



Why say no?

How often does someone reply to you (when you ask for something or need something to be done) with, “that’s a unique request, let me see if I can support it?”

It seems that people are more likely to tell you, **no**. **No**, that can’t be done. **No**, we’ve never done that here.

I’ve witnessed it in our school system, in a recent conversation about why my daughter couldn’t wear a shirt with the American Flag on it. The Principal told me that because of the way the flag appeared on the shirt, it was considered a logo. I proceeded to explain why the American Flag is not a logo, but a symbol of freedom. The conversation that day ended with the Principal telling me, “that’s just the way it is, and we would have to bring it before the board to change it.” Work.



It would require her to do more work - that is the bottom line. Since then, that administrator has moved on, is no longer the principal, and we proudly wear the American Flag to school.

I've even seen this mentality in the Marine Corps, with seasoned staff non-commissioned officers, who are accustomed to doing things 'the way its always been done.' My great friend and Executive Officer proposed a plan to conduct Tank Gunnery training in a new way. Tankers take "Gunnery" extremely seriously in the Marine Corps. The Executive Officer proposed that we bring infantrymen and helicopter gunships out and integrate them into our live-fire training package. This would require an incredible amount of paperwork, approvals, surface danger zone de-confliction, and TIME. There was an immediate, "No, we can't do that," from the senior leaders at the table. To which my Executive Officer replied, "Why not?" There was no valid reason why we couldn't do it, other than, "it's just never been done, Sir." It would require extra WORK.

We also see this play out in our interaction with front line representatives of companies (clerks, store managers, etc.) Why is that? The answer is simple: if you walk out that door, it's less work for them. An employee who feels no skin in the game or real ownership of the product or service they deliver, will want to minimize the work he or she must do. Sending customers away is not necessarily stealing, and the risk of getting caught is low, but if you're the owner/employer, it's literally robbing you blind.

During my time at The Program and my ten years of marriage, I have learned and continue to improve on both sides of this issue. Number one, I RARELY tell a client "no." There is a cost associated with every request, and if you want it for your team, we can almost certainly make it happen. I learned that concept, not only from our Founder and CEO, but also from my wife. Her



out of the box home improvement ideas have pushed me further outside my comfort zone than any training or combat scenario I've ever participated in, in the military.

Number two, I don't take **no** for an answer. If you say no, I will typically ask, "what is the limiting factor?" It may be cost, or time or risk aversion. Regardless, all those reasons can be mitigated. Persistence is rewarded! I had a client call me this morning and thank me for my persistence over the past year in following up with her on a training package for her next generation of leaders. She said that it's rare to see such personalized persistence, and that she was looking forward to working with us soon!

Leaning toward "**no**" will not propel your team to greatness. Finding a way to say "**yes,**" will. If you can instill a feeling of ownership in your team, where they feel like they share in the benefit of client satisfaction, you will have people that make decisions in the best interest of the company, even in the absence of their supervisors. With that mindset every player, client, and customer they help will have the potential to improve the team, your reviews or to bring in more business and in the process, you can eradicate the "**no**" instant reactions from your team.

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