Boundaries for Leaders

In the world of leadership things often become convoluted, mixed-up, and churned together. Work/life balance, rest, self-care, family responsibilities, mothers-in-law (fathers-in-law too), leisure time, making meals, and cleaning up. Plus, the lawn needs to be cut…how do we find the right boundaries to live with all the responsibilities that overwhelm us on a daily basis? On top of the logistical maze we navigate each and every day, we need to draw boundaries for roles and relationships.

The problem is when we draw boundaries and observe them, we say things like no, or I'm not available, or thanks but no thanks. Many people struggle with the little voice in our heads that tells us to feel guilty for not helping out or jumping in when we are asked to do a task or volunteer help to a friend, neighbour, or loved one. Naturally, this also impacts leaders of all types. There's no question that part of being a successful leader involves the ability to draw effective and appropriate boundaries, both relationally, and practically.

Dr. Henry Cloud takes this a step further and demonstrates how a leader can set the table for the team she leads in order to provide the best opportunities and best odds for success. While Cloud is well qualified to write volumes of psychological analysis, this is not a book about psychological understanding designed to get results (or better, *psychologically manipulative*). It's a book that describes and delineates some of the best principles for leaders to employ when they are responsible for the success of their teams and organizations.

It should be apparent to all of us by now that relationship with people trumps pretty much everything else. If you are a leader, try getting things done well and efficiently with unhappy people. People that feel demeaned, and undervalued are notorious underperformers, but we often forget that people who are disconnected from their leadership lack feelings of ownership, and community. We might be able to ask what the big deal is if people feel disconnected, but we know that people perform best when connected, part of a team, and feel ownership and self-determination. This develops within connection. Connection is all about people…people are the main thing!

We've all seen the reels and memes demonstrating trust falls gone wrong at the company retreat. To an extent, there's some great humour in those reels. Like most things in the business world, great ideas and solid leadership principles become overused, worn out, and cliché. Same with the trust falls…yet the core principle should not be allowed to elude or evade us. Cloud delineates the necessity of genuine and authentic trust within teams and leaders. When boiled down, this concept of trust can be summarized as simply knowing another team member is *on your side*. The term *psychological safety* does a complete job of defining what it is like for someone to be in a trust environment at the workplace. No backstabbing, no underhanded political moves, no gossip, and benefit of the doubt abounds with grace. This is the core of a trusting environment. For those of us that are leaders, it's high time to learn how to create these cultures and environments. This is done by observing and creating the boundaries as laid out by Dr. Cloud.

Cloud presents much more in terms of relevant material in **Boundaries for Leaders**. Whether you are a leader does not matter, the value found in this book is certainly worth the read.

(Credit to Dr. Henry Cloud, Boundaries for Leaders, Harper Collins, 2013)

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www.theadvantagemill.net
al@theadvantagemill.com
519.777.7979