

Inability to Say "No"

Very often there are colleagues, team members, managers, customers and even suppliers who "just need a minute" of your time... Murphy's Law dictates that this of course happens when you are working on a most important task or during your "power hour".

Try the following:

- 1) Acknowledge their request (Try to delay a definite answer).

"So you are preparing your presentation for next Monday and you want me to change some of the tables for you."

- 2) Explain what you are doing at the moment. Make them understand what that means for your current work.

"I am afraid that I have to finish this report off first as it has to go to the Management Committee by the end of the day..."

- 3) Tell them what you can do or cannot do.

"I am sorry but I will not be able to help you today but if useful, I can help you on Thursday...?"

Other points:

- Say it with a neutral tone of voice; never sound annoyed, shamefaced or harassed. Say it with a smile but be genuine.
- Do not say "yes" to fill the silence.
- Be prepared to repeat your no at least once.
- Offer an alternative if you can and make a suggestion that combines your and the other person's interest.
- If you are dealing with your manager make him or her aware of it and get him or her to decide for you. E.g. "*I can't fit that into the work priorities I have at the moment. Is there something that you'd like me to put on hold while I do this?*"
- Help the other person understand what that means for your current work.
- Ask for time to think about it if you need it.
- If you feel angry count to 5 before you answer.

Remember:

- If you always say "yes", others will take your help for granted. Break the habit (not just for the sake of it but to ensure that others don't automatically bank on you helping them).
- Stake your efforts on something that really matters and show results in that field

- Learn to say 'no' without giving offence - "I would have liked to if it had been possible, but let me offer a suggestion....."
- It is better to do less, well than a lot, poorly! Don't confuse ACTIVITY with EFFECTIVENESS