

Opinion: Succeed by saying 'no' to your boss

By Morten T. Hansen, San Francisco Chronicle

"Find a way to say YES to things" was the title of the commencement address that Eric Schmidt gave in 2012 at UC Berkeley. The former executive chairman of Google encouraged the graduates to say "yes" to trying new things. Then he told them: "'Yes' lets you stand out in a crowd. ... Be the one everyone comes to for help, for advice, or just for fun."

While you may say graduates have such a choice of employers in this job market, of course they can say no – but they still will approach their new job with a "yes" attitude. Conventional thinking promotes saying "yes" as the way to impress your boss and peers: Say "yes" to all of the assignments that will come your way, to meetings and customer visits as well as all the mundane tasks that fall under your job description. Your goal is to become that go-to person, the "good soldier" who is always ready to jump in. While it sounds like a logical path to success, it's actually the opposite.

My research found that top performers say "no" – including to their bosses.

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