

EXCUSING MYSELF FROM THE TABLE

The Leadership Discipline of Saying No



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Over the past 18 months of building my business in the U.S., I've said yes to many things — people, networks, projects, opportunities. I said yes because I was curious. I said yes because I wanted to learn, connect, and grow roots in new soil. And truthfully, many of those “yeses” were exactly what I needed at the time. Each table I sat at offered something valuable — a lesson, a collaboration, or a new way of seeing.

But lately, something has shifted. It started when I was asked to switch chairs at one of the tables and I started to re-evaluate the value alignment. That led to re-evaluating every table I was at. And I've since begun quietly excusing myself from a few more tables.

Not because they're bad tables — many are wonderful. It's simply that I've realized I can no longer be my best at all of them. And if I can't bring my best self, I can't truly serve those around me either.

When Every Yes Becomes a Slowdown

There's a phase in every leader's journey when growth comes from saying yes — exploring widely and discovering what fits. But there comes another phase where progress depends on subtraction.

Every yes has a cost: energy, time, focus. When you're at too many tables, your attention scatters and your impact thins. Saying no isn't rejection — it's refinement. It's the art of keeping your energy aligned with your purpose.

The Myth of Missing Out

We live in a culture that glorifies opportunity — that whispers “You never know who you'll meet.” But mature leadership is knowing that not every good thing is a good thing for you, or for now.

I've learned that clarity accelerates. The clearer you are about who you are, what you bring, and where you're heading, the easier it becomes to recognize which tables deserve your presence — and which ones require your polite exit.

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Leaving a table doesn't mean cutting ties. It means choosing the settings where your light makes the most difference. The Lighthouse doesn't chase every ship on the horizon; it stands firm, guiding only those traveling its stretch of coast.

The Courage to Excuse Yourself

Excusing yourself gracefully takes courage. It requires self-trust — the confidence to release something good to create space for something right.

The first time I declined an invitation I would have accepted six months earlier, I felt almost guilty. But later, I realized I didn't feel loss — I felt lightness. That lightness became fuel for projects and relationships that truly matter.

When we say yes out of obligation or habit, we dilute our capacity for excellence. When we say no from clarity, we create room for excellence to breathe.

Saying No is a Service

It took me a while to understand that saying no is not only a service to myself — it's a service to others.

When I stay at a table where my energy is divided, I'm not serving anyone well. Excusing myself allows someone else to take that seat — perhaps someone who

needs that opportunity more than I do. Saying no with integrity honors both sides.

Focus Creates Speed

Leaders often confuse busyness with progress. We fill calendars, attend meetings, join groups, hoping more activity means more results. But in reality, focus is the greatest accelerator.

Imagine a boat with too many sails open — catching wind from every direction. It doesn't glide faster; it drifts. Trimming the sails gives direction and speed.

The Light You Bring

At Lighthouse Leadership, I often remind clients that leadership is intentional influence — shining light where it matters most. When your light is scattered, it dims. When it's focused, it becomes powerful.

Excusing yourself from a table is not stepping away from people; it's stepping toward purpose. It's choosing to invest your energy where you can bring your best — and where that best creates ripple effects of growth, clarity, and empowerment.

So today, I'm choosing fewer tables. Selecting where I can add the most value, and because I finally know where my light shines brightest.

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