

Podcast Episode #012

## The Shrewd Way to Say No That Creates What You Really Want

[See the podcast episode online](#)

**Announcer:** Welcome to The Lifftoff Project with Coach Pamela.

**Pamela:** Hi. Welcome to The Lifftoff Project. I'm Pamela Mitchell, your host and your coach, and this is the podcast devoted to helping you meld your professional self and your personal self into an enhanced version of your best self. My goal is to help you take control of your work and your life, feel more relaxed and confident, and experience the satisfaction and fulfillment of a sustainable, successful life.

Today's topic is the shrewd way to say no that creates what you really want. All "no's" are not created equal. I give you a way to say no that opens doors instead of closing them. And in Ask Coach Pamela, I answer a question that came in about how to manage a perceived skills gap when you're embarking on a reinvention. Lots of great stuff on tap for you today, so let's get this show started.

**Announcer:** And now, it's Tales from the Coaching Front.

**Pamela:** I have a client who is in the early stages of his reinvention, where he's just decided he's going to make a switch. He's letting his circle know that a change is coming. What happens when we're in that stage, when we begin just networking and telling people what we're up to, is oftentimes our inner circle will bring us opportunities. That's what happened to him. A good friend of his brought him a very cool opportunity, but for a whole constellation of reasons it wasn't a good fit and he needed to turn it down. What we talked about in our session was how to turn it down, how to say no, in a way that didn't close the door to future opportunities, but opened a door and helped create what he truly wanted. Here's the four-step plan that can help you do this.



The first piece is acknowledgement. You always want to start with thanking the person for bringing you this opportunity. Now that might seem obvious, but sometimes when something doesn't fit and they're such a good friend of ours, we just go straight to the "no." What that does, when we start off with "no," is it begins to close a door. So we always want to start by thanking the person by saying, "It's great that you've brought me this. I really appreciate it," and by acknowledging the person it begins to encourage them to continue the behavior. When we start off with that automatic "no," it shuts down behavior, versus when we encourage behavior through acknowledgement, it means that we want it to continue. That's why acknowledgement is such an important step to begin with, because we want to encourage the continuance of the behavior, which in this case is bringing opportunity.

Now the second thing to this four-step plan of saying no is that we don't begin saying, "No, it's not right for us for x, y, and z reasons." We start by saying, "This is great, however, my core priorities in this are..." and by beginning with "my core priorities are ..." you shift the person's attention to what it is you're truly looking for instead of the gaps. Now when you start saying, "Well it's not a fit for me because of x, y, and z," there's nowhere for the person who brought you the opportunity to go. All they know is that somehow this job is lacking, but there's no place for them to figure out what you truly do want; but when you start by saying, "These are my core priorities," now you begin to guide the person in the direction of the things that you truly want.

So you might say, "In this move my core priorities are to be located in a particular city," or, "My core priorities are to use a skillset that I haven't been using up until now." This, oftentimes, is a big one in reinvention, where we're looking to make a change. Say, for example, you've been in PR but now you want to move to the editorial side, but everybody knows you as a PR person so they keep bringing you PR opportunities. That's where you say, "This is great. Thank you so much, but my core priorities in this switch are to move to more of an editorial function." Now you're starting to direct people in the pathway that takes them to where it is that you're ultimately wanting to head.

The third thing that you say is, "If you hear of a job that fits that, I would love to hear about it." What that does is it opens up a door. Why it opens up a door is it does two things. One, sometimes the opportunity that they've presented you with actually can be changed into something that you do want. We can't always assume that just because something on its surface looks like it's not a good fit that it can't evolve into that. If we say no to it right up front, then we have no way of knowing whether or not it could have been shaped into an opportunity that was along the alignment with our priorities.



Or then it directs the person to what to look for for you. Now you've acknowledged them. You've told them your core priorities. You've said, "This is what you can look for, for me." Then they can keep their ears open for the kinds of things that do fit for you.

Now the interesting thing about this plan, and the fourth thing about this, is that you can use this not only in the networking stage, but you can also use this in the interviewing stage. I have a great story in my past about how this came up in the interviewing stage.

This was a situation that happened to me when I decided that I was going to leave entertainment and make a switch to start the Reinvention Institute, become a coach, and help people. I was in the midst of interviewing for a job in my field at the time because I had been referred to this job by a former boss of mine. I had been going down that path but in the back of my mind I was pretty sure that I was going to leave and make the switch, but I was interviewing so I had to continue to follow along but I knew that I wanted to close that door.

So when I got offered that job I said to them, "Thank you so much for the great job, however, I'm committed to staying in New York City." This job was moving to a different town and I said, "I'm a city person. I love New York. I love this kind of urban area, and I really don't want to move to more of a suburban area." That was my reason. I turned it down. I gave them the names of other people that could possibly be for that job. Three weeks later I got a call from the recruiter and the recruiter said to me, "We still would love to have you for this job. If we offered you this job and we moved to London, would you consider taking it?"

Now mind you that I was an internationalist, so that London assignment was not off base. It was in fact my big dream that I had always wanted in my career, even though I hadn't even mentioned it to them. So here it was that they had, of their own volition, decided that they were going to move the location of the job to a city that fit right within my wheelhouse because they wanted me for that opportunity.

Because you're listening to this podcast, you know that I ultimately turned that job down. That's actually for another story about how we get tested in those moments of our reinvention. Are we really committed to what we say we want to create? But for purposes of this particular topic, the idea of saying what our priorities truly are, which in that case was my priority in the next position was really to stay in a city that was really a vibrant city because I was a city person, created an opportunity, if I should have wanted to take that job, to move to a very cool city. If I wanted to stay in entertainment I would have absolutely taken that job, without a doubt, because I wanted to go to London.



This is what you want to keep in mind anytime that you want to say no, whether it be in a reinvention, or for some other opportunity that shows up on your path. First acknowledge the person for bringing something to you, and then think about saying, "Here are my priorities," because even if that particular person doesn't bring you your priorities, there's a way in which when you state those things it makes you clear. That sense of clarity is rewarded in this world; we start to move that energy in the direction of what we say we want. The clearer we become on what it is we want to create, the easier it is to actually make it happen.

**Announcer:** Got a question? She's got your answer. It's time for ask Coach Pamela.

**Pamela:** I recently appeared on NPR's On Point radio show with host, Tom Ashbrook, and the topic was reinvention. Afterwards, a listener wrote to me because she was embarking on a reinvention. She was retiring after thirty-five years in her job, and she was feeling nervous about making a switch. She felt that perhaps her skills would not open doors for her for what she wanted to do in the future, so she asked me for help.

What I say in this situation, where we're looking to make a reinvention and we are worried about our skills, is that what we need to understand first is what it is we're looking to do. Oftentimes when we're embarking on a reinvention, all of our fears come up: "Am I good enough? Do I have what it takes?" Those are very normal fears in that moment, but what we have to recognize is that those very general fears can stop us before we even get started. Those big fears are oftentimes just manifestations of our anxiety about making a switch; but in this particular case about whether or not our skills are up to par, we can't answer that question until we know exactly what it is we're looking to do.

That's its own process. I talk about that in my book, *The Ten Laws of Career Reinvention*, and it starts with a vision. There are all kinds of exercises that you can actually do to help you identify what it is that you want to do next. There's a short course on my website called "Brainstorming Your Reinvention Idea." All of these things can help you uncover what it is you might want to do next. Until you have that question answered, you can't begin to think about your skills.

Here's the thing: She had a fear about her computer skills. She was a boomer and she didn't have to, in her current field, keep up necessarily with the latest and greatest on the computer front. She recognized that there was going to be a gap. Perhaps, but without knowing what she wanted to do next, it's not possible to say whether or not her computer skills needed to be brought up to a certain level. On the show, for example, a guy talked about how he became a dog walker. If that's what you ultimately want to do, then you don't necessarily need to develop the latest and greatest computer skills in order to make that happen.



This is a great example of why you need to first identify what it is you want to do next before you can even begin to analyze your skills gap. Once you've got that target in your head, then you can see what skills best position you for those opportunities. In some cases, you might not need what you actually think you need, but in other cases you might actually see that there's a skills gap. For this particular woman, if she decided she wanted to go back into an office environment, yes, she was going to need to develop her computer skills and bring herself up to whatever was the latest and greatest in the field that she was looking to target.

When you see that there is a skills gap, you need to be willing to fill those gaps. As I was reading the comments on the NPR page, there were a few that said, "Why should I have to do this? Why isn't my past experience valued?" What I have to say to that is that it's not that your past experience doesn't have value, it's that you need to add to that past experience to position yourself for where the world is moving. The world is evolving, and we must evolve with the world. Sometimes that can be a very scary thing, but the truth is that there are opportunities out there, from community colleges, to certificates, to having somebody come and train us in something. If we get creative, there are ways that we can fill the gaps. It's when we're afraid to, when we resent the fact that we need to continue evolving, that we begin to be left behind.

I encourage you to take a look and see what you can do, whether you're making a change now or even down the road, to continue to evolve in your own life, in your own skills. Identify something that just sounds like fun for you to learn. Do it before you have to. In that way you can evolve not from a sense of pressure, but from a sense of possibility.

That's it for this segment of the The LiftOff Project. Be sure to visit our website, [TheLiftOffProject.com/podcast](http://TheLiftOffProject.com/podcast), where you can download a transcript of today's episode, and see the details of that creative way to say no.

If you have a question for an upcoming segment of Ask Coach Pamela, go to [TheLiftOffProject.com/question](http://TheLiftOffProject.com/question), and leave me a voicemail. If I answer your question in a future episode, I'll send you a free deck of reinvention cards as a gift. So get on over there. Leave me a voicemail with a question!

You can also connect with me on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @TheCoachPamela. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a review for us on iTunes; your feedback truly does make a difference.

Today's LiftOff inspiration comes from Marva Collins who says, "Success doesn't come to you, you go to it." So take a step this week, move forward to fill those gaps, and get to your success.





Thank you for listening today, and remember: Why settle for good when great is waiting?  
Take one small step this week to lift your life. Bye for now.

©2011 THE REINVENTION INSTITUTE; ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
*Reproduction of this content, in whole or in part, without written permission is prohibited.*

