# Making Clear Requests

How many times has each of us said yes to something only to find that what we didn't have a clear understanding of what we were committing to? Or perhaps the shoe was on the other foot, and a teammate didn't follow through to your satisfaction because of a lack of clarity. Clear communication is key to success in making and responding to requests. When we say yes to a request, we are putting our integrity on the line, and it's important to set ourselves—and others—up for success.

The following is a list of questions to ask to create guidelines for successful completion and support a successful YES.
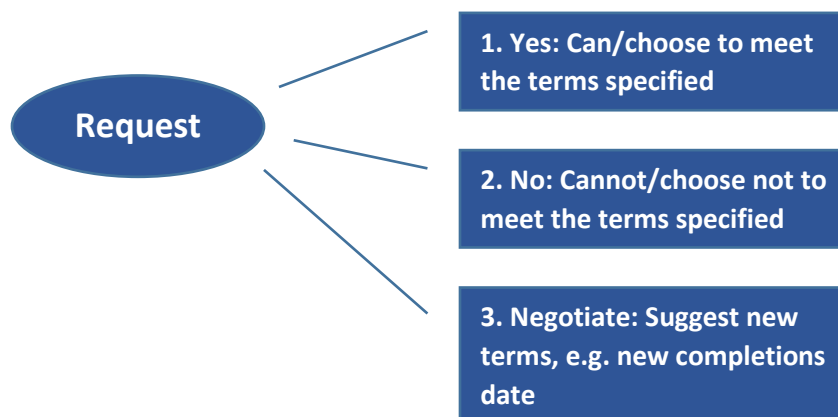
 What is the desired outcome?

1. What does "done satisfactorily" looks like?

2. What are the milestones and measures of success?

3. What is the required time for completion?

4. What resources (people, dollars, materials) are available (if applicable)?

5. What communication is required/requested during the process?

Before saying yes to a request, be sure to ask all of these questions and, if necessary, get the answers in writing so there will be no question about what you've agreed to.

If you are the one making the request, be sure to specify all of the above, so the requestee has all the information they need to respond.

## Responding to Requests

There are three choices of response to a request: Yes, No and Negotiate Terms.



**Request**

1. Yes: Can/choose to meet the terms specified

2. No: Cannot/choose not to meet the terms specified

3. Negotiate: Suggest new terms, e.g. new completions date

# Follow-Through

It is vitally important to communicated well with regard to follow-through. If a task or project is going off the rails, it is essential to communicate with the appropriate people to get it back on track. No matter how uncomfortable it is to tell the truth, silence will only make matters worse. If you find that you are unable to fulfill a promise you have made, it is your obligation either to request help from others or to renegotiate the original agreement. Honest and clear communication in difficult situations like these builds trust and shows that you have integrity.

# Communicating for Accountability with OKRs

### Objectives and Key Results[1]
Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) is a system for getting clear on what you want to accomplish and how you're going to do it. OKRs offer powerful communication by making everything visible and measurable, and they provide a framework for accountability and teamwork, because they are agreed to and shared by everyone involved. OKRs are equally useful for setting your own goals and holding yourself accountable to outcomes; and you can use them when setting goals with your supervisor or team lead as well. They can be used for stretch goals, like moving to the next place in your career, or smaller goals, like improving you performance in the next six months.

Objectives should be worded clearly and be unambiguous. Each one should have no more than 5 KRs; 3 is usually a good number.

Here's an example of an OKR about improving communication between teams:

<u>Objective:</u> Increase the quality and effectiveness of communication between A Team and B Team to improve collaboration on Project X.

**KR1:** Beginning April 15, hold weekly tag-ups to check on progress of collaborative efforts (no more than 15 minutes each)

**KR2:** At April 15 tag-up provide template for inter-team requests (Jose, Ann and Jamil)

**KR3:** By April 30, have all team members complete online communications course.

**KR4:** By June 30 have facilitated meeting with both teams to assess progress and plan for further improvements in communication.

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[1] For more on OKRs, see *Measure What Matters* by John Doerr. Also see: https://www.whatmatters.com/stories/ted-talk