



## THE ULTIMATE PRODUCTIVITY

### HACK IS SAYING NO

Not doing something will always be faster than doing it. This statement reminds me of the old computer programming saying, “Remember that there is no code faster than no code”.

The same philosophy applies in other areas of life. For example, there is no meeting that goes faster than not having a meeting at all. This is not to say you should never attend another meeting, but the truth is that we say yes to many things we don't actually want to do. There are many meetings held that don't need to be held. There is a lot of code written that could be deleted.

How often do people ask you to do something and you just reply, “sure thing”. Three days later, you're overwhelmed by how much is on your to-do list. We become frustrated by our obligations even though we were the ones who said yes to them in the first place.

It's worth asking if things are necessary. Many of them are not and a simple “no” will be more productive than whatever work the most efficient person can muster. But if the benefits of saying no are so obvious, then why do we say yes so often?

#### **WHY WE SAY YES: -**

We agree to many requests not because we want to do them, but because we don't want to be seen as rude, arrogant or unhelpful. Often, you have to consider saying no to someone you will interact with again in the future your co-worker, your spouse, your family and friends.

Saying no to these people can be particularly difficult because we like them and want to support them. (Not to mention, we often need their help too). Collaborating with others is an important element of life. The thought of straining the relationship outweighs the commitment of our time and energy.

For this reason, it can be helpful to be gracious in your response. Do whatever favour's you can and be warm-hearted and direct when you have to say no. But even after we have accounted for these social considerations, many of us still seem to do a poor job of managing the trade off between yes and no. We find ourselves over-committed to things that don't meaningfully improve or support those around us, and certainly don't improve our own lives. Perhaps one issue is how we think about the meaning of yes and no.



### ***THE ROLE OF NO: -***

Saying no is sometimes seen as a luxury that only those in power can afford. And it is true turning down opportunities is easier when you can fall back on the safety net provided by power, money and authority. But it is also true that saying no is not merely a privilege reserved for the successful among us. It is also a strategy that can help you become successful. Saying no is an important skill to develop at any stage of your career because it retains the most important asset in life, your time. There is an important balance to strike here saying no doesn't mean you will never do anything interesting or innovative or spontaneous. It just means that you say yes in a focused way.

### ***HOW TO SAY NO: -***

Most of us are probably too quick to say yes and too slow to say no. It's worth asking yourself where you fall on that spectrum. If you have trouble saying no, you may find the following strategy proposed by Tim Hartford, the British economist. He writes, "one trick is to ask, "If I had to do this today would I agree to it? It's not a bad rule of thumb, since any future commitment, no matter how far away it might be, will eventually become an imminent problem.

If an opportunity is exciting enough to drop whatever you're doing right now, then it's a yes. If it's not, then perhaps you should think twice. This is similar to the well-known "Hell yeah or No" method from Derek Sivers. If someone asks you to do something and your first reaction is "Hell yeah" then do it. If it doesn't excite you, then say no. It's impossible to remember to ask yourself these questions each time you face a decision, but it's still a useful exercise to revisit from time to time. Saying no can be difficult, but it is often easier than the alternative. As writer Mike Dariano has pointed out, "It's easier to avoid commitments than get out of commitments. Saying no keeps you toward the easier end of the spectrum. What is true about health is also true about productivity an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

### ***THE POWER OF NO: -***

More effort is wasted doing things that don't matter than is wasted doing things inefficiently. And if that is the case, domination is a more useful skill than optimisation. I am reminded of the famous Peter Drucker quote "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all".

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