

The Pushback Playbook: How to Say No Professionally

7 Situations, 7 Scripts, Zero Burned Bridges

Master the art of professional pushback. These 7 scripts help you decline requests, defend timelines, and set boundaries—without damaging relationships.

The 7 Pushback Scripts

01

The Unrealistic Deadline

When a client or boss asks for something that's genuinely impossible to deliver on time.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

Next time you face an unrealistic deadline, offer an alternative date or reduced scope—never just say 'I'll try.'

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

Um, that's very soon... I mean, we could try, but... maybe? I'll see what we can do.

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

I want to deliver quality work, and that timeline puts that at risk. I can commit to [date] with full confidence, or we can discuss reducing scope to meet your deadline.

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

You're not saying no to them—you're protecting the quality they want.

02

The Scope Creep Request

When someone asks for 'one more thing' that wasn't in the original agreement.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

Always acknowledge the request positively before redirecting to scope and cost.

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

Sure, I guess we can add that... it's not too much work... probably.

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

Happy to include that. Since it's outside our original scope, I'll send over a change order with the additional time and cost. Does that work?

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

You're saying yes to helping—but no to doing it for free.

03

The Meeting That Should Be an Email

When someone wants to schedule a meeting for something that doesn't require one.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Before accepting any meeting, ask: 'What do you need me to decide or provide?'

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

Okay, sure, let me find time... [blocks 30 minutes for a 2-minute question]

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I'd love to help. Could you send me the details by email first? That way I can give you a thoughtful answer—and if we still need to meet, I'll have context.

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

You're positioning yourself as efficient, not difficult.

04

The Favor That's Actually Work

When someone asks you to do something significant under the guise of a 'quick favor.'

■ ACTION / THE FIX

When you hear 'quick favor,' translate it to 'unpaid work' in your head. Then respond accordingly.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

Oh, sure, I can take a look... [spends 3 hours on unpaid work]

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I appreciate you thinking of me. That's actually a significant project. Let me send you my rates and availability, and we can see if it makes sense to work together.

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

You're honoring your expertise while leaving the door open.

05

The Bad Idea You Need to Redirect

When a client or colleague proposes something that won't work, and you need to steer them differently.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Always acknowledge their goal before offering an alternative approach.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

I don't think that's a good idea... I mean, you could do that, but... it's not really best practice...

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

I understand the goal. Based on my experience, that approach tends to create [problem]. What's worked better is [alternative]. Would you be open to exploring that?

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

You're redirecting to your expertise, not just blocking their idea.

06

The Interruption During Focus Time

When someone wants your attention immediately for something that isn't urgent.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

Practice the phrase 'Can I get back to you at [time]?' until it's automatic.

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

Oh, sure, let me stop everything... [loses 45 minutes of productivity]

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

I'm in the middle of something right now. Can I get back to you at [specific time]? Or if it's urgent, give me the 30-second version.

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

You're offering an alternative, not a rejection.

07

The Request Outside Your Role

When someone asks you to do something that isn't your job.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

Know who handles what on your team so you can redirect confidently.

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

I guess I could do that... even though it's not really my area...

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

That's actually [Name]'s area—they'll be able to help you much better than I can. Want me to connect you?

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

You're being helpful by directing them to the right person.

La Guía para Decir No Profesionalmente

7 Situaciones, 7 Scripts, Cero Puentes Quemados

Domina el arte del rechazo profesional. Estos 7 scripts te ayudan a declinar solicitudes, defender plazos y establecer límites—sin dañar relaciones.

Los 7 Scripts de Rechazo

01

La Fecha Límite Irreal

Cuando un cliente o jefe pide algo que es genuinamente imposible de entregar a tiempo.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

La próxima vez que enfrentes una fecha límite irreal, ofrece una fecha alternativa o alcance reducido—nunca solo digas 'I'll try.'

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

Um, that's very soon... I mean, we could try, but... maybe? I'll see what we can do.

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

I want to deliver quality work, and that timeline puts that at risk. I can commit to [date] with full confidence, or we can discuss reducing scope to meet your deadline.

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

No estás diciéndoles no a ellos—estás protegiendo la calidad que quieren.

02

La Solicitud de Scope Creep

Cuando alguien pide 'una cosa más' que no estaba en el acuerdo original.

■ **ACTION / THE FIX**

Siempre reconoce la solicitud positivamente antes de redirigir al alcance y costo.

■ **AVOID / INCORRECTO**

Sure, I guess we can add that... it's not too much work... probably.

■ **BETTER / CORRECTO**

Happy to include that. Since it's outside our original scope, I'll send over a change order with the additional time and cost. Does that work?

■ **WHY / POR QUÉ**

Estás diciendo sí a ayudar—pero no a hacerlo gratis.

03

La Reunión Que Debería Ser un Email

Cuando alguien quiere agendar una reunión para algo que no la requiere.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Antes de aceptar cualquier reunión, pregunta: '¿Qué necesitas que decida o proporcione?'

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

Okay, sure, let me find time... [blocks 30 minutes for a 2-minute question]

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I'd love to help. Could you send me the details by email first? That way I can give you a thoughtful answer—and if we still need to meet, I'll have context.

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

Te estás posicionando como eficiente, no difícil.

04

El Favor Que En Realidad Es Trabajo

Cuando alguien te pide hacer algo significativo bajo la apariencia de un 'favor rápido.'

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Cuando escuches 'quick favor,' tradúcelo a 'trabajo no pagado' en tu cabeza. Luego responde acorde.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

Oh, sure, I can take a look... [spends 3 hours on unpaid work]

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I appreciate you thinking of me. That's actually a significant project. Let me send you my rates and availability, and we can see if it makes sense to work together.

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

Estás honrando tu expertise mientras dejas la puerta abierta.

05

La Mala Idea Que Necesitas Redirigir

Cuando un cliente o colega propone algo que no funcionará, y necesitas dirigirlos diferente.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Siempre reconoce su objetivo antes de ofrecer un enfoque alternativo.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

I don't think that's a good idea... I mean, you could do that, but... it's not really best practice...

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I understand the goal. Based on my experience, that approach tends to create [problem]. What's worked better is [alternative]. Would you be open to exploring that?

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

Estás redirigiendo a tu expertise, no solo bloqueando su idea.

06

La Interrupción Durante Tiempo de Enfoque

Cuando alguien quiere tu atención inmediatamente para algo que no es urgente.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Practica la frase 'Can I get back to you at [time]?' hasta que sea automática.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

Oh, sure, let me stop everything... [loses 45 minutes of productivity]

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

I'm in the middle of something right now. Can I get back to you at [specific time]? Or if it's urgent, give me the 30-second version.

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

Estás ofreciendo una alternativa, no un rechazo.

07

La Solicitud Fuera de Tu Rol

Cuando alguien te pide hacer algo que no es tu trabajo.

■ ACTION / THE FIX

Conoce quién maneja qué en tu equipo para que puedas redirigir con confianza.

■ AVOID / INCORRECTO

I guess I could do that... even though it's not really my area...

■ BETTER / CORRECTO

That's actually [Name]'s area—they'll be able to help you much better than I can. Want me to connect you?

■ WHY / POR QUÉ

Estás siendo útil dirigiéndolos a la persona correcta.