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PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 014, with Lor Bradley

The Importance of Setting Business Boundaries

Introduction

Hey scalers, I hope you're all doing just great!

You know, my episodes seem to come around so quickly and now I'm getting into the swing of podcasting, I'm finding that I have more things to talk about than I do slots in our Scale and Skyrocket podcast rota! So before we get started on today's episode, if there's anything you want me to talk about then comment or drop me a DM with suggestions!

OK. I wanted to talk to you today about setting boundaries in business and how a lack of them can trip you up. I'm also going to share some of the very simple signs of when your boundaries might need a check-in and how to go about setting good boundaries that are going to protect your energy and your sanity!

I asked an entrepreneur friend of mine this week, 'how do you set boundaries?' It's always a great question because our answers to this one is usually very telling and often, we'll get very uncomfortable answering, especially if we don't have robust boundaries.

I know she won't mind me sharing this, but she said (and I'm going to summarise this), "I'm fucking terrible at it! My group hotseats run over time and I've come across clients where their energy feels all wrong and they're not learning from what they're seeing, I'm often running over their allotted times but clearly I need to get better at that."

And I think the boundaries question is always a brilliant one because when we sit and apply the boundary lens upon ourselves and our business it can be transformational. And tightening up our boundaries is something we all continue to work on no matter what level of business we're in.

Why is Setting Boundaries Important?

That saying has always stuck with me of 'we cannot serve from an empty cup.' And I allowed my cup to run dry last year because I compromised my boundaries in a BIG way and diverting my focus from my planned pathway for 2020 slowed me down considerably.



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I'm going to take you through my own example. Looking back, feeling the pain and re-setting my boundaries was one of my core focuses of 2020. We were all knees deep in a pandemic and there was so much uncertainty.

You could almost feel the fear of small business owners, and the excitement of those seeing the opportunities to pivot and grow. There's been a lot going on.

People were naturally worried about the longevity of their business and started reaching out to me for support. Now, THAT reaching out triggered some pretty darn unhealthy behaviours in me.

I always freely admit I do have some residual overhang of people pleasing behaviours that I'm still working on and last year, my compulsion of wanting to please, support and help others was overwhelming.

And before long I was offering some free calls, free networking and spending hours answering emails to help navigate others temporarily through the fear period.

So very quickly, my calendar was chock-a-block full of paid clients and pro-bono work, and I went from a line separating free vs paid work and working vs non-working time to having no line at all. And working started to spill over into my personal time, my internal battery was quickly drained.

It affected my balance massively. My tiredness took me out of my zone of genius with my paying clients and they just didn't get the best out of me. I ended up feeling resentful as most people I was giving my free time to were basically not putting my advice into action.

And right there I realised I was at risk of my cup running empty whilst I quickly eroded my boundaries.

Why it so difficult to set boundaries?

The thing is, when you run your own business, there are so many factors to consider. You end up being everywhere and if you're a solo business owner or working with a small team that's when your boundaries are most at risk of getting blurred or completely wiped out altogether.

It's incredibly easy to lose sight of the invisible lines that we create to keep up safe in our business. And my own experience last year just goes to show that over caring or people pleasing sometimes gets in the way of u setting healthy boundaries.

When you don't have sufficient boundaries, it leaves you with no clear way to interact and set expectations with your clients and with your teams. It becomes much easier for relationships with your clients to be compromised and broken and you risk affecting your business in the long-term, you risk your energy and your sanity!

We all need to set a clear separation between work and personal life, and free and paid work – and even more so when we're super passionate about our work. I can be like that; I love what I do so much that I sometimes forget myself and talk about business without remembering my boundaries.



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So, as in my own experience, as much as caring for the people around us and going the extra mile matters, being transparent and clear with those around you is even more important. If you set boundaries, you're naturally being more transparent and you're able to explain why you do things the way you do.

And ultimately a lack of boundaries leads to a lack of care and respect in yourself and your clients.

So, setting boundaries in your business is a must.

Signs You Need To Tighten Up Your Boundaries

I'm often asked, 'how do I know when my boundaries need adjusting?' Well, you *feel* it.

You might feel tired, stretched too thin, working longer hours than usual, responding to emails from clients at unsociable hours, taking calls, doom scrolling on Facebook, working with people who aren't your ideal paying clients, taking on too much from your team....so basically, anything that makes you feel icky or drains your energy.

- Your clients might be contacting you outside of your working hours constantly and you 're feeling like you have to respond.
- You're spending so much time answering emails that it distracts you from working in your business.
- You might start to feel increasingly resentful of others demands on your time.
- You might find yourself saying yes to everything because it feels easier than to say no.
- Alright, so let's wind this part up, you're basically not serving clients as well as you could and ultimately your sleep, health, and other parts of your life start suffering.

If any of these resonate with you then it sounds like you could benefit from putting stronger boundaries in place because boundaries help us to take better care of ourselves and stops you from saying yes to everything! They are also key to helping you to build the lifestyle and the business that you want.

I'm often asked what types of boundaries I have in place now and what I think are great boundaries to incorporate into your routine as you start to scale up your business so I've created a checklist that you can sign up for, download and check yourself against.

An Example Of Setting Boundaries With Clients

Ok, let's go back to my friends' example of where she is holding over running group sessions with clients, and where a relationship with one of her clients just feels energetically wrong.

For many of those of us who are consultants, coaches, therapists and delivering advisory based services this is really important when you're experiencing boundary infractions such as time overruns or clients who don't show up in the way you'd like them to.



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And when you have the wrong energy in a client relationship, it's not going to help your client evolve - it'll hold them back. When I work with my 1-2-1 clients, I know that if they haven't emotionally invested in doing the work required then I can't help them.

So, they've made an investment in you to take them through a transformation and to help them succeed. And I know that if I don't put firm boundaries with higher maintenance clients, that they'll only go on to tell others (who might be thinking about signing up with me) that my advice doesn't work (and they'll avoid the reality that they've showed up in the wrong headspace in every session!)

Clients *will* have rough times (and it's great to give them some space to acknowledge and hear how they're feeling) but then take them back to how you are there to help them succeed and that you'd be doing them an injustice by:

- a) reinforcing a negative behaviour (especially if there's a risk of it becoming repetitive),
- b) running the sessions longer (as that's not time-smart working for scaling a business - we experts must eat our own dog food right?), and
- c) not being clear on what you think they should be doing right now. Sometimes I ask my clients to leave the group calls, I'll tell them (in the nicest way) what they *need* rather than what they *want* to hear. It makes me unpopular 'in the moment' sometimes but they always say they trust that I'll always show up with the mindset to help them succeed rather than reinforce where they are right now.

Does that make sense?

Also, when we erode our boundaries from a place of trying to help it holds us back over time in showing up at our best. We can't serve from an empty cup and thus it ultimately affects the client experience in the long run.

So, as with kids, clients really do love strong boundaries and you don't have to compromise on any of your values along the way. They're investing in the experience, so we have a duty to deliver it :)

It can be really painful to set boundaries and it takes time. You're going to backslide, trip up and forget your new boundaries so don't be too hard on yourself if you don't get it right off the bat. Just keep returning to your boundaries as often as you can until it becomes second nature.

So don't forget to download the checklist, I'll leave the link for you.

The Transformational Benefits of Strong Boundaries

Remember you're in business because you're creating a lifestyle that serves you, you want to build more freedom to do more of what you love and less of the things you don't want to do.



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And the wonderful thing is when you have established rock solid boundaries – it empowers you. You free up your energy, your time, you unlock your creativity and you become more productive.

Your business starts to serve you and your clients (and your audience) will massively respect you for doing that as, at the end of the day, it's going to benefit them too.

Until next time,
Lor Bradley