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# Getting to No:

## Tactics and Scripts to Stay Close to Your Path

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**Planning is easy,  
execution is hard.**





# First: Understand the “Yes”

# Why say “yes”?

- Solve a problem
- Alignment
  - Strategy
  - Values
  - Positioning
  - Differentiation



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# Why say “no”?

- Doesn't solve right problem
- Lack of Alignment
  - Strategy
  - Values
  - Positioning
  - Differentiation





**It's what you say, AND  
how you say it**



# 1. Explain why

“Not mission-aligned”



“This quarter we are focusing on strengthening infrastructure.”

“That would be amazing, but we’d have to rewrite our entire system.”

“We are expanding features for our current market, not expanding to new markets.”

BONUS: Know your audience

## 2. Ask why

“How do you see the project aligning with our mission?”



“We planned to do X. Can you walk me through the compelling reasons to do Y?”

“How much additional marketshare will this realize, and in what time period?”

BONUS: why do they feel so strongly?



# Empathy!

## We're on the same team

### 3. Offer an alternative

“Would this workaround help?”



“We can’t accommodate that request. They were interested in project X, maybe they could beta test it next month?”

“My team doesn’t have the capacity, but Q’s team might.”

BONUS: remind them of the plan and ask for an alternative.

“I’ll bump it up the chain.”



“That’s a worthy project; I’ll see if we can do it next quarter/year.”

“That sounds good; I’ll have to research that to make a business case.”

“Can I get back to you on this?”

**BONUS:** Ask them to help.

## 4. “Not Now”



“I’m pretty sure it’s a ‘no’ but I’ll bring it to Q.”

“Should we get Q on the call?”

“I brought it up in quarterly planning and Q said...”

## 5. “No” from someone else



## 6. “Yes”

“Huh, that wasn’t in our plan, but this is worth changing the plan.”

“I think we can delay X project so we can do Y.”

”I’m going to see if Q’s team can do project X so we can do project Y.”



“It’s too hard” “We don’t know how.”

“My reputation is on the line.”

“The team vacations in August”.

SAYING ANYTHING UNTRUE

BONUS: No after yes.

**BONUS:  
How NOT  
to say no**



# **BONUS:**

## **How to get better**

Write down the situation



Revisit it with another person or at another time

Re-assess - would a different tactic have been better?

Listen

Create and consume art



# Story time: Quarterly planning



**Story Time:  
You don't understand!**

**Thanks for understanding**

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# Q&A