

## Guest blog: Stop saying yes when you want to say no

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05 October 2010 by Sophie

***'No' is one of the most important words a business owner has: it's crucial for time management, negotiating and focusing your energies in the right place. Sue Hadfield and Gill Hasson, authors of [How to be assertive in any situation](#), explain how to use it.***

When it comes to other people's needs and demands, some of us are wired to say yes to everything: 'Yes I can give you a discount', 'Yes I can take on that extra work' and 'Yes, I'll come to another networking event'.

Here, we look at five common mind traps, uncover them for the tricks that they are and identify ways assert yourself.

### **1. The confusion trap: saying yes when I mean no**

Saying yes to other people's needs can be so automatic that it's only after you've agreed to do something you realize, actually, you don't want to do it at all!

**The escape:** Notice how you feel. When, for example, you are invited to yet another pointless networking event, you feel tense or get a sinking feeling, be aware that these feelings are telling you that you don't want to go.

### **2. The pressure trap: I have to give an answer immediately**

No you don't! But it is easy to feel pressured to say yes or no to someone else's request and forget that you have the right to think about it first.

**The escape:** Ask if you can get back to them. For example, a client needs to know if you can rearrange your commitments and fit in a piece of work for her to be completed by the end of the week. If you're unsure, ask for more information, time to think about it or discuss it with someone else. If she still needs an immediate answer and you don't feel able to give her one, suggest she asks someone else.

### **3. The money trap: I can't turn down potential clients who require services that I do not offer because I need the money**

**Escape:** Recognise that taking on work you are not really capable of will leave you stressed and risk your professional reputation. Taking on inappropriate work does not give you the opportunity to focus on what you like to do. Stick to projects that include the services you do offer - build your reputation and long term financial security.

### **4. The consequences trap: If I say no, then something bad might happen**

It's easy to believe that saying no will result in the other person refusing to work with you or use your services in future. But this fearful way of thinking leaves you feeling stressed and out of control.

**The escape:** Don't be a victim! Before you turn the other person down, identify the possible consequences of saying no and decide how you could manage them.

### **5. The excuses trap: I have to give several reasons why I'm saying no**

The more reasons you give, the more convincing you'll sound. Right? Wrong! In fact, the more excuses you give, the less believable and more desperate you sound.

**The escape:** Know that other people can see through your excuses. Recognise that you only need one genuine reason not to do something. Know that the more excuses you make, the weaker you appear!

**Find out more about Gill and Sue's new book: [How to be assertive in any situation](#)**