During a typical month at work, it seems as though I'm approached by co-workers at least two or three times to give to some cause--their child's fund-raiser, more often than not.

What bothers me is the idea of solicitation in the workplace. I'm tired of the being approached at my desk and asked to buy candy bars, flowers, raffle tickets, or my personal favorite, wrapping paper. When I refuse politely, I've been told, "Really? You don't want to give?", or "Come on, it's for my kid." It's an awkward moment for both of us, and the awkwardness generally lingers for a day or two after the rejection. I'm trying to stand my ground, but I also want to maintain relationships with my co-workers and not appear cheap. Is it unreasonable to ask my boss to prevent soliciting in the office, or to request that it be done in a common area so as not to disrupt me while I'm working?

This issue is one of the most asked-about issues in business etiquette. The best solution is to have an office policy about soliciting co-workers. If no policy exists, ask your boss to implement one. A couple of suggestions to increase the likelihood of your boss buying in: First, develop what you think would be a reasonable policy, one that addresses your concerns without completely shutting out those who want to be able to ask for donations. You might ask friends at other companies what their corporate policies are, and use these as a guideline. Second, find some other people in your office who feel the same way you do, and ask them to accompany you when you meet with your boss. There’s strength in numbers.

Source: Post, Peter. "Etiquette at Work." Boston Globe 15 May 2005.

For more information on Emily Post Business Etiquette Programs contact Director of Sales and Relationships, Dawn Stanyon at This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it .