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Collaborative Coaching Solutions, LLC

CCS INSIGHTS

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Clear Bounderies Strengthen Leadership

Have you ever hesitated to set a boundary because you were worried about how someone might react? Maybe you avoided addressing a team member who repeatedly missed deadlines. Maybe you continued to revisit a decision because someone was unhappy with it. Or maybe, you found yourself doing someone else's work because it felt easier than having a conversation with them. Most leaders care deeply about their people and want to maintain positive relationships. But avoiding setting clear expectations and boundaries can create confusion, frustration and inconsistency.

Clear boundaries create clarity. Consistent follow through builds trust.

Leadership boundaries establish expectations for how people work, communicate, and interact. They help team members understand their responsibilities, what decisions have to be made and what they expect from their leader. Setting a boundary does not mean being unkind or unapproachable. You can listen to concerns, show compassion, and still maintain a clear expectation.

A SimpleThree Step Leadership Framework

When you establish or reinforce a boundary, try this approach:

Clarify the Expectation

Be specific about what needs to happen and why it matters. Focus on the behavior or responsibility rather than making assumptions about other's intentions.

Ex: " Going forward, I need you to let the team know as soon as a deadline changes so everyone can adjust their priorities."

This gives clear expectations which in turn gives the team a better opportunity to succeed.

Listen and Discuss

Give the other person an opportunity to ask questions, share their concerns, and identify obstacles. Being open to discussion can help you understand what support may be needed while reaffirming the expectation.

Ex: "I understand you are managing many priorities right now. What do you think might get in the way of meeting this deadline?"

Listening shows respect and creates an opportunity to solve problems together.



Agree on Next Steps and Follow Through

Confirm what each person will do, set a time frame, and schedule a follow up. If the expectation is not met, address it promptly and respectfully.
Ex: “Let’s agree that you will provide an update by Thursday and we will check in on Friday morning to discuss any remaining concerns.”
Consistent follow through and defined benchmarks reinforce accountability and builds trust across the team.

When You Receive Pushback

A negative reaction does not automatically mean you have set the wrong boundary. People may need time to adjust, especially if expectations have not been clear or consistent in the past. Listen to their concerns and consider whether there is an obstacle you need to address. You can acknowledge someone’s feelings while maintaining the expectation.
Ex: “ I understand that this change is frustrating and I appreciate you sharing your concerns. The expectation is still that we follow the new process. Let’s talk about what will help you move forward.”

Organizational ROI:

When leaders establish clear boundaries and follow through consistently, organizations can experience:

- Clearer roles and performance expectations.
- Greater employee ownership and accountability.
- Less time spent revisiting decisions or addressing repeated issues.
- Stronger trust and a greater sense of fairness across the team.
- More consistent and productive communication.

Try This Today

The next time you feel tempted to avoid an uncomfortable conversation, remember that a respectful, clear boundary can strengthen both the relationship and the results. Ask yourself:

- What expectation or boundary needs to be clarified?
- Have I communicated it directly and consistently?
- What conversation have I been putting off?
- What support or information might the other person need?
- How will I follow up?

Ready to Create Greater Clarity and Accountability?

If your leaders need support setting expectations, navigating difficult conversations, or building a more accountable team, let’s connect. Through leadership coaching and organizational development, I help leaders create stronger teams and healthier workplace cultures.