WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Set a Boundary You Can Keep

A clear response that names what is possible, what must change, and who needs to decide.

5-10 minutes | Leader Rebellion · Boundary conversation

Use it in three moves

1. Understand the need behind the request. State your existing commitment and the concrete limit, without making your worth part of the negotiation.

2. Choose a response you can honestly offer: a bounded yes, an alternative, a request to reprioritize, or a no.

3. Make any required trade-off explicit. If you cannot decide it yourself, name who can. An alternative is optional; you do not need to invent one to justify every boundary.

What do they need, and why?

What have you already committed to?

The concrete limit

Time, authority, resources, or a boundary you need to keep.

What can you offer?

Choose: Ask for a priority decision / A bounded yes / An alternative / A clear no

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YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Your response in one or two sentences

State what you can or cannot do.

What would need to change?

If nothing would make this workable, say so.

Who needs to agree to the trade-off?

When do you need the decision?

A question for me

What am I assuming I must sacrifice without giving anyone a chance to make an explicit choice?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

What do they need, and why?

A new customer analysis for Thursday's sponsor meeting.

What have you already committed to?

The service review is due Thursday and is already agreed with the team.

The concrete limit

There is enough time to complete one of these properly, not both.

What can you offer?

Ask for a priority decision

Your response in one or two sentences

I can complete the new analysis by Thursday if we move the service review to next week.

What would need to change?

The service review sponsor needs to agree to that change before I switch the work.

Who needs to agree to the trade-off?

Both sponsors, with the team lead resolving any conflict.

When do you need the decision?

Before midday Tuesday

The thinking behind it

Nic writes about boundaries on what work should ask of a person. A sustainable agreement can include a limit without turning care for the work into limitless availability.

An original Leader Rebellion exercise. This response builder connects a request to existing promises and real limits. It does not teach a universal script for saying no or assume every workplace gives people equal freedom to refuse.

Read Why Work Can't Be Your Church by Nic Payne