



Transformational Leadership & Service Podcast

Episode 14 Transcript

The Positive No

How often has this happened to you? You are working away, minding your own business, when the phone rings. On the line, you discover a friend, family member, business associate or perfect stranger. They all share a common bond. They want something from you. It could be your money, your time, your effort or your influence. Whatever it is, you quickly determine that you don't intend to participate. But it's not easy to tell them so. So what do you do?

Most of us, at one time or another, have stammered, stuttered and stumbled our way through such a situation, offering feebly, "Well, that sounds very interesting. I don't know if I can work it out or not. I tell you what, let me think about it and I will get back to you within the next few days. Okay?" The caller is suddenly filled with hope and anticipation of an affirmative response. The truth is, you have absolutely no intention of saying "yes." However, you are hesitant to admit this. You don't wish to disappoint the person and worse still, damage a future working relationship. What to do? The following suggestions may help.

Too often, when someone approaches us with an opportunity, we tend to assume we are the only person on earth they have considered. In reality, more often we are the umpteenth and final person on their long list of vague possibilities. That's why they are working so hard to get you to agree, to say "yes." If not you, who? Desperation proves to be a wonderful motivator. When facing such pressure, try practicing the "positive no." It is simple, straightforward, effective and can be accomplished in five easy steps.

Step 1: Listen *honestly* to the complete thought, idea or suggestion. Many people *hear*, but don't *honestly listen*. Occasionally, promising opportunities are missed entirely because we make up our minds too quickly. The best listeners make the best leaders. It enables them to be aware of all the options before them. Therefore, it behooves all of us to invest the time to hear the person out before making final judgments. Remember, great ideas can come from anyone, anywhere, any time.

Step 2: Consciously determine your level of *willing involvement*. Decide, after hearing the proposition, whether you *really* want to participate or not. Again, be honest with yourself. You will know. Your gut and head will tell you.

Step 3: If you decide to participate, *proceed enthusiastically.* If you choose to participate, give it you all. Don't hold back. Don't hesitate to demonstrate your genuine excitement and enthusiasm for the undertaking. Remember, enthusiasm is not taught, it's caught. Maybe others will join you in the endeavor, infected with enthusiasm they catch from you.

Step 4: If you decide not to participate, state your intentions *quickly and definitively.* *"John, thank you for thinking of me. I won't be taking advantage of this opportunity at this time..."* Keep in mind that for those who will understand your decision, no in-depth explanation is necessary; for those who will not understand your decision, no in-depth explanation will suffice. Just be honest. If the opportunity fails to capture your imagination, don't struggle to manufacture enthusiasm. False enthusiasm serves as a poor foundation for productive accomplishment.

Step 5: Offer *additional alternatives.* *"What's so positive about saying 'no,'"* you may be wondering. *"It sounds as negative as ever to me."* Up to this point it certainly does. But, we can make a negative (no), positive by offering alternatives. *"No, John, I won't be taking advantage of your offer at this point, but have you ever considered... (list alternatives.)?"* When you leave people with alternatives, you leave them with hope. And hope is good – of that fact I'm positive!