

## POWER-UP YOUR PRODUCTIVITY BY SETTING WORKSPACE BOUNDARIES

In any place of work there is clubbing together of personalities with differing backgrounds, physical features, and psychological orientations. Each person has different sets of values and needs. These differences can escalate any time to unbearable levels and cause stress, anxiety, conflict, anger, resentment and a host of other negative emotions. Offices recognize this as a universal problem and provide personal spaces (like personal desks, chairs, wastepaper baskets, phones etc.) to reduce chances of conflict and smooth the workflows. However, not everything can be managed by the office administration, and not every action of your colleague can be a reason for complaint to the HR. Many times, you need talk it out with your colleagues in a fashion so that they respect your needs while you respect theirs. This is how you manage your boundaries and develop positive relations as well as productivity. Reporting on a colleague is the last option where it involves a conflict on a relatively personal level. If you find your colleague overstressed or engaging in behavior that affects your productivity, you need to sort out matters between yourselves and give each other the space that is required to remain properly productive. So, what are the benefits of sorting out needs with your colleagues and setting boundaries that are respected by mutual consent?

1. You feel personally empowered.
2. You learn how to manage conflicts.
3. You can easily refuse requests that are inconsistent with your needs.

In short, it enables you to easily manage your resources including time, and perform efficiently. **How to Set Boundaries** Setting interpersonal boundaries in workspace involves three essential steps:

1. You need to make a list of your needs. Identify those needs that need to be met by agreement of colleagues. Reduce the number of requests or conditions to a minimum that are truly essential.
2. Decide upon and establish your boundaries: Once you have identified your needs, you need to communicate them to your colleagues in a reasonable and assertive manner. It is not possible for your colleagues to figure out your needs, and unless you make them aware, they are not at fault. So tell them your needs and work with them to reach a solution by mutual consent.
3. Guard your boundaries: Once your boundaries are set and established by consent with your colleagues, do not breach them by yourself. You have just created some social contracts to respect the needs of others in return of your needs being respected. If you have initiated the move, then breaching social contracts is the worst thing you can do. Your requests may never be honored again by your colleagues. Also remember that guarding your boundaries do not mean stressing your ownership to the point of becoming insufferable to others. You have earned a privilege by consent, so enjoy it and increase your productivity.

I'll end with a little example to make things clearer: My manager had given my colleague and me the task of administrating our website discussion forums on alternate days. My colleague had been in charge of the same task from the time before I joined, and used to handle it alone. She began to resent my inclusion in the responsibility and would often find faults with my work and pass comments. This made me angry and I made more mistakes, which in turn gave her the opportunity to find more faults. I found that I disliked her attitude of trying to be my boss, when we were both enjoying the same position. A little bit of analyzing, and it was clear that she was feeling insecure by loss of absolute ownership of the task. She had begun to consider the company forums as her absolute territory and my inclusion was seen as interference as well as cause of insecurity. Instead of taking the matter to the manager or making any complaints, I decided to sit down with her and talk the matter out. I was able to convince her that if she kept up her behavior it was hurting me and in turn hurting the company. I told her that I appreciated her efforts to make my work better, but I was unable to accept her style. If she did feel that I had made any mistake, it would be better that she informed the mistake directly to the manager than trying to teach me. I set that boundary. It worked wonders. My productivity went up. There were almost no mistakes, and slowly I developed a healthy relationship with my colleague. In fact, our families have become quite close to each other. That's how important it is to set boundaries and define it to your co-workers. Just taking the complaint to the HR or my immediate manager would hardly have had as positive an outcome. The conflict would have continued and found other avenues to vent itself, and may be I would have lost my job for the huge number of mistakes made when angry.

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