

NEVER SAY NO

By: Robert Sher

On August 9, 1966 I learned a valuable lesson that has been extremely helpful to me over the years. It happened while I was sitting inside the hospital waiting for the birth of my first child.

The Chief of Obstetrics, Dr. David Feld, of blessed memory, had a booming voice and an impressive manner both inside and outside of the delivery room. I overheard his conversations with residents and nurses. During this time, the nurses and residents asked him questions and one of them made a suggestion.

I don't recall what exactly the suggestion was, but I remember Dr. Feld's reply because it has stuck with me throughout my life. He said, "Yes. Good idea. Did you ever look at it this way?"

By not saying "no," Dr. Feld energized the nurses and residents to think, bring things to his attention and grow in their respective jobs. Over my years in business I've discovered that "no" is the worst word you can use when addressing an employee who takes the time to offer a suggestion or ask a question. By saying "no," you will diminish an employee's worth. What's more, you will prevent yourself from hearing another person's perspective on how the business is running.

There is a different, and more effective, way of doing things. You should try listening to employee suggestions and using them to find new, meaningful ways to improve business operations. Not only will this type of leadership yield continuous and valuable suggestions, it will also increase morale and retention of workers who feel they are valued and are being listened to.

Since you can't be everywhere and see everything all by yourself, it is critical you encourage employees to bring suggestions, information and opinions to you. This will be helpful to your employees' growth as well as to you and the business for which you are responsible – whether you own it or are a piece of the senior leadership management team.

By not saying "no," you are being open-minded, and showing employees that your office door really is open. This is so critical a skill in today's business world that has so many leaders who say their doors are open yet don't listen well and are easily threatened when a challenge arises by someone beneath them on the corporate ladder.

When you open your mind and listen to your employees' suggestions and concerns, you will be amazed at the improvement you will witness in employee involvement and self-confidence. Perhaps your employees will want to devote more time and energy to your team – not run away from it for a better job somewhere else. They will feel valued . . .

and who doesn't want to feel important?

The truth is, as business leaders, we need all the help we can get. Asking for – and welcoming – suggestions will only lead to finding better ways of doing things and, ultimately, better ways of making the customers happy. It is a win-win for the employee, the customer and your business.

If you want a happy and more productive workplace, access the wisdom and experience of your group. Getting employee's ideas is necessary if your business is going to remain competitive in today's business climate. Open your executive doors and open your mind and you will create a more productive and satisfying work environment for your entire team.

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