In today’s collaborative work environments, managing **incoming requests** has become a crucial skill for both professional success and personal well-being. With a steady stream of asks from various internal and external sources, it’s impossible to say yes to everything without overcommitting and burning out. The key is learning to assess requests effectively and delivering a well-reasoned "no" when necessary, while ensuring that every "yes" you give sets you up for success.

**Assess the Ask**

* Just as you would conduct long term effort before making a financial investment, it's important to carefully evaluate requests before responding.
* This involves getting clear on the details of the ask by engaging the requester with thoughtful questions: Who is asking? What is the deliverable? When is it due? What resources are required? What are the costs and benefits?
* Creating a habit of drafting an "intake memo" (repeating/rephrasing what the other person has asked for) helps clarify requests and prevents misunderstandings.
* This process, even for small asks, can reveal hidden complexities or uncover more straightforward paths.
* Moreover, sharing this information with the requester ensures mutual understanding and builds trust in your judgment.

**Deliver a Well-Reasoned No**

Saying no can be tricky but necessary to avoid overextending yourself. A good "no" is based on a clear, logical assessment of the request, while a bad "no" stems from poor judgment or personal biases.

A good no should go through three "gates" of consideration:

1. **Is it allowed?** If a request violates rules or policies, a straightforward no is appropriate. Offering to help reframe the ask to align with the rules can also be a useful alternative.
2. **Is it feasible?** If the request exceeds your abilities or resources, it's better to decline. In some cases, it might be an opportunity to develop new skills, but be clear about the time and effort involved.
3. **Does it make sense?** This is the most subjective gate, where you need to assess if the request aligns with priorities and offers a high likelihood of success. If you're unsure, ask more questions before committing.

Timing is key. Respond to requests promptly, but avoid rushing to say no. If the answer is not now or not at this moment, communicate that clearly. Offering alternative solutions or timelines can help preserve relationships and opportunities.

**Give an Effective Yes**

Saying yes should be reserved for requests that align with your skills, priorities, and the organization’s goals. A good yes is strategic—it enhances relationships, adds value, and showcases your ability to execute.

When you do say yes, ensure there’s a clear plan. Outline what needs to be done, by when, and how you'll work together with the requester. This level of clarity sets expectations and prevents misunderstandings.

**Conclusion**

In a world where requests are constant and overwhelming, your ability to assess, prioritize, and respond effectively is essential. A thoughtful "no" will protect your time and energy, while a focused "yes" will ensure that your contributions are impactful and valued.