

MTD Quick Tips

How To Renegotiate Deadlines

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How To Renegotiate Deadlines

A couple of my trainers have just come back from facilitating a Team Leader soft skills management course and gave me a great example to use for this week's Quick Tip!

Here's the question that was asked from the course:

"I feel really uncomfortable when my boss sets me a deadline and then half way through the piece of work I know that I can never meet the deadline set. I feel awkward and stupid going back to ask for more time and I just end up coming out with a list of excuses - how can I approach this better?"

This is a great question!

A lot of us think that our boss will frown upon us by going back and asking for more time so instead we get all stressed out about the work and put in even more hours than the 10 hour day we were working in the first place!

Never make excuses with your boss. No-one likes to hear excuses, especially your boss!

Instead, renegotiating a deadline is all about making a subtle trade off.

The position you need to get to is when you are "purchasing" more time from your boss in return for giving him/her something.

I know that sounds odd but hear me out.

You need to persuade your boss to "sell" you more time in exchange for value received.

You have really got to make it clear to your boss what the additional time will buy. Here's an example:

"We really want to do a thorough and well prepared proposal here, I'm going to need an extra 2 days Bill. I don't think it will do us any good to try and rush it and end up neglecting a, b and c"

Do you see how more effective that is than just saying "We need more time"?

Another important thing to note is that you should view the shift in the deadline as a simple alteration rather than a crisis - be careful with HOW you say it.

Also, offer your boss alternatives and solutions. Make sure you always offer them choices.

Here's a great example:

"I can get the first proposal done by next Tuesday, with full costings and case studies by Thursday and the whole project completed by the following Monday"

Here is another...

"If I put back doing xyz I can get a and b to you for Friday"

So what happens if your boss pushes back?

Your boss might come back with...

"I need this work completing by the deadline"

When responding to these types of statements always try to spin the situation around and mention things like:

1. The boss wants the best possible job completed doesn't he/she?

2. You take great pride in doing an excellent job

3. You do not want to cut corners now because it will save time down the line

4. You will not be comfortable with the results if you rush it

5. ...and if you're not comfortable then your boss will not be comfortable

Here's an example:

BOSS
"I really do need that proposal by Friday Sean"

SEAN
"I would love to have it completed by Friday as well "BOSS", you know I take great pride in finishing a job to the standards that we set and on time. On this occasion to get the job completed by Friday will mean that I will have to cut corners though and I will feel really uncomfortable with that and I am positive that you will feel the same if we go down that route. If you can give me until Tuesday morning, I will have the proposal complete plus I will be able to do a detailed costings breakdown in addition to what we had planned"

Let's bisect my reply above along with the hidden messages it gives to my boss:

"I would love to have it completed too" - means that I want it completed as much as you by Friday.

"I take great pride..." - I set really high standards because I do not want to let you down.

"I would feel uncomfortable..." - My standards would not be met if I rush it for Friday.

"Cut corners.... you will feel the same too" - Surely you do not want a sub standard job because you have very high standards the same as me.

"If you give me until Tuesday morning..." - I am offering a solution and date when I know that IT WILL be up to our very high standards.

"Provide detailed costings in addition..." - I am offering an additional piece of work that will add value to the proposal.

Then go on to ask your boss whether they are comfortable with it - but let them make the decision. If they are happy with a sub standard job then they have made that decision and have to live by that.

Always think about the quality of work if the job is rushed, the pay off for the delay and what you will both look like if the job is not up to the required standard.

To your success,

Sean

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About Sean McPheat



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Founder and MD of international management development firm MTD Training, Sean McPheat is widely regarded as a leading authority on modern day management and leadership.

Sean is a bestselling author, and has been recognised for his own business building skills through the **British Business Awards** and has been featured in the **Who's Who Of Britain's Business Elite**.

He has been a regular judge for the UK's Young Enterprise Programme but was not as horrible as Simon Cowell (well almost!)



Sean has been featured on **CNN International, the BBC, SKY, ITV, The Guardian, Forbes, Arena Magazine, Marketing Weekly, Business Zone, Winning Edge** and radio stations such as BBC WM and LBC (London's Big Conversation).

Sean has over **250 media credits** to his name and his weekly email tips go out to over **60,000 people** interested in management and development strategies.

Sean is also a **much sought after media figure and motivational speaker** on all topics related to management, HR, business improvement and entrepreneurialism.