
MONDAY MANNA
OCT 2, 2023**SETTING HEALTHY WORK BOUNDARIES****By Rick Boxx**

The work world can be filled with stress – deadlines to be met, quotas to be filled, goals to be achieved, profit margins to be maintained. Because of these demands, many workplaces become unhealthy environments, potentially detrimental to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of staff members.

The Harvard Business Review, which has been a highly esteemed business publication for many years, addressed this problem in its management tips in one of its editions. These recommendations focused on the importance of setting healthy standards of work for your team. It is interesting to note that each of them is affirmed by principles taught in the very old “business book” called the Bible.

Here are the three tips the Harvard Business Review presented on how leaders can help their team enjoy healthy boundaries resulting not only in greater productivity but also high levels of workplace satisfaction and fulfillment:

First, as the leader, set a good example. When deadlines are looming or an important account seems at risk, it is easy to forget that employees and colleagues have lives outside of the office. We should take seriously the potentially negative impact that sending late-night emails to staff or their never being able to take a lunch break can have.

We should honestly consider how we would react if someone made excessive demands upon our own personal time. Leaders set the tone for those who follow them. One day, after performing an act of service for His disciples, Jesus Christ said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). He was not expecting them to do something He was not willing to do.

Second, plan extra time each week. Many of us are overly optimistic, sometimes making commitments to complete projects on time schedules that prove to be unreasonable. As leaders, we should encourage staff to block out time each week for working on unfinished projects.

On another occasion, Jesus cautioned a large crowd assembled around Him, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him...” (Luke 14:28-29).

Third, increase workload transparency. Check in with staff regularly and ask how they feel about their workloads. Listen to them and be ready to respond in ways that can help them and relieve unnecessary burdens. Proverbs 27:23-26 advises, “Be sure to know the condition of

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your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.... When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing and the goats with the price of a field.”

The people we work with obviously are far more valuable than farm animals, so we should have even greater concern for their well-being as they collaborate with us every day in the workplace. Your team needs healthy work boundaries, which includes leading them toward times of rest. As Hebrews 4:10 states, “For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from His.” If even God needed to take a break from His labors, how much more do we need to do the same?

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Reflection/Discussion Questions Challenge

1. How would you describe your working environment? Is it healthy, or is it unhealthy because of relentless pressures to complete projects and achieve goals and objectives? Explain your answer.
2. What do you think would be readily observable symptoms of an unhealthy working environment? How would you go about bringing these concerns to the attention of people in authority?
3. It is suggested that leaders serve as good examples in terms of promoting healthy work habits and philosophies. Do you agree that top-level executives should bear this responsibility? If so, how common do you think it is for leaders to do so?
4. Do you think “workload transparency” – encouraging staff to communicate concerns about their workloads openly and honestly – is promoted in most workplaces? Why or why not?

Challenge

Whether we hold important decision-making positions or not, we all can strive to make a positive influence in our workplaces. However, it is often difficult to effect needed change alone. Do you have someone (or more than one person) who can support you in efforts to improve your working environment? As Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.”

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 24:27; Ezekiel 34:12; Matthew 7:12, 22:39; Luke 6:21; 1 Peter

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