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Creating a Culture of Possibility

Q: What would happen if every time your organization said "no," you instead said "yes?"

A: As decisions are made and permission is requested at your organization, which is more likely to be heard?

Sorry, that's our policy / those are the rules I would love to help, but my hands are tied Where will we ever find the money for that? That's just not how we do things around here

or

Let's see how we can make that work!

I once knew a military commander with an innovative approach to his work. Unlike the typical bureaucrat, under Bob's watch, his employees needed permission from a superior to say "no." Without the ok from a higher-up, no one had the authority to say, "Sorry, we can't do that." The only acceptable answer to doing things a bit differently was, "Let's see how we can make this work."

- Imagine every time your CEO brought a matter to the board, the board responded with, "Let's see how we can make this work!"
- Imagine every time an employee wanted to pursue a new idea, the response from upper management was, "Great! Let's see how we can make that work!"
- Imagine every time a client had difficulty fitting her life into your systems, that the response at the front lines was, "Let's see what we can do."

If there is ONE difference between organizations who succeed wildly and those that are always working their tails off to merely survive, it is the difference between a culture that says, "I'll bet we can" instead of "I know we can't."

Creating a Culture of Possibility

We saw that lesson clearly during a recent trip, when our flight was delayed beyond the time the car rental office closed. We called before our flight even took off, explaining our dilemma to the manager. In response, he gave us his cell phone number, and told us, "Call when you get in. I'll come get you, and we'll just open the office and get you on your way."

And that is exactly what he did. As we thanked him for the 100th time for taking such care of us late on a rainy Friday night, he turned to us and said, "I don't make any money saying no."

Our organizations don't create great workplaces saying no. We don't provide the very best service possible for our clients and patrons and participants by saying no. And we can't make our communities amazing places to live by saying no.

And the reason is simple: **"No"** cuts off all possibilities.

So what would happen if at your next board meeting, your board vowed to create a

Culture of Possibility?

What if your board and employees needed permission to say no - needed to refer to a higher authority to say, "Sorry, we can't do that."

What would happen if in every decision your organization made, from the most mundane to the most significant, the expected answer was, "Let's see how we can make that work!"?

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