How to Say "No" to Your Boss (And Look Good Doing It)   by Kathi Guiney SPHR, GPHR President of *YES!* Your Human Resources Solution.

You have just been approached by your boss to jump on a project and know you do not have the time. Now what?! Your boss has the power to impact your career, and nobody really likes hearing "no." So if you're going to say "no, it would be best to deliver that message in the most favorable way possible. In this case, the most favorable way possible is to seem like you're not saying "no" at all. And the real trick to turning down your boss is to never, ever, use the word "no."

So how can you say "no" to your boss without actually saying "no"?

- **Give a real, logical reason**. If you're going to turn down your boss, expect to explain your reasoning. This will show that you have carefully considered the situation, and will also help your boss to understand your thought process. Make sure you consider the business consequences of the rejection before you cite a reason (and indeed, before you choose to reject the request at all). Also, remember to give an honest reason. Inventing an excuse always sounds like the "dog ate my homework".
- **Show, don't tell that reason.** Package your refusal in a scenario that allows your boss to make the final decision. Express your willingness to assist, then show how busy you are (your boss doesn't always know!) by detailing your current list of projects and deadlines. Ask your boss for suggestions on how to prioritize or if there are projects that can go on the back burner for a while. This will help illustrate a realistic time frame for completion and your boss can make an informed decision to reassign the project, extend the deadline, or reprioritize your workload.

At the end of the day, the company is negatively impacted when employees have more on work on their plate then can be done well.   Learning to say "no" with tact and with solid reasoning can help you and the company focus efforts on the right projects and ensures these projects are staffed appropriately to meet deadlines. So in the end your "no" is like saying yes to meeting the company goals of best results.