

Learn the power of 'no'

By **Jessica Newhall**
Clatsop Community College
Small Business Development Center

Having counseled hundreds of business owners at the SBDC, I have found that the challenge and peril of leaders trying to “do it all” is pervasive and fraught with a lot of tension. This quest to achieve success in one’s career and be a great partner, spouse, parent, respected community member, friend, practice self-care and manage a household can be daunting, if not impossible.

For women, the societal imbalances, particularly in the home can add additional stress. A 2020 study by Oxfam and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research found that women in the United States spend two hours more each day cleaning, cooking, taking care of children and doing other unpaid work than men.

Regardless of gender, the reality is that often the same characteristics of what makes someone a great leader (the willingness and aptitude to step up) can also be their Achilles heel. So, what is the solution? Well, sometimes it comes down to learning how and when to say “no.”

In my June article for this publication, I shared my own personal mental health struggles as a result of getting stretched too thin. When I started my brick-and-mortar business after years on the road in the media business and running a consulting business, I was so excited to finally be able to be a part of my community. I said “yes” to every opportunity that came my way: committees, board positions, partnerships, volunteer opportunities. I got involved wherever I could — thinking it was what you were supposed to do as a local business owner. My business partner, who had decades more experience in owning a business than me, saw this and counseled to focus in on the opportunities that would have a positive effect on my goals and our business. Well, sometimes we must learn from our own mistakes. I will never forget the time when I got the call to



Jessica Newhall

hear my home water had been turned off because I hadn’t paid the bill — for months! I had just been so busy that I just kept stuffing the bill in my purse as I ran out the door thinking I would pay it later that day. It didn’t happen and that phone call was the proverbial, and later literal, cold shower wake-up I needed to tell me to cut back and refocus my time more effectively.

In the Clatsop SBDC’s Small Business Management Program we talk a lot about the practice of “making time to work on your business, not just in it.” This means taking the time to analyze, strategize, forecast, and plan for growth. Many business owners understand the need for this — but when it comes time to do it, there’s little room for it mentally and time in the day. So they turn to the SBM program as supportive, programmatic path towards achieving that. Here are some of the guiding principles that we teach, all of which can apply to leaders of any type of organization:

• **Get clear on your goals.** What do you want to achieve, personally and professionally? How do the various opportunities and activities you do or are considering help you achieve those?

PERHAPS YOU CAN LOOK TO THIS COMING CHANGE OF SEASONS AS ONE WHERE YOU CAN REFLECT WHERE YOU ARE ON THE BALANCE SCALE AND WHETHER THERE IS ANYTHING YOU NEED TO SAY “NO” TO.

• **Prioritize.** What is critical to the achievement of your goals and what could you take off your list?

• **Be proactive, not reactive.** On the “Thrive Global” podcast, Ashton Kutcher shared a productivity tip that he starts his day out by making a list of all the things he wants to accomplish. Before he responds to any emails or does anything for anyone else, he shoots off all the emails, makes the calls and does all the activities that further achievement of his goals. It is only once he has done those things that he turns to responding to others.

• **Choose you and your goals first.** There is a quote by Paolo Coelho on my refrigerator that says, “When you say ‘Yes’ to others, make sure you are not saying ‘No’ to yourself.” Give yourself permission to choose you and your goals.

• **Question and evaluate before you say yes.** On an episode of Brene Brown’s “Dare to Lead” podcast, the actor, director, producer, activist and leader, America Ferrera once gave the following leadership advice: “learn how to allocate the resource of you.” Before you say yes to that board position, committee role, decision to attend a networking event, ask yourself “how will this positively affect my ability to achieve my (or my business’s) goals?”

• **Learn how to get comfortable saying no.** Sometimes saying “no” can seem harsh and, if you are like me, perhaps FOMO (fear of missing out) can rear its ugly head. If you are worried about saying “no” or closing the door completely, maybe try just saying “thank you, right now is not the best time — but keep me in mind in the future.”

I’ve always thought the fall was a powerful

time for a re-set. Maybe it’s the “Back to School” energy or that the days grow shorter and there’s less time for “doing” and more time in the evening for reflection? The Jewish New Year’s celebration Rosh Hashanah always takes place in the autumn and is a time of introspection, to look back at mistakes over the past year and plan changes for the one ahead. Perhaps you can look to this coming change of seasons as one where you can reflect where you are on the balance scale and whether there is anything you need to say “no” to.

Jessica Newhall is the associate director of the Clatsop Community College Small Business Development Center. She can be reached at jnewhall@clatsopcc.edu.

APPLIANCE PACKAGE DEALS

Over 30 years in Clatsop County!

Mattresses, Furniture and More!

J & S

APPLIANCE AND HOME FURNISHINGS
529 SE MARLIN, WARRENTON

503-861-0929

Hours Open: Mon-Fri 8-6 • Saturday 9-5 • Sunday 10-4

We Service What We Sell



Coast River
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Business News Updates
e-edition

CoastRiverBusinessJournal.com

