

## 3 times you need to push back at work

Learn how to say 'no' to safeguard your reputation as a standout employee.

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You want to be known as the person who gets things done at work, taking on assignments and knocking them out of the park. You want to get noticed by the higher-ups in hopes of propelling your career forward.

But being a “yes” person isn’t always the way to go about this. In fact, there are times when saying “no” to an assignment or request might be in the best interest of your reputation, your career, and even the company.

How can you determine whether to push back on the demands being made of you? Monster spoke with experts to find three times when saying “no” is the only way to go.

### **When you don’t have the resources**

There is a difference between thinking you’ll do a poor job and knowing for sure that you will. The possibility of failure isn’t by itself a reason to refuse a project—some failures can be great learning experiences for you and your team, says Kelly Meerbott, leadership coach and principal of You: Loud & Clear in Philadelphia. But if, after consideration, you know you can’t possibly deliver on what you’re being asked, it’s probably best to push back.

How can you gauge the outcome in advance? Start by asking yourself if you have all of the necessary tools to complete the assignment properly. This could include access to data, additional manpower, special equipment, etc.

For your career’s sake, you want to produce the best results, and you can’t do that if you aren’t set up for success. Would a construction crew be able to build a great house with just a hammer and some wood? Not likely. Furthermore, the finished product wouldn’t reflect well back on the crew.

“If the failure is likely to damage your professional brand,” says Lauren Still, strategic career advisor and founder of the Denver-based Careerevolution Group, “sometimes it is better to gracefully decline or use the conversation to revisit expectations about the assignment.” Explain to your boss why your current resources aren’t cutting it and exactly what you’d need to deliver exceptional results.

### **When the timeline is unreasonable**

Another clear indication that you should push back is if your plate is full and time is of the essence.

Look at the deadline you’re given. Is it doable? Are you allowed to put your other duties on hold to focus on this new project, or are you expected to keep up with your daily responsibilities? “How much quality work are you able to do if you’re just trying to get through and get it all done?” asks Meerbott.

If you can't deliver great work, then don't say yes just to say yes. Your credibility is on the line. Promising something you know isn't possible only makes everyone come out of the experience unhappy because no one gets what they want, says Debra Wheatman, president and founder of New York City-based Careers Done Write.

Instead, present a deadline that is more feasible. That way you'll show your boss that you aren't shirking responsibility but that you're more interested in doing a great job rather than simply beating the clock.

### **When you feel the request is unethical**

No matter how much you hate to say no, refusing to do something you think is morally wrong or possibly even illegal will give you a reputation as someone with integrity.

"Part of being a good leader is understanding when something isn't appropriate or isn't the right thing to do," Wheatman says. For example, you may be asked to fudge reports in favor of the company, deliberately mislead clients, or something more illicit.

Your desire to get ahead should never cloud your better judgment. "If it's going to misalign your moral compass, it's an automatic no," Meerbott says. "It's never worth your integrity."

Explain that you're not comfortable doing what you've been asked. If your wishes are not respected, it's a real red flag and you should start combing Monster for a new job sooner rather than later. Doing something unethical will not go unnoticed, says Wheatman, because someone always finds out.