want to let people down and we may also not want to pass up on opportunity.

In this special report, I'll be focusing on how to say no to free requests. In "[Converting Free to Paid](#)", we'll be going into a considerable amount of detail on how to also say no for other kinds of requests.

## **The #1 Time Management Tip - Learning to Say No**

As business owners and freelancers - or for that matter, pretty much most people these days - we're overburdened with responsibilities and things we should be doing.

Most of us feel that we need extra hours in each day to get everything done that we need to. Sleep and time with family, friends and spent on our passions often gets put on the backburner just to cope.

I've studied a lot of different methods of improving productivity and time management. I've discovered that there is no one fits all solution. There's not a single method that works for best for everyone.

At the same time, I've come to understand that regardless of which time management system you use - learning to say no is the single biggest thing we can do in order to improve our productivity and get a better handle on our time.

Too many yeses will mean we end up over-committing ourselves. Saying yes when we shouldn't can mean reduced or lost revenue. You can get caught up in a vicious cycle where you can never catch up.

## **It's Okay to Say No**

First, realize that it is really okay to say no. Often it's not just about doing the best thing for us, but for our family and friends, our existing paying customers and even those who may be asking us for help or to take on paid work that we have to decline.

I want you to close your eyes, take a deep breath and say, "It's okay to say no." Imagine all the stresses associated with saying "yes" leaving your body. Acknowledging that it's okay to say no is the first step towards being able to say it comfortably to other people.

## **The Positives of Saying No**

There are a lot of positives to saying no. Let's consider some of them:

It keeps you focused on your business and your long-term plans.

It frees up that person to move onto the next... chances are that someone approaching you also has someone else in mind to approach other than you. Telling them straightforward, "No, I can't help you," will allow them to move on faster.

Saying no can help keep you in business and have a growing business by allowing you to better focus your time and creative energy.

Finally, you are avoiding over-committing yourself.

## **The 3 Steps to Saying No**

Finding the right words to say no can be difficult when you are first getting started with it. There's a simple 3-step formula I like to follow when figuring out what exactly to say:

1. **Validate the person by acknowledging the importance of the request.**
2. **Say no.**
3. **(Sometimes) offer an alternative.**

### **Step 1 - Validation**

The validation step serves a few purposes:

1. **It communicates to the person making the request that you understand that this is important to them.**
2. **It communicates to the person making the request that they are important to you.**
3. **It enables you to get to the "no" gracefully.**
4. **It minimizes potential damages.**

### **Step 2 - Say No**

Once you've validated the request, simply say, "No." This has to be done firmly so that it's absolutely clear that you're unable to help them.

You do not need to explain why you are saying no. You also do not need soften the no. As long as you've validated their request, nothing other than a no is needed.

### **Step 3 - Offer an Alternative**

Although it's not necessary in every situation, there may be times where you are able to offer the person an alternative source for getting their request fulfilled.

## Example - How to Say No To Richard

Let's go back to the scenario I gave with Richard and I'll give you a couple of examples of how that could be handled appropriately:

**Example 1 - all 3 steps:** "I'm so sorry to hear about your scheduled speaker becoming ill and that you're having to find a replacement last minute. I appreciate you thinking of me but I'll have to decline. Why don't you give Mary a call and see if she'd be available? She's a fantastic speaker!"

**Example 2 - steps 1 and 2 while keeping the door open for the future:** "I'm so sorry to hear about your scheduled speaker becoming ill and that you're having to find a replacement last minute. I appreciate you thinking of me but I'll have to decline. That said, if you have an opening for a speaker at one of your upcoming dinners, please feel free to get in touch with me and I'd be happy to consider it."

## Conclusion

If you're not used to saying "no" when people ask you to do things, it can definitely take some getting used to. It can be especially difficult to decline requests made face to face or over the telephone. I suggest starting off by practicing with electronic (email, private messages and text) requests so you can take your time putting together a response. You can then ease yourself into saying no in direct contact with others.

## What's Next?

If you'd like to increase your income, reduce your stress and have a lot more fun in your business or freelancing career, you may be interested in my "[Converting Free to Paid](#)" training program. This is a 3 week program focused on helping you draw the line between free and paid, monetizing requests, figuring out an action plan and, in some cases, creating products to fill gaps. On top of top-notch training, you'll be able to attend a live Q&A call I'll be giving at the end of the training program.

To get more information and sign up, please visit [ConvertingFreeToPaid.com](http://ConvertingFreeToPaid.com).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.