

## OFFICE POLITICS

# Playing the Game

IN TRUTH, OFFICE POLITICS is not the name of a new board game. Nonetheless, learning to play the game of office politics is an integral part of working in any corporate environment whether it's the smallest, two-person studio in the suburbs or the largest corporate headquarters in New York City. Office politics create social challenges, and by learning to play the game with finesse, you can experience the difference between simply surviving in your position at work and bounding up the corporate ladder.

To win the game, you will need to accumulate as many positive points as possible, avoiding pitfalls that will lead you into the social quagmire known as “the black hole” where you can become temporarily stuck. First and foremost, you will need to figure out who your opponents are. Then you will take steps to win them over to your team and keep them there. As your network of team members grows or diminishes, you will earn or lose points accordingly.

Talk to people and find out what interests them. Expressing interest (giving up some of your valuable time) in someone else's situation leads to empathizing with them instead of judging them. As a result, you will become more likeable. According to Penelope Trunk, author of *Brazen Careerist*, “office politics is training

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ground to teach yourself to be likeable, and as a side benefit, you will save your job.” Treat your co-workers with respect and do your best to be indispensable. Then, remember to willingly share with others the knowledge you have gained.

Clearly, sharing knowledge refers to the communication of business acumen like technical skills, not gossip. Speaking negatively about other workers, your bosses or clients must be avoided. Gossiping is one of the fastest ways to slide down the rungs on the corporate ladder. Other point-takers in the office politics game are complaining excessively, over-reacting and getting yourself embroiled in sticky situations that divert you from accomplishing your real goal of moving on up. Another sure-fire way to lose points is open up personally to other workers when you are away from the office (at lunch or after hours). Whatever you say or do will definitely get back to the office whether you want it to or not.

You are in control of your own Office Politics game. By focusing on the positive, you can become socially savvy, avoid conflicts, and build your reputation, all of which will help you be successful at work and life in general. And one more thing, don't forget about your appearance. Looking and acting professionally are both very important to the final outcome of the Office Politics game.