

Hello everyone. And welcome to episode eight. Today, we are talking about good fences, make good neighbors. That old idiom, which I am so proud that I actually got correct, is all about putting a fence down the property line between two neighbors. That makes it clear to everyone where the boundaries are. Um, and then there's, you know, less fighting with Bob from next door. And I think that whole concept, it really plays well in business. The whole idea here is communication. And this principle is really vital to your business with clients, with your team, with your family. We need to be setting expectations on a whole host of things so that everybody knows where the boundaries are. And there's a whole lot less fighting with Bob from next door. At Reynolds OBM, we have something called a welcome kit, and it's like a "work with me" document. Everyone that comes in as a new client will get this document.

And it really just lays out all the ways that we work together, what we do. And I figured I'd go through it a little bit and kind of tell you where we set our boundaries from day one. This goes out to everyone even before invoices are paid. And that way they know if we're compatible, like how are we going to work together? Our office hours, are nine to four Eastern time. That doesn't mean that I'm exactly going to answer email at 9:00 AM. It just means that I'm here at 9:00 AM. I may have a meeting with someone else, but those are our office hours. What it does mean is that if you send me an email at nine o'clock at night, I'm probably not even going to read it until the next morning. I don't work all the time. I did work all the time, scattered in the beginning and it was awful.

I keep those hours so that I can then go and see my family. I can make dinner. I can do those kinds of things. That's a really big thing for me, that that idea of just working and then not working. And then I obviously like if something is a problem, if there is an emergency my clients have my phone number. They can text me, call me whatever. There's not really a lot of emergencies. And most of what I do, I'm not doing major launches that are all consuming for a couple of weeks. Whether it's, you know, the, the website's down or things like that, like, I, I don't have those kind of things happening so I can set this kind of boundary. A lot of other people, they don't, they don't have this kind of business. So these are the things that you have to figure out for yourself and then make the life and the business that you want.

Now I have a team, so this is not as big of a deal as it used to be when it was just me. But I do have the holiday schedule and then like how I would deal with going on vacation. Uh, but for me, even if I'm not here, somebody is here, so someone's going to help them. That's the nice thing about having an agency, there's someone to cover. Um, so I have all the holidays we're closed. That seems like a simple thing. But knowing when I'm open and when I'm closed for business is a big deal. If you want to go to target, you need to know that they're not, maybe not open at midnight. And then what kind of communication do I have? Do I like to email or Slack?

Some people really like to just text, which I can't stand because it's too hard to keep it controlled, unless it's an emergency, obviously. And then like some people like Voxer, they liked the talking of it. I like the reading quickly, so that doesn't work for me. But just having those ideas of where the communication is going to be, so that it's all in one place or it's organized. And you don't feel like you have one person sending seven different messages, seven different ways. It's really hard to find a message or go back and look for something. If everything is all over, at least that's how I feel. Remember this is all my boundaries, but I'm just trying to give you some ideas of where my boundaries are. And then we have meetings. We usually do at least a biweekly or a weekly meeting with clients.

That's already set out there. And usually it's a standing meeting every Tuesday at noon or something like that. And then how, how do you get paid? When would you invoice? Do you send invoices before the work has done after the work has done? Is it 50% down? How do you pay? Do you take credit cards, silly things like that. Can if laying that all out in the beginning really, really does make, this is so much easier

to deal with clients like, Oh, no, I'm sorry. This is my policy. Having the policy creates a lot less friction with people. They know where they stand and they know what they have to do. And if they don't like it, then that's a different story. And maybe you can make another deal for something else, but trying to have policies and keep straight really does help.

And then what kind of timing on deadlines? So if you're working on projects or you have to deliver some kind of thing, how does that work? When should they expect it? If they think that this should be, it's a two day turnaround and it's a four week turnaround, there's going to be very unhappy clients. That's not what you want, but if you can tell them, Hey, this isn't two weeks, you'll have this in four. You still have that. That means that they understand where they are and then they can argue with you about going faster, but whatever. But the whole idea is that everyone knows what's going on. Deadlines. That kind of thing. My timing is I will answer your email or get back to you within 24 hours. So most of the time I answer right away. Or if I'm at my desk, I'll just answer.

Or if I'm doing another project, maybe a little while, rarely does it take that long. But if someone comes to me at 4:30, when I'm already not at my desk and want something immediately, that's a different story. I have a thing in my contracts about rush fees for things like that, because I don't want my whole life to be wrapped around people, demanding things right now. That doesn't work. I get aggravated, they get aggravated. It's not fun. Um, I also talk about security, which is a big deal. When you're an online business, what kind of security do you have? What are you using? What tools are you using to keep everything safe? We use LastPass as an encrypted software for passwords. So I can share passwords with my team, uh, without, you know, emailing credit card numbers and things like that. So everything is in a secure location within any of our systems, all their passwords and things like that. So they know that I'm not, you know, everything's not just laying around.

And then there's a really important thing about what happens when you're not going to work together anymore. Maybe the project's over. How does it end if you're a virtual assistant and they're hiring another virtual assistant, how do you get the knowledge you have to the new person? Do you offer training? Is it paid? Is that included in your package? Why does this come in handy? It helps because having working hours and not feeling overwhelmed and your team knowing exactly what's expected of them. You not doing any work you really hate or isn't profitable, right? If we have a package, you don't lay out what they get and you say, "I'll help you" for a thousand dollars. And then all of a sudden they start adding all this stuff in it's called scope creep because the scope of the work was never defined. And then all of a sudden you have this, all the stuff in there, and you're not making any money because you have to pay for all these people.

And you just worked really crazy hours and you've made nothing, things like that are going to be really, really unfortunate. And you are not going to like working there. You're not going to like doing that work. You're going to hate your business after awhile. So having these kind of boundaries is really important. So we want to set expectations on how we work, our mission and vision and values that we talked about a couple weeks ago, which in this world of all the crazy things that are going on, it's come to be a really big thing. Timelines again, like how long is this going to take? When can you expect it? And then what is in scope? What are you going to deliver? I'm going to give you these four things, not seven things, four things, and all of these things. Also, they make clients happy, right?

Getting exactly what they expected for the price they expected or better. You can always add in more value, but if you promise things and they're unclear and they don't work out and the client isn't happy, Oh, it's a little worse. And then you get a bad review. That's even worse. Yeah. So I want you to do the work you want, but I also want you to be happy doing it. I having to deal with a client who is unhappy, it's the worst. So by setting these boundaries and getting all this laid out and everyone knows what to expect, that really sets you up for success. And that's what we want. Right? I want you to have a

successful business that makes you happy and makes you money because this isn't a hobby. So the last thing I want to say is Parkinson's law.

It's one of my favorite concepts. Parkinson law says work expands. So as to fill the time available for its completion. So basically if you give yourself two hours to do something, it will take two hours to do it. If you give yourself one hour to do it, you'll do it in one hour. The idea isn't the amount of work, but the space you give it, if you know, you only have an hour and you got to hustle, you're going to fly through that a lot faster. Right? Right now time is like a run on sentence. It just is. It just keeps going. And there's no like breaks or anything. I used to have a bookend. I would drop my son off in the morning. I'd have to pick him up after school. There was a bookend and I'd have to get a certain amount of things done in that time.

And that meant I could only give an hour here, half an hour there. And I had to like rush around and do things, whatever it was now I can kind of take my time. That means things take longer, which is silly, but it's true. So if I knew I had a half an hour to get all the laundry done, let's say, or all, or get out in the garden and do something or do a spreadsheet or make a spreadsheet or whatever. Like that kind of thing is you get it done. You focus and you get it done because you only have a half an hour and you have to get it done. If you have two hours to do the same thing, you kind of meander through it. Maybe you check your phone in the middle. You're not so focused. So that is another thing of setting your expectations for yourself.

You need to say, okay, I am not going to work on this thing forever, because that's how things don't get done, giving yourself some kind of timeline and a deadline and sticking to that. We'll create these expectations for yourself. So boundaries and expectations are not just for other people. It's the accountability piece for yourself, right? Yeah. You want to have boundaries in your own head because right now there's like this, like I said, this run on sentence of life. So there's a couple of things on my own "to-do" lists that are very: "I can do that tomorrow. I don't have to do it today." And I think there are about four things on my list for myself that I've pushed off. I don't know, every day, this week I didn't set those boundaries. Whatever's on my to do list, has to get done today.

If I made that a real rule and a real boundary for myself, I might get different things done, or I might not put on everything. That's on my to do list right now. I might look at that and be like, it really does need to get done. Don't put everything on your list. There's no way I could get all this stuff, but that's how I am. I want to shove as much in as possible. So we are going to try to set some boundaries in our life. We're going to set boundaries with our clients, by showing up, telling them what to expect, letting them know how we work so that they are crystal clear on what they're getting. We're going to set boundaries with our vision and values. So everyone knows who we are, who we stand for. I'm going to be clear on timelines, on scope, but then we're also going to be very clear with our own selves, giving ourselves that accountability piece that we need so badly.

We want not to set so many goals or so many task lists that there's no way we could get it done. So setting those boundaries, remembering Parkinson's law, giving yourself only a certain amount of time to do things that we can get things done. Feel good about yourself, make some money, go see your family. I want you to have a successful business and I want you to like what you do... even love it. So, uh, start thinking about all these kind of boundaries and where they need to go and think about all the times in your business or in your life where you have kind of hit a real big snag. Client was mad, everything took longer, all those kinds of things. Or you ended up having text messages at 4:00 AM, from clients, things like that. Think of all those things that didn't work and then figure out a policy on that, write it down and start communicating it, go through these, do the exercise. It really helps knowing that I am not working all the time is a huge thing to me. Um, and then knowing what I'm supposed to deliver as well is huge

because that's, that's good. Scope creep is crazy. All right, everyone, get out there, make some boundaries, stick to them and uh, I'll see you next week.