

## **Topic: Building your influence as a Leader**

### **Analyzing the Use of Organizational Politics in Your Organization – Assessment Activity**

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Like any other tool, politics can be used in positive or negative ways, and the outcome can be either constructive or destructive, depending on your perspective.

Generally speaking, politics are used constructively when they're in the best interest of the organization. So it may help to think of positive politics as political behavior and actions that are honest and open, and move the organization closer to achieving its goals.

Alternatively, negative politics include any actions that rely on deception and secrecy in the pursuit of personal and organizational interests.

This activity can be used as a guide to discovering how politics is used in your organization. It will also help you to improve the ways you use positive politics to build relationships, credibility, and influence.

## **Negative Politics**

Being aware of the potentially destructive aspects of organizational politics will allow you to minimize any negative effects. Signs of these destructive aspects in an organization include employees who lack commitment to the organization, have low job satisfaction, have low job performance and morale, and have increased job anxiety.

In the interest of your relationships and influence, you must not contribute, purposely or unwittingly, to negative politics. You can do this by avoiding the following actions:

- Using politics to further the goals of one set of stakeholders at the expense of another – don't compromise the best interests of your organization.
- Pitting stakeholders against each other – this will only make it more difficult to get them to cooperate with you or each other in the future.
- Abusing position power – don't force people to cooperate.

## **Abusing position power**

The abuse of position power can take a number of forms:

- Using formal authority or significance in an organization to make threats and manipulate others.
- Using rewards and consequences to further personal, rather than team, goals.
- Withholding information or deceiving.

## **Positive Politics**

The positive use of politics benefits everyone involved in working to achieve organizational goals. And as a leader, you'll be building your relationships, credibility, influence, and political power when you use politics positively.

You must make positive use of politics to build and maintain your influence as a leader. The responsibility to act ethically is paramount to your capability to influence others.

Remember, using your political power to promote your own interests may work for a while, but in the long run, it's self-defeating. You'll be destroying your chances of building or maintaining strong and positive relationships as trust, commitment, and loyalty are destroyed.

Ethical use of political power is an effective way to influence people to work together to achieve organizational goals.

Leaders commonly apply two strategies to help them use political power appropriately for the good of the organization, and in positive ways. The first is to create strong relationships, and the second is to promote unifying goals and objectives.

## Creating strong relationships

To successfully influence others, you need to create strong relationships.

As a leader, you must build personal, one-on-one relationships with coworkers and colleagues, whether they're fellow leaders, decision makers, or any other member of the work community. Keeping two concepts in mind will help you build and maintain strong relationships: respect and reciprocity.

Everyone wants respect. But to get it, you have to give it, and that leads to reciprocity. In relationships, business or otherwise, you often get out what you put in.

So, if you treat people with respect and are supportive of them, you're likely to get the same treatment back.

Applying two techniques will help you create strong relationships when you are seeking support or trying to influence others:

- Understand the other person's point of view.
- Make the support mutual.

## Promoting unifying goals and objectives

The second strategy to help you use your political power, appropriately and in positive ways, is to promote unifying goals and objectives.

Organizations are inherently political. Whenever resources are limited, competing interests and competition for those resources gives rise to politics.

One way you can minimize the competition is to promote unifying goals and objectives.

The key is to cultivate an attitude of doing what's best for the organization. Once that's the mindset of the work community, destructive politics will give way to constructive politics, and you'll ultimately be able to achieve more in the best interest of the organization.

## Activity Guide

This activity provides you with an opportunity to analyze the use of politics in your organization. Taking the time to analyze the political realities within your organization will improve your ability to use politics in a positive way to influence others.

Identify situations in which politics is being used in positive and negative ways to influence others and get things done.

Think about how you can use these situations to your advantage. Focus on ways you can use politics positively to achieve organizational goals. And alternatively, focus on how you will avoid using politics negatively. Can you find a way to turn negative politics into positive politics?

As you study the political realities of your organization and search for ways to use politics, several questions can guide you:

- What is in the best interest of the organization?
- Is there a way that benefits all stakeholders?
- How can you use politics to build positive relationships?

Asking these questions will help you keep your efforts focused appropriately – on the good of your organization.

### Situation 1

Positive uses of politics:

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Negative uses of politics:

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Can you use this situation to your advantage? How?

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How can you use positive politics in this situation?

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How can you avoid using negative politics in this situation?

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Are there any ways you can turn negative politics into positive politics?

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## Situation 2

Positive uses of politics:

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Negative uses of politics:

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Can you use this situation to your advantage? How?

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How can you use positive politics in this situation?

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How can you avoid using negative politics in this situation?

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Are there any ways you can turn negative politics into positive politics?

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