

# Mastering the Art of Saying "No" for CIOs

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As CIOs evolve from service providers to true partners and digital leaders, mastering the art of saying "no" is increasingly important. Saying "no" effectively will help CIOs maximize the time they can spend on high-value initiatives and enhance their leadership reputation.

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## Key Findings

- In the digital age where IT has the potential to provide growth and competitive advantage, CIOs are increasingly feeling the need to say "no" to excess or nonstrategic work to make room for strategic digital work and opportunities.
- Many CIOs work within IT departments that are positioned as service providers to their enterprises where saying "no" to requests is either forbidden or discouraged.
- As a result of this historical taboo against saying "no" to stakeholders, many CIOs have little practical experience doing so and lack techniques for saying "no."
- CIOs who are willing but unable to say "no" successfully, risk gaining a leadership reputation as conflict avoidant or unable to manage the complexities of true executive leadership.

## Recommendations

CIOs eager to master people dynamics and enhance their leadership reputation should:

- Improve their ability to say "no" by mastering and using the "assertive no" rather than the "aggressive no."
- Adjust their techniques for saying "no" based on their relative position to the target of the "no" on the hierarchy.

- Scenario plan for escalations and resistance, given the possibility that the target will say "no" to the CIO's "no," and take countermeasures to ensure their "no" is sustainable.
- Set a reputational objective for themselves as leaders who have a healthy approach to conflict, healthy business relationships and the ability to say "yes" and "no" appropriately, and match their conflict management style to that objective.

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## Analysis

CIOs are under increasing pressure to deliver growth and competitive advantage through digital initiatives. More than ever, CIOs aspire to be strategic leaders in the enterprise. One of the keys to doing this is creating the capacity to focus on high-value work by avoiding low-value or excess nonstrategic efforts. A core challenge CIOs express is the inability to say "no" to colleagues and executives who are accustomed to thinking of the CIO and IT as service providers. In a service provider relationship, the business sets expectations that service providers are never supposed to

say "no," even when resources are scarce or the request lacks business value. Tremendous IT resources are squandered yearly due to this dynamic.

Most CIOs express a clear willingness to say "no" and have many valid business reasons for wanting to do so, including the issue of redirecting IT capacity to critical digital initiatives. The reason many CIOs do not say "no," is not because they lack the desire; rather, it is because they lack the techniques and understanding of the mechanics of how to say "no" effectively. Saying "no" is more complex than uttering the single syllable, and CIOs recognize this challenge.

The historical IT leadership style associated with service provision took away the opportunity for many CIOs to say "no." Practice does make perfect, and many CIOs positioned as service providers have had little opportunity to practice saying "no." As a result, many CIOs either failed to develop the appropriate "no" skill set, or their toolkit became rusty through lack of use. Much of the existing body of literature on saying "no" focuses on "why" individuals should say "no," with an almost exclusive self-help orientation. Corresponding research on "how" to say "no" is remarkably scarce. To fill that void, this research focuses on the mechanics of how CIOs can say "no," rather than why.

The mechanics of "no" can be challenging. There are many misconceptions among CIOs and other leaders regarding how and when to say "no" that can get in the way of successful outcomes. These include:

- "You never say 'no' to your boss."
- "You should always say 'no' without actually saying 'no.' Say something like, 'yes, but ...' instead."
- "Saying 'no' damages relationships, so avoid doing it at all costs."
- "Service providers should never say 'no,' or they will lose credibility."

Many CIOs will say "yes," worried that they will feel badly later for saying "no." Unfortunately, they sometimes end up feeling resentful as a result of an excessively heavy workload or for working on low-value projects that consume time they would prefer to spend on more strategic or digital initiatives.

In addition, individual beliefs and methods guide how and when we say "no." Some national cultures have particularly strong norms around saying "no," the role of hierarchy, and the importance of the individual versus the importance of the community or the collective. CIOs must factor in specific cultural elements in their situation when applying the techniques described below.

## A Successful "No" Creates Three Positive Outcomes

CIOs can say "no" effectively and overcome many of the common misconceptions. A successful "no" accomplishes three things (also see Figure 1):

- **The "no" stops or prevents an event from happening.** The initial outcome most CIOs seek from saying "no" is preventing a specific event from happening. This might be starting a new project, continuing a project or losing resources. If the "no" stops the event, this is the first

indicator of CIO success. However, it is important to accomplish this in a manner that ensures the next two, often more critical, outcomes.

- **The "no" creates or maintains positive relationships.** CIOs express a strong desire to avoid damaging relationships by saying "no." Contrary to common beliefs, saying "no" often improves relationships with key stakeholders, including the CIO's direct boss. Those who never say "no" reinforce the belief that they are service providers. They inadvertently make themselves subject to unrealistic expectations and the associated criticism when those expectations are not met.

CIOs who effectively say "no" communicate to others that they are leaders who have values, rules and priorities of their own. These CIOs also position themselves as partners who expect reciprocal relationships from their peers, rather than a one-way service relationship where IT gives and others take.

- **The "no" sends a specific leadership message.** When individuals describe a leader, CIO or otherwise, one of the first adjectives they often use describes the leader's relationship with conflict. For example, they might call a leader "decisive" or "aggressive" or "collaborative" or "conflict avoidant." CIOs must decide what reputation they want and match their conflict management style to that objective.

Figure 1. What Is the Optimal Outcome We Want From the "No?"



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

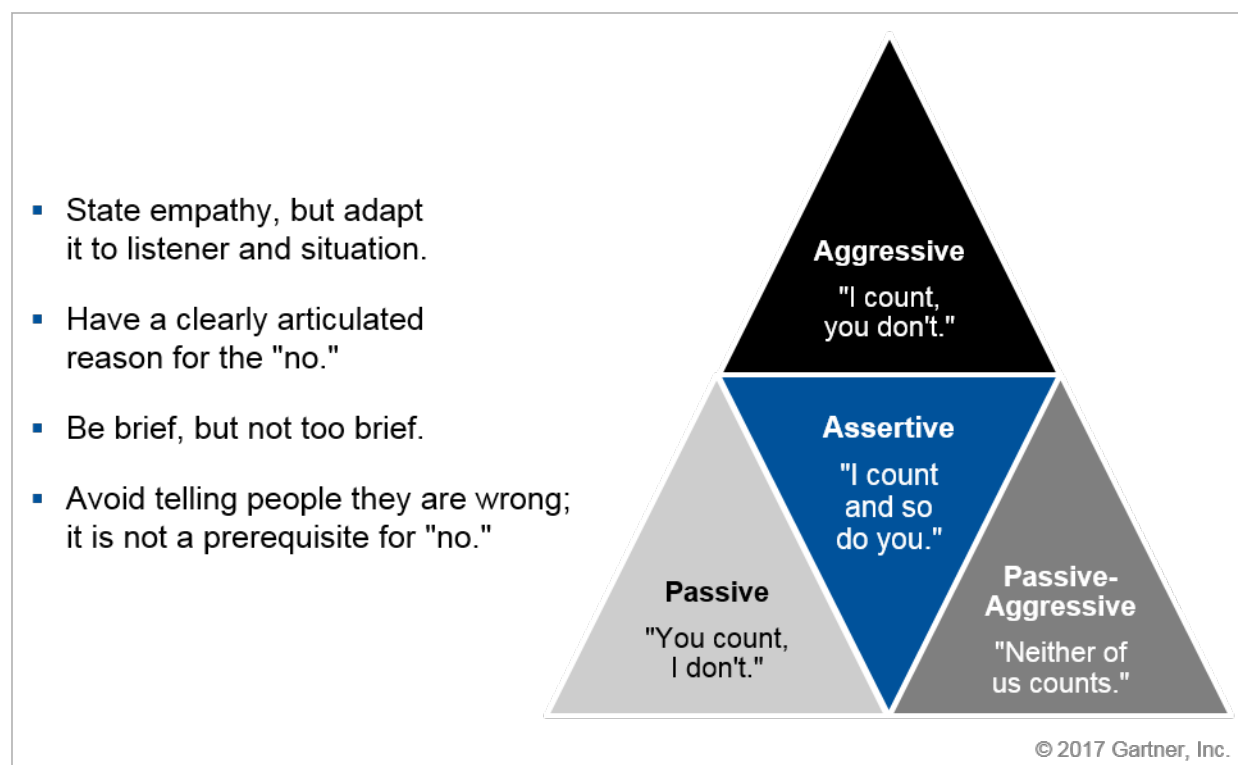
CIOs who master saying "no" create a reputation as a leader with opinions and positions of their own. They also develop a reputation for making difficult decisions in a diplomatic manner. Such CIOs gain greater confidence from other key executives, colleagues and their teams.

Every "no" event that a CIO engages in will inform that reputation. This research encourages CIOs to consider setting a leadership objective for an "assertive" reputation.

## Strive for the "Assertive No" Rather Than the "Aggressive No"

CIOs strive to say "no" while achieving positive relationships and reputational objectives. The "assertive no" accomplishes this by establishing a respectful approach to the objectives of the CIO and the objectives of the requestor. Figure 2 highlights the different types of "no" and outlines how to achieve the strived-for "assertive no."

Figure 2. Strive for the "Assertive No"



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

When any leader is in a potential conflict situation, possible responses range from passive to aggressive. Consider a scenario where a key stakeholder requests a project that is beyond the capacity of an already-overloaded IT department's staff and budget. The CIO has four primary options:

- **Passive:** A CIO might respond passively and avoid offering resistance or saying "no" in any way. In this case, the intention of the CIO may be to garner a "can do" and "always say yes" attitude to gain friends and credibility. Unfortunately, when CIOs acquiesce to project requests that are beyond their resources, they can inadvertently communicate that the objectives of the requestor matter, but the objectives of the CIO and IT team do not.

- **Aggressive:** On the opposite end of the spectrum, the CIO might provide resistance to the extreme of not considering any requests that are beyond the resources of the department. In this case, the intention of the CIO may be to protect both the IT department and the enterprise from overextending themselves and unnecessary failures. This CIO may strive for a reputation as a strong and capable leader who delivers on everything he or she promised.

Unfortunately, this CIO may appear uncompromising and to lack empathy for what matters to the stakeholders. These CIOs may have good intentions in efficiently cutting off debate or consideration of requests that may seem unrealistic, but they may accidentally create enemies of stakeholders who may feel their priorities and pressures do not matter to IT.

- **Passive-aggressive:** In this scenario, a CIO might say "yes" to the request. However, on some level, both the CIO and the stakeholder recognize that the project will not be executed or will not be executed as either intends. In many cultures, this option is considered preferable to anything resembling open conflict that may make the players uncomfortable or risk the appearance of a lack of collaboration.

In cultures where this occurs, uncertainty and resentment can grow and become toxic for all stakeholders. Neither IT nor the stakeholders win in this scenario, and neither feels as though they matter. But neither side may feel empowered or have the appropriate tools to engage in a healthier resolution of the situation.

- **Assertive:** In this scenario, the CIO says "no" to the request, but in a manner that communicates that the requestor and the requestor's objectives matter. It establishes or reinforces a mutual relationship and respectful understanding that helps both parties come to a constructive resolution.

To deliver the "assertive no," CIOs should:

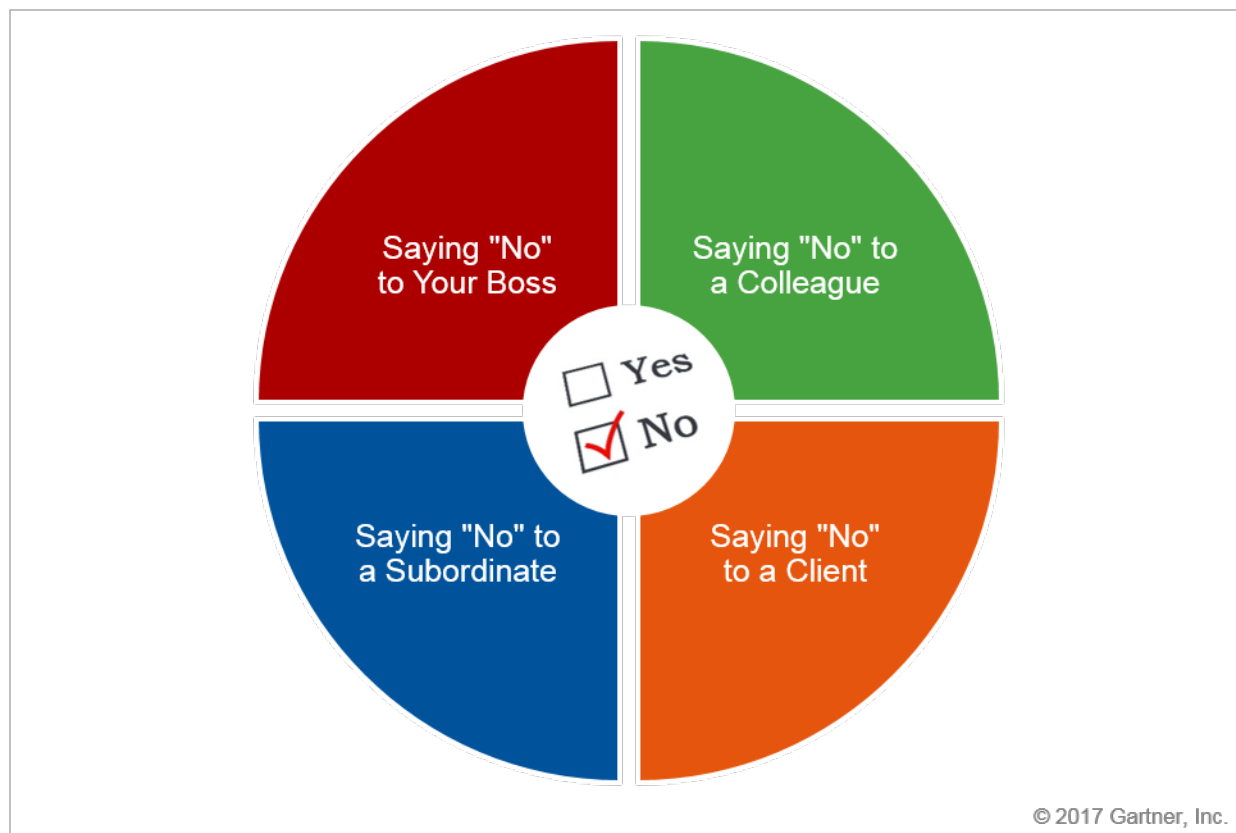
- State empathy, but adapt to each stakeholder and situation. Stating empathy with the requestor's objectives and situations can defuse a potential conflict or escalation, and can encourage reciprocal empathy between the stakeholder and the CIO.
- Have a clearly articulated reason for the "no." There must always be a valid business or resource reason for a CIO to say "no" to a stakeholder.
- Be brief but not too brief. Explaining the no too little can make the CIO appear dismissive or arrogant, and, therefore, aggressive. Explaining too much risks appearing defensive.
- Avoid telling stakeholders they are wrong; it is not a prerequisite for the "no." Telling others they are wrong can appear aggressive, especially when accompanied by a large amount of data. Few people appreciate being told they are wrong; even fewer appreciate having being presented with data that proves it.

The "assertive no" leaves both parties in the exchange whole. Ideally, both participants should leave the interaction feeling respected and heard, understood and acknowledged. Even though one will walk away giving a "no" and the other receiving it, both accept the outcome in a healthy exchange.

## Hierarchy Matters When Saying "No"

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to saying "no," and one of the most important variables is the hierarchy. Hierarchy matters because there is risk inherent in saying "no." There is a significant difference in the risk associated with saying "no" to one's subordinate, boss, colleague or client. As a result, different tactics apply. As always, CIOs should start with the end objective in mind, which will vary according to where the requestor is in the hierarchy (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Start With the Hierarchical End in Mind When Saying "No"



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

**The subordinate "no" should encourage future input.** From a power perspective, saying "no" to a subordinate's requests or ideas poses significantly more risk to the subordinate than to the CIO. However, if the CIO delivers the "no" too aggressively, then the subordinate may avoid being proactive in the future. Research indicates that individuals react more strongly to negative feedback than to positive. So, undoing the effects of an unintentionally harsh "no" can be time consuming. To avoid this and encourage future input:

- State empathy by declining the situation rather than the idea or the person. For example, you might say: "This is a great idea to help save money, but, at the moment, the CEO is most

heavily focused on revenue-generating projects. We can talk more about that during our next meeting."

- Say "no," but reward the person for the idea through encouragement or other recognition. Consider saying: "I appreciate your proactively bringing ideas like this forward. Please continue doing so."
- Validate the idea by saving it for potential future use and telling the person that you are doing so. Consider creating a list of ideas suggested by subordinates and periodically reviewing them to see if they can be implemented at a later date.
- Use this as a coaching opportunity, and provide guidance on how to get a "yes" in the future. For example, you could say: "This is a great idea, but it would need a greater return on investment for us to pursue it. Consider how you might modify it to get a better return, and come back to me next week."

**The boss "no" must show strength and respect.** While it is important to be a good follower to one's boss, never saying "no" can accidentally communicate that the CIO has no boundaries, ideas or rules. This can inadvertently communicate that the CIO is exclusively a follower or order-taker, rather than a strong leader. To say "no" with strength and respect, try some of the following tactics:

- Suggest a viable alternative to the request when you can find or create one. Consider saying, "We have an existing system that does something very similar to what you requested ..." or, "We do need to upgrade the system, but we can delay for a few months if we would like the expense to accrue during a different quarter ..."
- Ask your boss for a viable alternative when it is not available to you or your boss is open to engaging in this discussion. Ask questions such as, "Of the three investments you are requesting, which one is most important to you?" or, "Is there another option that you would be comfortable with ...?"
- Demonstrate how "no" is in the enterprise's best interest or consistent with its priorities and values. Consider saying, "This is clearly an important project, but there is no option for executing it that keeps us compliant with the new regulations" or, "This does not seem to align with our current strategy. Do we want to make an exception?"
- State empathy with your boss and the idea by making a statement such as, "I understand why you would think that ...," then add the information about the request or situation they might not know.
- Whenever possible, CIOs should use the pronoun "we" to demonstrate that they are on the same side as their boss. This conveys strength and community. Use the pronoun "you" when deferring to the boss and demonstrating respect. CIOs should alternate the use of "we" and "you," and avoid using one or the other exclusively, or they risk appearing presumptuous or like an order-taker.

**The colleague "no" maintains mutual peer status.** CIOs usually have many peers who are approximately equal to them on the organization chart or in power and scope. CIOs who never say "no" to peers risk being confined to service provider status and damaging their power base rather

than reinforcing their peer position. To create or maintain mutual peer status, apply some of these techniques:

- Say "no" to peers clearly. "I won't" is better than "I can't." If CIOs state they "cannot" fulfill a request, they risk appearing incapable. In saying they "will not" fulfill a request, CIOs take a position and convey their stance. For example, say: "This project is not something we will do this year because it is inconsistent with the corporate strategy," rather than, "We cannot do this as we are out of capacity right now."
- Apologize with empathy, but briefly, and not with weakness. Consider saying, "I am sorry you are unhappy, but this is something we will not do," rather than statements such as, "I am sorry you are disappointed in us, and we will do better next time."
- Do not defer the "no" by saying things such as, "We will get to it as soon as we can" if you do not intend to do it at a later date. This can come across as passivity or passive-aggression.
- Consider the "conditional no" when appropriate. This is when the stakeholder can provide resources or modify the business case in such a way that a "yes" becomes appropriate. Very importantly, avoid the "conditional yes," as most colleagues will only pay attention to the "yes" and fail to provide the conditional resources.

**The client "no" protects healthy and realistic relationships.** Some CIOs of shared service organizations, or those who create IT-related products such as software or digital products and services, have client relationships that have more contractual characteristics than the traditional enterprise CIO relationship. With the onset of digital, more CIOs are finding themselves engaging in creating or delivering digital products to clients. In this case, it is important that CIO-client relationships are healthy, and that the IT department avoids setting unrealistic expectations by saying "yes" too often or at an inappropriate time. Use some of the following techniques:

- Determine your power position in the shared service relationship. Some clients are required to pay a chargeback to the shared-service center and may not opt out of doing so. In this case, they are in a lesser or subordinate power position to the shared-service center. In other cases, chargebacks are optional, or clients may shift to an alternate service provider. This puts them in a greater power position than the shared service organization.
- Do not give clients the impression they have control over the "no" if they do not. A client may attempt to negotiate pricing or request services that the CIO cannot provide. While leading clients to believe they can control elements of the relationship that they cannot may appear to be the "softer" or kinder approach, it can create misunderstandings and increase the duration of the conflict.
- Explain the "no," but minimize the data justifying the decision. Excess data can make the CIO look apologetic, or invite the client to comment on details of the "no" of which they may have no control or little knowledge of and extend the conflict.
- Whenever possible, remind clients of previous instances in which the CIO said "yes" and was able to accommodate their requests. This will highlight and reinforce positive patterns of "yes" rather than an excessive focus on the minority of "no" responses.

Always adjust the assertive "no" for cultural context. For example, in extreme hierarchical cultures, the CIO should default to having all "no" conversations in private with the stakeholder alone to avoid accidentally causing the stakeholder embarrassment. In highly collaborative cultures, the assertive "no" is often more effective when the CIO refers to the greater good of the community or enterprise, rather than a more individualistic reason, as the basis for the "no."

### Plan Ahead for the Target to Say "No" to Your "No"

When CIOs apply the techniques described in this research, many stakeholders will accept the "no" and CIOs will achieve many of the outcomes they intend. Unfortunately, the techniques are insufficient for some stakeholders and situations. Some targets of the "no" will resist even the most reasoned and empathetic declination of their request. This may be because they disagree with the CIO's response, they are under a great deal of stress or, because of political and control issues, they simply prefer to have their way.

In other cases, the target may take the perspective that the CIO's "no" was simply the start of a negotiation, and continue to lobby and maneuver in the hope of achieving a "yes." Regardless of the reason, CIOs must be ready for potential negotiations and escalations if their initial "no" is not accepted (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Plan Ahead for Your Target to Say "No" to Your "No"



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

CIOs must engage in scenario planning and ask, "What is the stakeholder likely to do next?" By planning ahead, CIOs can increase their chances of a positive outcome. It is important to note that the scenarios outlined below are based on the premise that the target has exhausted all the business-related rationales available, and that no additional empirical data would convince the CIO to switch the "no" to a "yes." Consider including the following elements in scenario planning:

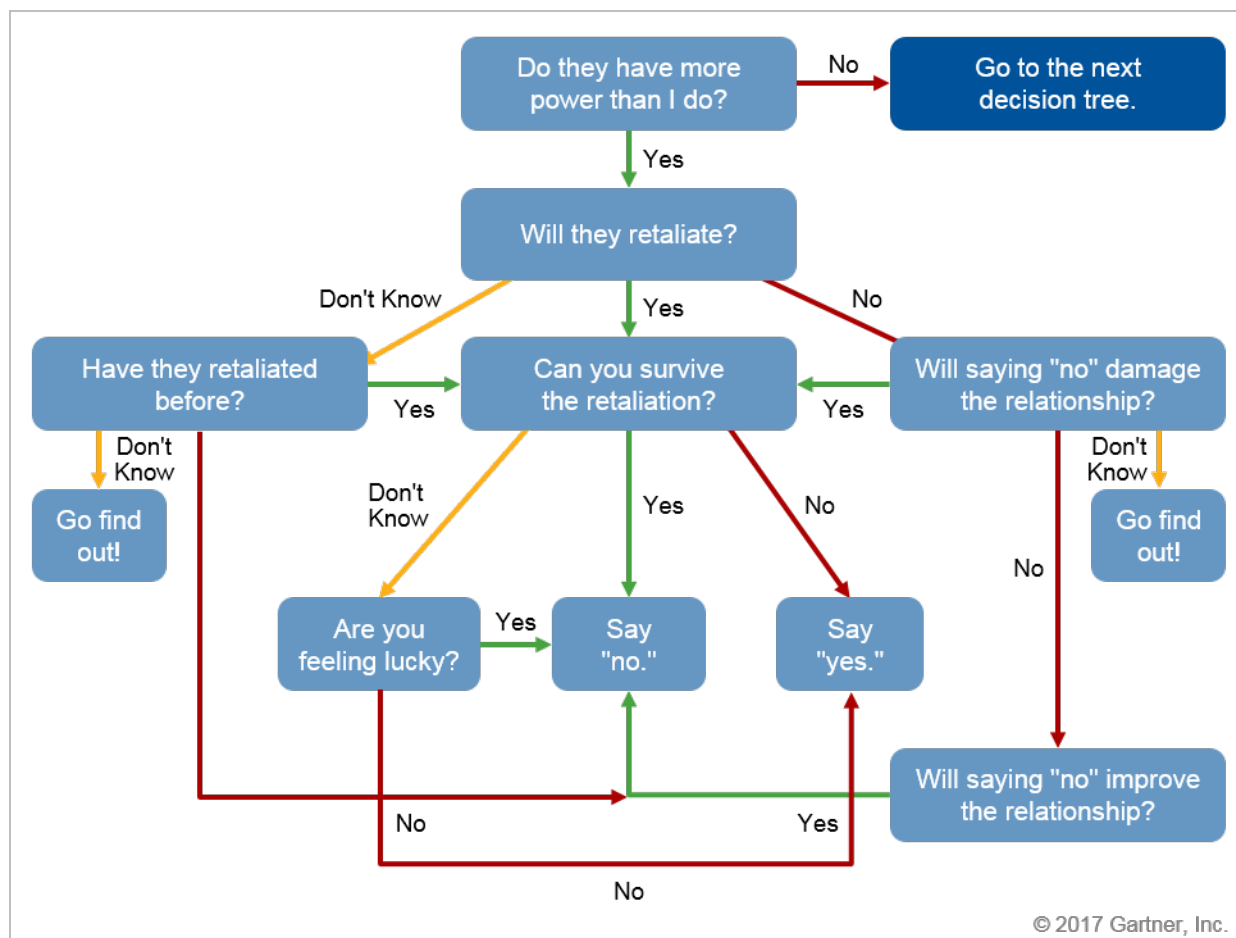
- *What is the risk of continuing to say "no" to the target?* Consider the number of times IT has said no to this particular stakeholder, the implications of the frequency and what may have happened when IT said "no" in the past.
- *Is the target likely to escalate?* One of the most common scenarios that CIOs describe is having the stakeholder escalate to their boss, who may or may not be senior to the CIO. Escalations can increase the risk of collateral damage and must be factored into many scenario plans. The goal of the escalation may be to gain help in overturning the CIO's "no" or spread negativity about the CIO to prevent another "no" in the future. Either scenario must be dealt with by the CIO.
- *What are the unknowns?* As in any potentially political or conflict-oriented situation, unknown variables create more risk. Consider the target's common behaviors and boss's behaviors, and what IT cannot know about the target's response to negative situations.
- *When is it time to surrender?* Sometimes the wisest course of action is to surrender and change the "no" to a "yes." This is most appropriate when new information demonstrates that the request has business value, the stakeholder provides appropriate resources or, in the extreme case, when continuing to say "no" poses an unacceptable political or career risk to the CIO and IT.

Again, hierarchy matters. The next section explores the most important variables for CIOs to consider, based on hierarchy, when the target rejects the initial "no." Each hierarchical subsection includes a decision tree to help CIOs work through various scenarios along with a brief analysis of the hierarchical variables that matter most when dealing with the target.

### If They Have More Power Than You Do, Assess the Risk of Retaliation

The decision tree in Figure 5 illustrates possible decision paths for dealing with a target who has more power than you do, either through positional power and hierarchy, or influence. This might be the CIO's direct boss, a business unit president who is above the CIO in the hierarchy or someone who is positioned similarly to the CIO but has more organizational power.

Figure 5. What If They Have More Power Than I Do?



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

The key variables CIOs must assess when dealing with a target that has more power than they do include:

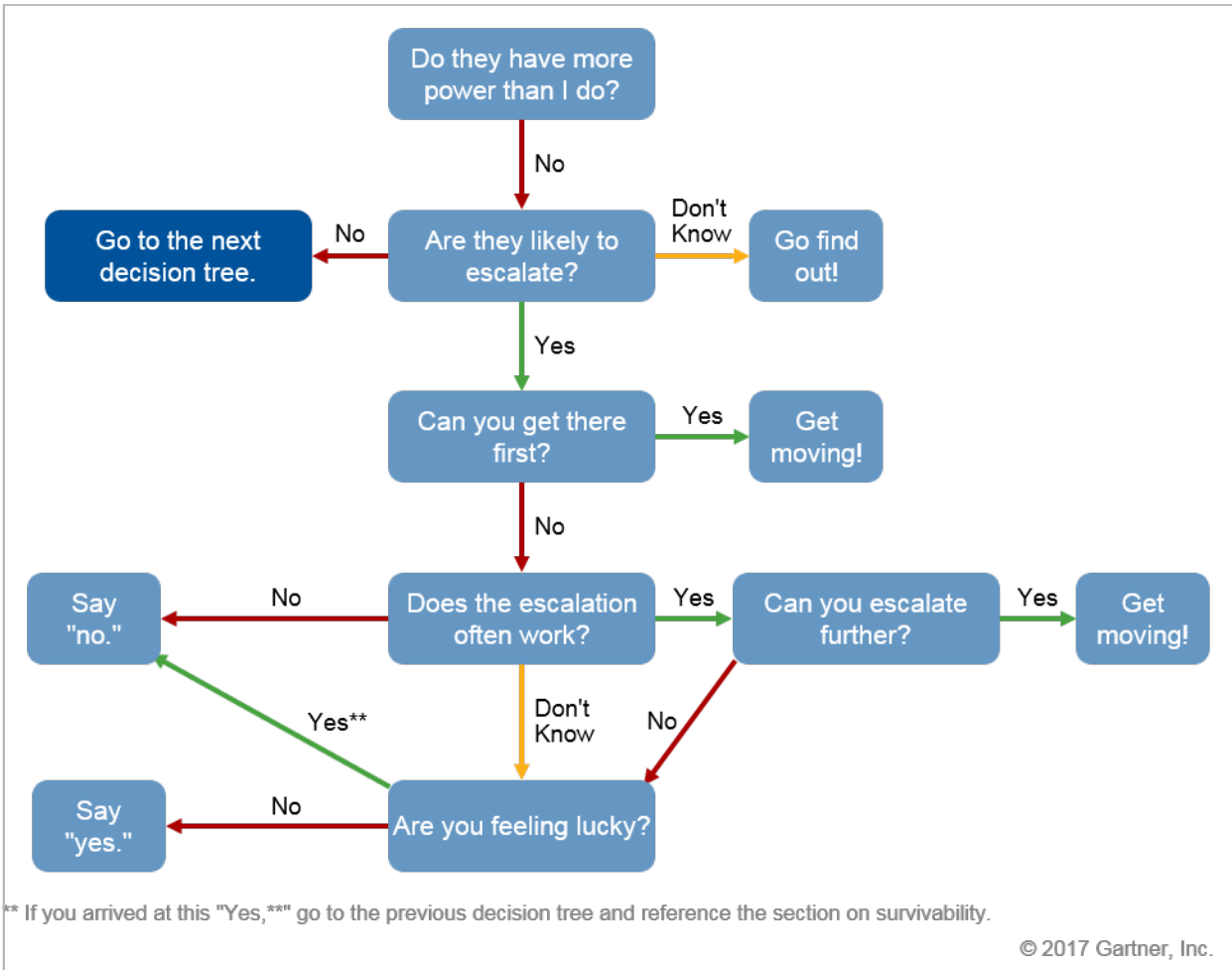
- *Will they retaliate?* If the CIO is new, or has never said "no" to the target before, then the answer to this question may be an unknown. In this case, it is important to discreetly find out if the target has a history of retaliation. Consider who in the enterprise would know and if they would be a good ally in your information gathering.
- *Can you survive the retaliation?* There are many different degrees of retaliation. Some are survivable from a career perspective, and some are not. CIOs must assess if the retaliation will simply make them uncomfortable or if it will be career damaging.
- *Will saying "no" damage the relationship?* As noted previously, often saying "no" upward in the hierarchy can increase a CIO's status and regard among the executive team. If the target, however, feels the CIO is wrong about the "no," then this can lead to negative repercussions for the CIO.

- Are you feeling lucky?* Unfortunately, it is not possible to foresee every variable and there may be unknown issues. Luck will be a factor in almost every outcome. A CIO with a strong reputation might feel lucky, and standing by the "no" might seem well-timed. It may be equally true that if IT has historically been under-resourced and is struggling, it may be an appropriate time to take a stand and hold onto the "no."

**If the Target Has Approximately Equal Power to the CIO, Manage the Escalation Path**

The decision tree in Figure 6 illustrates possible decision paths for dealing with colleagues who are essentially peers. These are individuals who are the same level on the hierarchy as the CIO, or of approximately equal power and status. One of the few ways peers can successfully override a CIO's "no" is by escalating the issue to a mutual boss or another member at least one step up in the hierarchy.

Figure 6. What If They Have Approximately Equal Power As I Do?



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

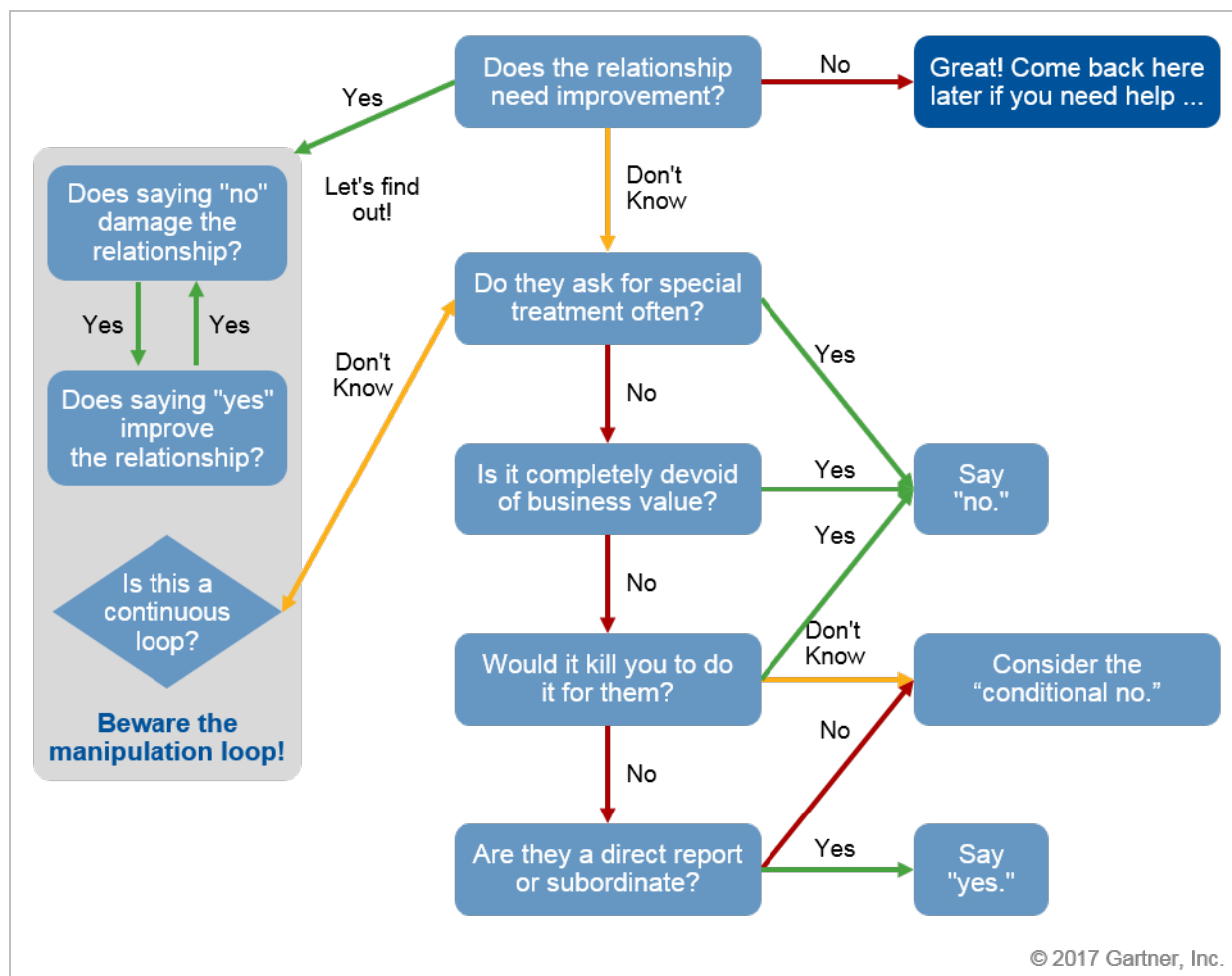
The key variables CIOs must assess when dealing with a target who is a peer or has similar power include:

- *Are they likely to escalate?* Not all peers are likely to escalate the situation; however, CIOs must anticipate this possibility. There is little worse than being caught off guard by the CEO, CFO or COO who may second-guess the CIO's decision.
- *Can you get there first?* If a peer is likely to escalate, the CIO may want to get to the senior executive first. Whether the CIO addresses the issue directly, or simply lays the groundwork by introducing relevant and pre-emptive information, being proactive rather than reactive can yield good results. Ideally, the CIO's goal is to have the senior executive reinforce the original "no."
- *Does the escalation often work?* Some senior executives prefer not to intervene or encourage escalations and will let the CIO's decisions stand. In other cases, the senior executive may regularly take the side of one player over another. CIOs should pay close attention to these patterns and play accordingly.
- *Are you feeling lucky?* There are times when CIOs will conclude that the "no" is so important that they will stand by their "no" even when the boss sides with a peer. In this case, it is critical to ensure that the battle is worth fighting and reinforces the CIO's reputation rather than triggering a career crisis. Refer to the previous discussion on "survivability" in the above section on saying "no" to your boss to help ensure a successful outcome.

### If They Are a Subordinate or Do Not Escalate, Consider Triggering Reciprocity

The decision tree in Figure 7 illustrates possible decision paths for those who report to the CIO or are peers but who do not engage in escalations. In each of these situations, the CIO has more power than the individual making the request. The CIO has the power to grant the request, demonstrating generosity or triggering reciprocity in the relationship. Or, the CIO can deny the request, which can improve or damage the relationship depending upon the circumstances. How the CIO uses that power can potentially improve or degrade the relationship.

Figure 7. What If They Have Less Power Than I Do or Don't Escalate?



Source: Gartner (May 2017)

The key variables CIOs should consider when dealing with a target who is a subordinate or peer who does not escalate include:

- *Does the relationship need improvement?* CIOs sometimes have the opportunity to grant requests that they are not strictly required to fulfill. In these situations, the target may either view the CIO's gesture as a generosity, which can improve the relationship, or they may take it for granted, which risks straining the relationship.
- *Are you in a manipulation loop?* The decision tree above illustrates a common manipulation situation. If the CIO's relationship with a stakeholder is positive when the CIO says "yes" and becomes negative with a "no," then the CIO is in a potential manipulation loop.

In this situation, the stakeholder is writing all the rules of the relationship and controlling the dynamic in a one-sided manner. In this case, it is likely that the situation lacks reciprocity; the CIOs regularly give, and the manipulator regularly takes but reciprocates rarely or never. CIOs

who are in a manipulation loop should consider shifting the nature of the relationship by continuing along the center of the decision tree.

- *Do they often ask for special treatment?* Some stakeholders regularly make requests that are urgent or outside the parameters of normal operations and governance. While this may be an indicator of simple disorganization or lack of process understanding on the part of the stakeholders, it is also an indicator that their relationship with IT may need improvement.
- *Is the request completely devoid of business value?* If the request has no business value, CIOs should consider continuing to decline the request. If there is some value, and the stakeholder rarely asks for special treatment, then the CIO may continue to consider a possible "yes."
- *Would it kill you to do it for them?* While it may seem like a facetious question, CIOs should consider whether the relationship is beyond all repair and the generosity is likely to go unrewarded. If the CIO has repeatedly reached out to the target and been generous with no positive result or genuine reciprocity, then further outreach may be unproductive.

However, if there is potential for improvement, then CIOs should consider the "conditional no" to trigger reciprocity. As described earlier, this repeats the initial "no," but introduces the possibility that the CIO will fulfill the request if the stakeholder provides resources that help enable the execution. This may include financial or staff resources, for example.

For this technique to work, CIOs must withhold any "yes" statement and delay work on the request until the stakeholder provides all of the conditional resources. In essence, the reciprocity of the stakeholder must happen after the CIO's "no" but before the "yes." In this case, order matters.

The only exception to this sequence is asynchronous reciprocity. The CIO may make allowances for a stakeholder once, and the stakeholder reciprocates later by genuinely supporting something of importance to the CIO. If the reciprocal behavior does not occur in the future, then the manipulation loop may still be intact, and the "conditional no" then becomes the preferable tactic.

- *Are they a direct report or subordinate?* When the target of the "no" is a subordinate, CIOs should consider bypassing any reciprocity, and say "yes" only if they believe that this can improve the relationship with the subordinate, and set a cultural example of collegiality and generosity.

## Remember, There Is No One-Size-Fits-All Technique for "No"

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When, why and how CIOs say "no" is an integral part of their reputation as leaders. Have the end state in mind before saying "no," and plan ahead for the next round of negotiations based on the target's relative position in the hierarchy. Most importantly, whenever possible, get to an assertive "no" with empathy for the best outcomes.

## Gartner Recommended Reading

*Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.*

"The CIO's Trusted Advisor Playbook: Selling and Persuasion"

"Adapt the Science of Influence to Develop Your Art of Persuasion"

"ESCAPE the Past: Six Steps to Successful Change Leadership"

"The Digital Economy Requires Venture CIOs"

"The Case for Change: Why Digital Business Needs a New Approach to Strategy"

### Evidence

["Nine Practices to Help You Say No,"](#) Harvard Business Review, 15 February 2013.

["Six Tips for Saying No to Your Boss,"](#) City A.M., 25 March 2014.

["Four Ways to Say No to Work Requests and Still Be a Team Player,"](#) Forbes, 2 March 2016.

["Why Saying No at Work Can Further Your Career and Improve Your Health,"](#) Forbes, 4 February 2016.

["The Art of Saying No to Clients Without Feeling Guilty,"](#) TrinityP3, 2 May 2016.

["Praise Is Fleeting, but Brickbats We Recall,"](#) The New York Times, 23 March 2012.

### More on This Topic

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