

2. Setting Expectations

Part of the Building a Collaborative Brand YOU series

Kym Hamer, 15th July 2024

When I was sixteen years old, I learnt one of my most valuable lessons about the power of expectations.

I was a high achiever with excellent grades and a whole range of hobbies I enjoyed. I was socially adept, well-liked with a core group of friends and a loving family. And I was struggling.

My parents, at a loss to know what to do, suggested I have a session with a psychologist. I don't remember much about the conversation, only that I cried a lot and talked about things I'd never felt I could say.

At the end of the hour, we talked about next steps and one of these was to read the book, *When I say no, I feel guilty* by Manuel J Smith PhD. (Unlike today, books on assertiveness and boundaries were few and far between.) It gave me insight into my feelings of guilt for not wanting the same things everyone else seemed to want or expect of me and provided the first critical steps back to feeling emotionally 'together' and empowered to make change. And every day since, I have been grateful for that early gift, that of understanding my expectations of myself.

It starts with me

Papyrus, a UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people, defines boundaries as the personal limits that define what we are willing to accept and what we are not.⁽¹⁾ Oxford Languages defines a boundary as a line which marks the limits of an area. Setting boundaries means knowing what you want and expect from others, and more importantly being willing and able to clearly, concisely, and calmly communicate these.

As I got older I realised that this was only half the story. Just as important was what others were willing to accept from me and defining the 'rules of play' for everyone involved. But the crux of the matter was - and still is - that it must start with articulating my expectations of myself and others, to myself, before communicating them to others.

When you are clear about your own expectations, it doesn't just create boundaries. It creates a foundation for choice - for you to ask yourself:

- What am I doing this for?
- What am I really saying yes to?



- Will this get me to where I want to go?

It provides a framework to think first, then choose the conversations and behaviours to act on to support your wider priorities and ambitions.

Just notice it

The first step in changing our thinking and behaviour is what I call noticing, and setting new boundaries and expectations involves first noticing your current ones - particularly, the ones that are redirecting your TEAM - your Time, Energy, Attention, and Money - away from getting you where you want to go.

Do any of these sound familiar?

- Someone pops by and asks if you've got five minutes...
- Someone tells you it will only take a minute (and it doesn't)...
- Someone asks a question they could have answered for themselves...

TRY THIS

1. Count how many times a day you hear these, and take note of how often you respond agreeably, affably, affirmatively.
2. This is the baseline from which you can notice what the voice in your head is telling you in the moment that it happens. This is your Expectation Story.
3. Practise this over a couple of days to 'get good' at noticing this story and at catching yourself out. Each time you might say something like, 'Aha! There it is again.'

Your power to make changes in your work, relationships and life lie in the noticing. It creates what Viktor Frankl and Stephen Covey refer to as the space between the stimulus (what happened) and the response (what you do).

In that gap lies the power to choose.

When you demonstrate this behaviour to others frequently, consistently and over time, you not only educate others in what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. You create agency for them to do this for themselves, both with themselves and with others.

The power to choose

A few years ago, a colleague shared this wonderful quote from therapist, writer and founder of The Embodiment Institute, Prentis Hemphill⁽²⁾:

“Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously.”

Boundaries help us figure out where **I** ends and **you** begins. To do that effectively, we must be willing to have conversations, to exchange perspectives rather than having the answer. A conversation about setting out your expectations of yourself and others might lead to an alternative that works even better for you as well as for everyone you collaborate with.

Organisational policies and cultures often encourage an 'open door policy' but nowhere have I seen it stated that this is to be at all times or in detriment to our wellbeing.

Successful collaboration is a work in progress and, given that four of our most precious resources - Time, Energy, Attention and Money (#TEAM) - are finite, being responsible for how we invest those resources, define our part and create structures that support our intentions AND expectations in any venture are important muscles to build.

What sort of expectations are you setting for yourself?

What structures, behaviours and habits will you build to allow you to choose powerfully?

And how will you role model these to shape what others can expect, and learn, from you?

Kym Hamer - Building Brand You

Accelerating results by unlocking your greatest asset - YOU

Sources:

- (1) [The importance of setting boundaries and saying no](#)
- (2) <https://prentishemphill.com/>
- (3) [Collaboration: A superpower for good or a weapon of mass dissatisfaction?](#)

Thank you for reading this - if you've enjoyed it, would you please pay it forward and share with others?

To find out more about Building Brand You™ and Personal Branding for Leadership coaching, DM me to request a call.

#collaboration #buildingblocks #personalbranding #coaching #safespaces #boundaries
#expectations #BuildingBrandYou #TEAM

Kym Hamer is the creator of Building Brand You™, a methodology helping organisations, teams and individuals to develop their visibility and personal brand as building blocks for delivering sustained success and impact both inside and outside their work. As the founder of Artemis Futures International, Kym works with a portfolio of leaders and organisations across the world on marketing, strategy and communications, and as a leadership, visibility and impact coach. She is one of Thinkers360's Top 20 Influencers in Marketing, Coaching and Personal Branding globally and for the last four years has been one of their Top 10 global influencers in Entrepreneurship. She is also the host of the chart-topping podcast Building Brand You™, a board advisor and a relentless champion for what's possible.