

When saying yes to no is right

By Heather Gurewitz

“No” can be a scary word. From a customer service perspective, we want to be accommodating; the customer is always right; go the extra mile; above and beyond. These are all very important concepts and it is true that when you own your business, your customer is the boss — to an extent. However, there are times in business when “no” is better than “yes.”

It is great to go above and beyond, but if you can't deliver your promise, it can get you into trouble. Don't be pressured to commit to something you are not sure will work for you or your business. Use a phrase like, “That sounds like a great project but I need to check a couple of details before I give you a commitment, I will get back to you by tomorrow and let you know.” This gives you the opportunity to look at all the factors involved and to see if the work you are taking on is work you can accomplish without sacrificing quality, timeliness, profit, or the goals of your company. It also gives you time to develop an alternative solution.

A flat out “no” won't necessarily build your customer loyalty, but phrases like: “This isn't the kind of project I normally take on, you should check with ...,” or “My schedule is full right now, but I

would be happy to check back in a couple months,” are possible solutions. This shows that you care about them and the quality and timeliness you plan to deliver.

It is important to be clear, honest, and communicative. Saying yes when you should say no or being unrealistic with your clients can ruin your reputation as a reliable business, resulting in lower pay for your work and less profit. Whereas a reputation for high quality work and timeliness may result in clients being willing to pay more for your services.

It can be tough to know when to say “no.” If you don't have a good business strategy, are constantly shooting from the hip, and tracking everything in your head, you may not be able to give a good answer. Good pricing and a strong business strategy can help you make these decisions and, of course, as the Small Business Development Center and the Women's Business Center, West Company is here to help entrepreneurs work through the process. It's a time investment worth saying yes to!

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Register for business workshops

The Building a Better Business series is back, revamped along the lines of those Choose Your Own adventure books from childhood. Now you can choose the business workshops that you want, whether you are already in business or planning to start one. Not only that, this series is now offered in Spanish. Start dates are Aug. 24 for English-speakers and Aug. 26 for Span-

ish speakers.

If you've already taken the Better Business series, consider a more in-depth look at your business's financial performance with Profit Mastery, a hands-on workshop in two parts, coming up on Oct. 9 and 16.

West Company will also offer a short series of workshops tailored to service-based businesses. From determining the right price for the service you offer, to

marketing that service, these will happen in late October.

Space is limited, so call now to register, 964-7571 or visit their website at www.westcompany.org.