

Entrepreneur

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By John Rampton

Which Meeting Requests Deserve Your Time, and Which Don't

Guard your time and improve your productivity without burning out.

Several months ago, a friend of mine invited me to a party he was throwing—no special occasion, just a get-together. I let him know that I would be attending, but by the day before the shindig, I wondered whether I should be spending this time on my business.

I begrudgingly went to the gathering, and eventually, I was able to let go of my wish to be working. It was great to catch up with people I haven't seen in a while. Oddly enough, some of us were even talked about our businesses and exchange ideas and advice.

Many people have difficulty deciding which requests deserve their time and which don't. As a result, they spend [valuable time](#) and energy frivolously. [As Dr. Teyhou Smyth says in Psychology Today](#), "Corporate burnout has taken out far too many top executives. It seems there is always a little more room on the schedule to take on 'one more thing,' then one day, it takes you out."

Usually, doing too much starts with expanding the projects that you are already working on. You're already too busy, then you take on one more job. You get tired, you work too many long hours, you don't balance your life. Here's some advice on how to know when to say "yes" and when to say "no."

The case for and against "yes."

As Susie Moore explains in [HuffPost](#), it's "not about being a 'yes person' or feeling pressured to do things we don't want to do. It's about having the courage and conviction to do the things we know we want to do."

According to Moore, saying "yes" more often will change your life in the following ways:

- It opens you up to new and exciting opportunities.
- It leads to a more creative, fuller, and vibrant life.
- It attracts positivity.
- It pushes your limitations.

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Additionally, in a previous [Entrepreneur](#) article, Chris Hutchins writes that "saying yes is the quickest, most efficient way to learn."

On the flip side, though, it's often suggested that you actually do the opposite and say "no" more often.

Accepting every invitation will prevent you from being successful and productive. As Warren Buffett famously said, "The difference between successful people and successful people is that successful people say 'no' to almost everything."

Listen to what your body says.

"Check with your body for the right answer," [writes Eric Haseltine in Psychology Today](#). "Our bodies have their own wisdom that we often ignore because, as a social species, our brains have evolved to suppress negative emotions about others."

Because our brains suppress negative emotions, "we frequently don't know what we feel and what's best for us," adds Haseltine. "The suppression of feelings is unfortunate because our bodies are the battlefields on which conflicting emotions go to war, producing 'battle damage' that harms our health."

For example, let's say you received a meeting invite. Instead of being excited, you have uneasy emotions. If your body is saying "no," you should too — decline the event.

If the request is not so apparent to you, Haseltine suggests asking yourself which answer creates a stronger reaction and go with that.

Identify your standard and live by it.

"The easiest way to know whether to say 'yes' to something is to know your standard," writes Julie Compton for [NBC News](#). If you're not exactly sure what your rule is, it's a code or measurement "something that is personally important to you, whether it's health, love, success, or something else."

I'd also add that your standard could be your values, beliefs, and life goals. In a quiet moment, think back and recall [your priorities](#). Your priorities give your life meaning and help you become the best version of yourself. If saying "yes" could comprise any of

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these priorities or principles you've set for yourself, then you'll want the answer to be a hard "no."

Look at your calendar.

Just think of how many times you've agreed to a conference call, social event or new project without consulting your schedule. Next thing you know, you're overcommitted, double-booked, and stressed out.

Whenever you receive a time request, check your availability. I'm not just talking about the exact date and time — let's say that you have a meeting that ends at two p.m. and you have an invite for another at 2:15 p.m. Sure, you could make that second event, but considering that you have to go across town, it would be unrealistic to make it on time. Instead, you should schedule this meeting at a later time or another date.

Are you saying "yes" out of guilt, obligation or FOMO?

None of us want to disappoint others, but it's impossible to please everyone. Don't feel pressured to turn down a request if your gut is screaming "no." If it's not pushing you any closer to your goals, then it's not worth your time.

The same is true with the fear of missing out. It sucks, but you have to make sacrifices in life. Do you want to start your own business? If so, you might have to put in 80-hour workweeks until it's launched. When you have extra obligations, you'll have to put your social life on the back burner temporarily.

Can it be delegated?

When a time request comes my way, I ask if it could be handled by someone else. It's not out of laziness: Maybe there's someone else who is more qualified than I am. For instance, if there were a technical issue with my company's app, I would have my developer fix the bug.

Other times, interruptions or requests may be something that's not worth your time because they're tiny or tedious. Learn quickly how to delegate tasks to someone else.

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Weigh the pros and cons.

Before making a final decision on more significant tasks or requests, let the requestor know that you need a day or two to mull things over. Try to make decisions quickly, but if you decide that you should say "no," be honest with the individual without explaining yourself.

You can always compromise and find alternatives. So what if you can't have a conference call this Friday morning? Schedule it next Wednesday afternoon when you have a free block of time. Can't attend a friend's birthday party this weekend? Take them out to dinner when you have the flexibility.