

Development Suggestions for Political Savvy

Suggested Readings

Title	Author/Publisher	Learning Mode
Political Savvy: Systematic Approaches for Leadership Behind-the-Scenes	DeLuca, Joel R./ 1999/ The Evergreen Business Group	Book
Don't Sabatage Your Success! Making Office Politics Work	Wood, Karen Ginsberg/ 2000/ Enlightened Concepts Publishing	Book

Activities

1. Knowing whom to involve – and when – maximizes your opportunities for success and positive recognition. To involve the right people at the right time, try to:
 - Determine whose support you will need to get your idea approved and implemented effectively. This typically means that end users and customers need to be involved early.
 - Run an idea by someone whose opinion you value before presenting it at a meeting. Ask this person to critique the idea and your presentation. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your idea? Also ask whose support you will need and try to cover those players in your plan before you present it publicly.
 - Ask members who else should be included when putting together a task force or project team. Invite others to sit in on meetings when you are discussing a topic that affects them, even if they aren't regular members of the committee. Send minutes of action items to interested parties for their information.
 - Talk with key individuals who will be affected by your project. Ask who among their peers or high management would support it and who would oppose it.
 - Offer a particular individual the opportunity to be involved if you think he or she should be included. You will not only reduce the chances of overlooking someone important, but will also get further insights into the appropriate people to involve in future projects.
 - Include people whose support you need in the planning and development phases of the project, because involvement generally means commitment.
2. Clarify your organization's structure by getting to know your peers cross-functionally. Find out what they do and what processes or rules they follow, especially those that may have an impact on you or your group.

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3. In order to access informal networks in your organization, ask an more experienced person to act as your coach or mentor. Ask this person:
 - Who are the people who can make things happen in each group?
 - Who holds the positional power within each functional area? This person may not be the person who makes things happen.
 - Who are the key players in this particular group? What are the dynamics of the group?
 - What is important to the key players?
 - Of whom do you have to be careful?
 - What ways have you found to effectively shortcut the formal system? What are the likely consequences, if any, if you bypass the formal system?
4. Develop relationships with individuals throughout the organization. Take note of who has influence and the support of their peers at all levels of the organization. Get to know these people by setting up an informal meeting, such as lunch, or by working on a project together. Note that face-to-face contact is essential in developing these relationships. Trying to save time by calling the person or sending an e-mail will not help you build a mutually supportive relationship.

Tips

1. Remember, “The right message at the wrong time is the wrong message.”
2. Compare a list of the organization’s priorities with a list of your group’s objectives. Keep objectives that are related to organizational priorities at the top of your “to accomplish” list, and try to eliminate objectives that are not related to organizational priorities.
3. Identify a peer or higher-level manager who is effective at involving others, observe his or her methods, and adopt them if possible.
4. Exclude disruptive or unsupportive people from your projects by offering tactful ways for these people to “bow out.”
5. Seek out a resident “expert” to act as your mentor. This person can describe the formal rules of the organization and introduce you to the informal network as well.
6. Maintain a policy of “no surprises” by relating both the good and the bad news to your manager or others who need to know.
7. Keep key players informed of your project’s status.
8. Recognize that your peers can be valuable resources.

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9. Strengthen your personal allegiance to coworkers at all levels of the organization by treating them with respect and consideration.
10. When you think that you may have to compromise on your agenda, classify your issues into “can drop,” “nice to have,” and “must have” categories. This will give you some flexibility for negotiation.
11. Make a list of the resources you can offer to others; then, when someone asks you for help, you will know which resources you have available.
12. Take time to listen to others’ requests for assistance; even if you cannot help them directly, you may be able to suggest someone who can.
13. Find effective ways to say “no” to a request for assistance from someone without jeopardizing his or her future support.
14. To understand others’ perspectives, set aside your own agenda and listen to other people’s ideas and rationales.
15. Ask your manager or a respected peer for feedback on your reputation in the “fight/compromise” arena; use the feedback to modify your behavior.
16. When faced with possible resistance, consider pre-selling your agenda to a couple of key players.
17. Analyze the costs of pushing your agenda to the exclusion of others’ agendas: If you “win,” will you receive cooperation from the “losers” in the future?
18. Learn to recognize when others are resisting your agenda by observing both their verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
19. Willingly share leadership responsibilities with peers.
20. Think about your audience’s needs, concerns, and perspectives. Consider how people are likely to react to your message and, whenever possible, position your message in a way that appeals to them and avoids a strong negative reaction.
21. Express criticism tactfully.
22. Avoid delivering personal criticism in public.
23. Make a list of where key players stand on particular issues for future reference.

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24. Before presenting a new idea or action plan, list the people whose support you will need. Attempt to discover where each person stands in relation to your proposal – pro, con, or neutral – and formulate a plan to handle each.
25. Demonstrate your commitment to the organization in tangible ways: by your willingness to “go the extra mile” when necessary; by attending company social functions; and by supporting the organization’s values, goals, and mission.
26. When functions are created or reorganized, spend some time talking with the people involved. What are their new responsibilities? How can you work together most effectively to get things accomplished?
27. Keep your manager informed of what is going on in your department. Ask how he or she would like to be kept informed of progress or setbacks.