

# Become aware of your boundary management strategies – analysis tool

*This tool has been developed by occupational psychologist Vivi Bach ([vibach.dk](http://vibach.dk)) and was first presented in the magazine “Erhvervspsykologi” (Occupational Psychology), Vol. 19, No. 1 (2021). Sita Michael Bormann, Work Life Consultant at IDA, has adapted the tool and prepared the following guide to using it. This has been done with the approval of Vivi Bach.*

# BECOME AWARE OF YOUR BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Strategy	Mostly segmenting	Somewhat segmenting	Somewhat integrating	Mostly integrating
Dimension				
Time	Separation maintained: time for work, time for relationships, time for children, time for sports, etc. You thrive when you can quite accurately frame and set clear boundaries for how much and when you work.	Time is separated (work-personal), but there are delimited periods of time where you integrate roles, e.g. reply to emails in the evening. You are aware of where and when you place your working hours.	You don't count working hours or are concerned with when you work, but you have an upper limit for your working hours. You may have delimiting habits, e.g. you do not reply to emails before your children are tucked in.	An 8-16 job will exhaust you. You do not segment your time into „working time“ and „leisure time“. You thrive when you can combine your roles and tasks as much as possible.
Location	Preferably separation: a place for work, a place for family life, socialising, food, exercise etc. You set boundaries for where you work at home, e.g. only at the home office.	You prefer to separate where you do what, but you integrate occasionally, e.g. take a walk with the dog while taking a work call, eat lunch in front of the PC, etc.	You like to mix contexts: work from home and other places and do private things in the office. But you also segment occasionally, e.g. you don't work on your laptop in the sofa.	You work literally anywhere, maybe you don't even have an office or a preferred workplace – your laptop and mobile are your office.
Relations	You see your colleagues, friends, family etc. separately and in the settings where they „belong“. You don't like to have colleagues visiting you privately or the family coming to the office.	Friends are friends, colleagues are colleagues, etc., but some relationships are also integrated, e.g. some colleagues also become friends.	You can have separate relationships, but you also have many „mixed“ ones, where you don't quite know what you should call them: close colleagues, good acquaintances or rather „real“ friends?	You „mix“ your relationships. For instance, you work with your spouse or sister-in-law, and you like to invite customers and partners for dinners with your family/ friends.
Content	You prefer not to work during your time off and not to have private disturbances when you are at work. You split tasks (private-work) and if you work at many tasks, you usually finish one task before starting a new one.	You separate things most of the time, but it is also nice with exceptions, where boundaries are more fluid. You separate tasks to some extent, but not completely.	You don't mind working in your spare time, as long as it is on selected tasks/forms of work, e.g. you answer emails while your children do their homework. You often work on several tasks at the same time and you don't separate too much between private and work-related tasks.	One can both „see“ and sense your work, because you ARE your work. Your family and friends might even be part of your work. There is no clear boundary between work tasks and leisure activities, and you are always doing several activities at once.

# GUIDANCE FOR USING THE TOOL

This tool has been developed by occupational psychologist Vivi Bach ([vivibach.dk](http://vivibach.dk)) and was first presented in the magazine “Erhvervspsykologi” (Occupational Psychology), Vol. 19, No. 1 (2021). Sita Michael Bormann, Work Life Consultant at IDA, has adapted the tool and prepared the following guide to using it. This has been done with the approval of Vivi Bach.

You can use the following approach when you want to work with the tool, for example at a management group meeting or a team/department meeting. The tool can also be used at 1:1 conversations:

**1. Complete the sheet** by circling the strategies that best suit you within the 4 dimensions – i.e. to what extent you are segmenting/integrating.

**2. Look at your completed sheet and reflect on the following:**

- Where can I best recognise myself in relation to the strategies I have circled?
- What benefits and/or challenges can these strategies bring me in terms of collaborating with my colleagues, my employees, and my manager?
- Are there any strategies I can change to my advantage? For example, some dimensions where I can be more integrating and less separating or vice versa, and in what way would that help me? (e.g. becoming more true to my own preferences and thus put myself under less pressure, become better at accommodating my colleague/employee)?

**3. Talk together as a group/team/department:**

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of the strategies you have each circled?
- How do the different boundary management strategies impact the collaboration with others? /how can different boundary management strategies create challenges for collaboration (in the management group, team, manager-employee, etc.)?
- With this in mind, is there anything you need to change about your boundary management strategies and way(s) of working together?

If you are a manager and want to use the tool in 1:1 conversations with your employees, you can ask the employee to look at the sheet and circle the preferred strategies before the conversation and then have a talk with the employee about some of the points in 2) and 3) above, e.g. what the selected boundary management strategies means for working with colleagues and with you as a manager, and whether it calls for other ways of doing things.