

Saying No

By Rob McKelvey

So now you are a manager!! It says so right on your business card so you must be one. With your role as a manager come new responsibilities, challenges and issues that may not have concerned you in the past. One of these issues is the necessity at times to say "NO". Who do I have to say NO to I hear you ask. Well you may have to say no to your staff, your boss, and even to yourself.

Lets take a look at some examples of saying NO.

Your boss comes up to you and asks, maybe demands, that you do something out of the blue. You know that you do not have the time and that the activity would seriously disrupt what you are working on. The easiest way to say NO to his request is to say: " I would be happy to do it. Which of my current projects would you like me to stop doing in order to do this new one?" or " I can do this new request however it will impact the deadlines for some other projects that I am working on. Are you OK with that?" By remembering this type of response it takes the pressure off of you.

Another example is staff who are expert at upward management and delegation. That means they get you to do their job for them. In situations where staff are continually coming to you and asking you for answers or solutions to problems a three step approach is often useful. Over a period of time take this approach when a staff member, for whom you are responsible as a manager, comes to you looking for you to solve the problem when it is part of their responsibility not yours.

1. Step one is to discuss the problem in detail with the employee and then give him a solution to it while at the same time telling him/her that this is the sort of thing you expect them to resolve.
2. The second phase when they come to you with a problem is to ask them what they recommend as a solution. Commend the person on taking ownership of the problem. You can then discuss the solution's validity if needed.
3. Stage three is to ask the person what they did to resolve the problem when they come to you with one. Eventually they will come and tell you how they resolved an issue or problem.

As a new manager it is difficult at times to give up the tasks that you were responsible for doing before you became a manager. So the hardest person to say NO to is actually you. It is, however, important to say NO when you find yourself doing the jobs that others, now reporting to you, are responsible for. It is also important to say NO when you find yourself micro-managing the people that are doing your old tasks just so that you can keep your fingers in it.

You may find it difficult to say NO to old mates, to whom you used to be a peer, when they are wasting your time on trivial matters. Things that may not seem

trivial to them. This is the hardest NO to say because you don't want to alienate them and appear aloof and uncaring. It may be useful to explain to these mates that you still value their friendship, however in your new role as a manager your priorities have changed.

NO is such a small word. Why is it so difficult to say? Practise it a few times a day and it will become easier to say.