



LEARNING CIRCLE INSIGHTS



Setting Boundaries and Expectations in Mentoring

“ Are
boundaries
limiting or
liberating? ”

Synopsis

Dilip Shankar and Lawrence Young facilitated the discussion on setting boundaries and expectations in mentoring meetings.

The discussion was to understand the importance of boundaries and how do you draw them? What are the consequences if boundaries are not defined? Who manages the boundaries, and how rigid or flexible boundaries can be?

Key point & comments

- Boundaries are essential for a positive, healthy, and effective mentoring relationship.
- Setting expectations allows participants to know the rules of the game and define clear outcomes. This is perhaps the most important phase in mentoring and sets the tone of the relationship.
- There exist many dimensions on which boundaries need to be drawn - area of expertise, accountability, criteria of success, time, frequency and location of meetings, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and ethics.
- Boundaries work well when it can evolve and adapt depending on the mentee and his or her context.



Who sets the boundaries?

- The dominant view was that it is a joint responsibility between the mentor and mentee.
- Few felt that mentor should draw the boundaries as he/she may be more experienced.
- The convergence was irrespective of who draws the boundaries, it needs to respect and accommodate interest of both participants.
- The best judge is the chemistry that happens between the mentor and mentee during this conversation.



“Boundaries set at the beginning by establishing rules of engagement & aligning expectations, help build trust and confidentiality leading to a stronger mentor-mentee relationship.



How do you draw boundaries?

Boundaries are best when its seen as a compass than a map. It needs to adapt and evolve according to the demands of the context. The broad areas that can be kept in mind are:

SELF-AWARENESS:

This is an ongoing process. Mentors should reflect on their strengths, limitations, blind spots, values and beliefs so that they are equipped to draw boundaries and help their mentees avoid mistakes they made.

PURPOSE (WHY):

What is your purpose for mentoring? This gives clarity to choose the mentee, the area of mentoring, and setting expectations.



WHAT?

Clarifying to each other not only what to expect but also what not to expect. Drawing boundaries on the area of expertise, criteria for success, accountability parameters, and confidentiality.

HOW?

Unfolding the plan - Frequency of meeting, time of the meeting, what kind of location will it happen, how to access each other beyond the set times. Being sensitive to cultural and personal boundaries that may exist. Being consistent with boundaries creates trust and respect.

Summary

- As a mentor you need to establish rules of engagement and align expectations at the beginning of your mentoring engagement. This includes timelines (usually 3-9 months), frequency of meetings (face-to-face a month), etc.
- Setting boundaries and expectations are an essential part of the mentoring journey.
- It's also good practice to incorporate a way of tracking progress; at A.I.M this involves the use of the A.I.M AIS tool for documentation of the ongoing mentor-mentee discussions, as well as completion of surveys at mid-term and end of each engagement.
- It may also be appropriate to put in a special protocol for intervention and escalation, to deal with out-of-bounds issues.
- Establishing of a mutual relationship, getting to know each other, understanding aspiration and purpose, and building trust are the foundation of a strong and meaningful relationship. Once these have been established, then both mentor and mentee can better align and agree on the boundaries & expectations.
- While both are equally responsible, the Mentor should lead the setting of these boundaries and expectation
- Boundaries are meant to be enablers and not disablers of good mentoring conversations; boundaries help build trust and maintain confidentiality leading to stronger mentoring relationships.

Upcoming Learning Circle Series

26th March

Structured or Unstructured Mentoring Meetings

23rd April

Real Play – Practice With Cases



Thank you!