

PROBLEMS AND PLEASURES: PART II

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You may recall I wrote an [blog](#) on the impact of “no problem” versus “my pleasure”. In response to my request for responses, I heard back from one reader with a specific request:

I have an employee that often says “no problem” when I ask if she can handle a project or if she believes a deadline can be met. What I have learned from her over time is that “no problem” often means I’m completely uncertain, unprepared or perhaps not invested in that particular item. Her rubberstamping response of “no problem” actually has become an alert for me that I should absolutely be concerned as there is most likely a problem coming.

I believe I need to no longer accept that response and instead ask questions that require engagement and commitment from her in the project. That will be focus for future interactions. Perhaps your next post on this will give me some insight in how best to do that!

Great question—how do we shift the conversation from the gratuitous response of “no problem” to one that has significance and clarifies there really is an opportunity to achieve the goal, overcome the challenge, or even properly address the issue at hand?

Like most leadership qualities, this starts with you. How often do you respond with “no problem” when there are several problems included in the request at hand? I’m not suggesting you immediately adopt “my pleasure” language, particularly when the task is not one of pleasure. Authenticity starts with you, if you want it from others. Once I operate authentically, then I begin creating trust with others who see my consistent delivery of ME.

Now you are operating authentically, step one. Step two, check in with your person. “No problem? Really? I’m checking on that as I sense this is a tall order.” Or, “Really? No problem? I expected more questions, or some pushback on this one. Tell me what you think about the project in general?” Anything that introduces the opportunity to admit complexity beyond their comfort is a good step in helping your employee speak up more authentically.

Final step, create a check in deadline. You assigned a project with some uncertainty about their ability to contribute fully, right? Co-create a timeline for check in — “I’d like you to stop by my office with an update next Wednesday.” This not only puts responsibility in the equation, it communicates that an in-person conversation will be had. Then immediately write it in your calendar, just in case they don’t stop by you have the accountability in place to drop by and say, “Hey, I thought you were going to stop by today. What happened? Where are we on XXX?” The shift in the relationship will take several of these opportunities, and the outcome will be lasting appreciation and honest, vulnerable conversations that are more “my pleasure” than “no problem”. Win-win!

For more information and further reading on Communication & Leadership, visit our [online library](#).

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Judy understands teams. And she knows how to help you maximize the potential of yours. For over two decades, Judy has applied her vast knowledge of team dynamics, emotional intelligence, work/life balance, leadership, finance, and legal management to help law firms improve their people, process, performance and, ultimately, profits.

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