



## When Enough is More Than Enough: Saying No to a Client

By Dana Kader Robb

When you were a start-up business person, you probably thought, “saying no to work? I wish I had that problem.” As the old saying goes – be careful what you wish for ‘cause you just might get it.

Many of us reach a point where we question whether or not to accept a new project or client. After all, money is money and it’s one of the primary reasons we’re in business. But what are some of the other reasons? Many of us started our companies because we love the work we do. We wanted to be able to help other people. We wanted to work for ourselves and not have to answer to a boss with whom we may not agree.

So from these angles, does it make sense to turn down a new opportunity? It does if you believe that you would hate doing the work. It does if you don’t think that you truly help that person in the best possible way. It does if you believe that you will not agree with their methods or their desired outcome and that it would be compromising the integrity of your work to take the project. Or if you’re just too busy to do it right!

If taking a job will end up costing you money and aggravation, it’s not a job worth taking. If you have prior experience with a certain client and know that they are never satisfied, think the rules don’t apply to them or expect more than their share of attention, turn them down next time. It’s important to know your limitations – the limits of your ability and your willingness to give.

Sometimes we just have a hunch that a certain project or client is not a “good match.” Go with that hunch.

### I Want to Say No, But it Comes Out Yes

Learning *how* to say no is just as important as learning when. It’s something we should be fairly good at since it’s one of the first things we learned to do as a child. But somewhere along the line most of us forgot the joy of that little word.

Here are some great ways to say no while still maintaining your good reputation.

- I don’t believe you’ll be satisfied with the work I could do at that price (or in that amount of time, or whatever).
- Right now I can’t give your project the time and attention it deserves.
- No, but let’s see what we *can* do within your budget.
- I just don’t feel I’m the best person for you at this time.

### The Santa Scenario

There’s one thing that you can often do that will make the sting of a “no” much easier to take – refer your client to someone else. If you can say, “I can’t do this, but I think so-and-so might be able to help you” then you will be seen as a resource and a valuable contact. Remember the Santa from *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* and how he sent the mom to Macy’s because they had a better price? By the end of the movie he was a very popular guy in part because he knew when, and how, to say no.