

Navigating Organizational Politics

Some people think “politics” is a dirty word. It doesn’t have to be. You can engage in politics without being devious, manipulative, or dishonest.

Every organization has its own informal ways of deciding who does what, when, where, and how. There are unwritten rules, behind-the-scenes agreements, back door access to resources, casual alliances, unspoken rivalries, friendships, cliques, and groupings of opinion.... You can sit back and take stance that you are above it or jump in and make things happen. Which will you do?

Influence strategy: To engage successfully in organizational politics, develop your organizational “street smarts.”

Study what makes your organization “tick.” Consider the informal processes and forces by which it operates. Investigate: Why do some initiatives blossom, while others wither and die? What are the real sources of power (e.g., expertise, reputation, access) and how do people wield them? Where do valuable talents and resources reside? What priorities truly guide people’s everyday actions?

Then, shape your answers to such questions into a map of your organization. Form a clear picture of how it really works. You can use that map to navigate your way through even the toughest “neighborhoods” to reach your objectives.

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