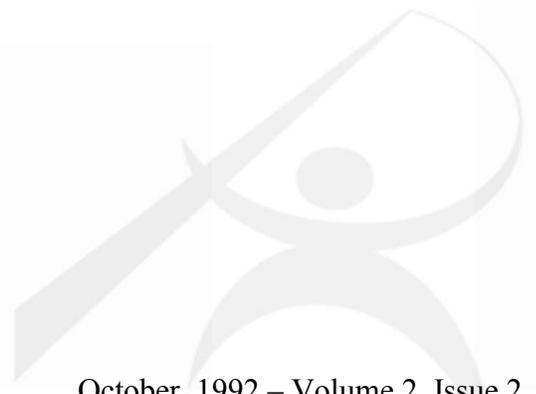




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*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*



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What Do Boundaries Look Like?

Unhealthy Boundaries

Rigid:

- "This is how we've always done it."
- Immune to feedback.
- Listening without responding.
- Unconcerned with world outside of own borders.
- Stability is highest value.

Porous:

- Constantly barraged with information and data.
- Treats everything as important.
- Can't say "no" to anything.
- Takes feedback personally.
- Easily distracted, in constant state of flux.

Healthy Boundaries

Flexible and open:

- ✓ "If there's a better way, let's do it."
- ✓ Focused on values and service, not on change for change sake.
- ✓ Roles, responsibilities, and intersection points are negotiated and clear.
- ✓ Feedback is sought and analyzed, becoming the basis for change.
- ✓ "We change to improve, serve better and accomplish -- or we don't change." □

Boundaries: Defining the Playing Field

In the last issue we said that empowering leaders know how to manage boundaries. This brought an onslaught of questions about just what we meant.

Boundaries are about power. They are the "lines in the sand." We create boundaries to define who we are and to protect ourselves from unwanted influences. We get upset when someone "crosses our boundary" without an invitation. We constantly define boundaries as individuals, as teams, and as organizations. We define them around jobs, responsibilities, resources, work space, time, and other things we deem important.

The point is, **we all have boundaries. It is the wise leader who recognizes them and deals with them directly.** Why? *Invasion of boundaries* is responsible for much of the internal conflict that organizations experience. *Poorly-defined boundaries* can cause the "power grab" or promote under-performance. *Rigid boundaries* bring about turfism and lead to lack of cooperation.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MANAGE BOUNDARIES WELL?

1. **Leader's Role:** The leader recognizes, mediates, and sets boundaries. She/he needs to distinguish between boundaries that are set for personality or position's sake and those that are set for quality and productivity's sake.
2. **Vision-Driven:** Boundaries can promote or stifle the pursuit of a vision. Boundaries that are helpful provide structure and flow to focus energy, time, and effort for an ultimate purpose.
3. **Negotiation:** As needs and circumstances change, so should roles, responsibilities and decision-making power. Boundaries that are flexible are negotiated, worked at, and renegotiated for higher levels of total performance.
4. **Judgment:** Are boundaries judged appropriate based on status quo or forward progress? Maintaining a position or serving the client?

In the final analysis boundaries will be set, consciously or not. In our results-oriented world, effectively setting boundaries is a critical leadership skill. □

John Reardon, owner of Phoenix Process Consultants, and Cathy Perme collaborated to write this issue.