

# Should You React Like This When Your Boss Says No?

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Should you react like this? ICLIPART

Hearing “no” has never been fun. Not when asking your parents to let you attend a must-go event. Not when proposing to the love of your life. Not when trying to close a client deal.

But not all those “no’s” can stall your career like a turndown from a boss. Supervisors may be negative about your requests and

proposals for any number of reasons:

- They were born in negative mode and still operate that way routinely.
- They're insecure.
- They fear losing control.
- They don't trust you or your abilities.
- They're feeling tired and overwhelmed.
- They're misinformed.
- They're more knowledgeable about the politics of a situation than you are.

Identifying the reason will help you determine the way forward—around the roadblock. And yes, if you're wanting to take on more responsibilities and expand what you can do for your organization, a series of "no's" from your boss can block your career advancement for a long time.

Step one.....

## Dive into the Deep Why

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Try to identify the why behind the “no.” You can always ask for the boss’s reasoning—but not like a pouting teen, with plenty of attitude. Tone, body language, and phrasing matter a great deal. Show sincere concern and curiosity about the response. Try something like, “I’m sure you have good reasons. Are you at liberty to share them with me?” Or maybe: “I’m disappointed, but definitely want us to solve problem X. Why do you think what I suggested wouldn’t work or be appropriate?”

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Said with respect, such a statement assumes the best—that the boss has good intentions and solid reasons.

So likely responses might include these: “The timing just isn’t right. We’re under a tight deadline to do X first.” Or: “Our focus needs to be on Y for the next 6 months. That’s where my priorities are now.” Or: “That may be a good idea. Why don’t you gather some preliminary data for me and get back to me later.”

## Get Agreement on an Initial Step

Before plunging off the deep end with a big, unexpected proposal, start on the shallow end. Get agreement on a “first step” by suggesting something that’s hard to reject. For example, let’s say customers have been complaining on social media and by email that front-line customer-service agents give out wrong information to callers.



Instead of making your first request approval to revamp the entire customer-service department, get agreement from your boss that “something must be done to reduce the growing number of complains.”

You might ask, “Do I have your approval to survey our front-line customer-service agents about their most difficult calls? As a first step in improving things, I’d like to see how our own reps view our growing number of complaints?”

If the boss okays this initial step, later you can take the analyzed information and propose the bigger, end-goal: revamping how incoming calls are routed for the best results.

## **Get Agreement on a Common Concern or Goal**

If your proposed solution has been axed, aim to get the boss to agree that “something needs to be done” (or changed or improved). Let’s say you’ve “gone for the Gold” on your first request and got a resounding “no.”

Step back and ask the boss if he or she agrees that although your proposal may not be the ideal solution, something needs to be done about the situation before the next quarter. Or maybe you ask if the boss still plans for the team to achieve X before year end.

Full stop.

At this point, you’re not proposing ANY specific plan, change, or effort. You’re simply asking the boss to agree that you understand the concern or goal and have a common interest in addressing it.

For example, “Do you agree that the procedure needs to be reviewed to prevent a potential safety hazard?” Although the boss



may dislike your proposed solution, it will be difficult for a boss to respond, “No, let’s just leave the procedure and hope nobody gets hurt.”

## Find the Boss’s Go-To Person

Of course, ideally, you will have already established yourself as a trust advisor. You provide your boss with good data and up-to-date information on an ongoing basis. You speak up in meetings with creative solutions and well-founded opinions. Other colleagues seek your opinions on similar issues.

But if you’re new in the job or have lost credibility because of a past mistake or bad judgment, then figure out who the boss does listen to most often.

Win that person over to your way of thinking before approaching the boss. Maybe that’s with a pre-meeting to present your idea and “get their feedback.” Or maybe you win them over by sending along links to articles, surveys, or other research. When your proposed idea is more important than who shares in the credit, by all means, find colleagues willing to support your pitch.

If you’ve ever worked in sales, you understand that a “no” from a prospect can mean many things: “Not now.” Or “We don’t have the money.” Or “Go away; I’m busy.” Or “I don’t trust you.” Or “I don’t need your product/service at all.” Salespeople rarely expect to close the deal in the first conversation. Neither should you.

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