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The Lion-Tamer™

Making Your Way Through Corporate Politics: The Lion-Tamer's 10 Top Tips for Survival and Growth

Corporate Politics result from how competing interests among people and groups are resolved. They are a given in most business settings. In reality, they are simply a part of the way things are.

Politics = power, influence, and leadership. So: who are the people with influence and/or power and how do they use their influence or power? For the greater good or for personal power? Who has successfully navigated the political territories in your company before you? How did they achieve success? Are you comfortable with those people as role models? Or not?

Over the course of time, being a successful political player is not enough to advance your career in substantive ways. You also have to be good at what you do in addition to being politically successful. Here are 10 top tips for navigating your way through corporate politics wisely.

1. Decide what you will and won't do in playing company politics. You have to know your personal limits.

2. Tell the truth at all times, but tell it as kindly and compassionately as possible. Sooner or later, lying or "fudging" will always catch up with you.

3. Never publicly criticize your boss, or any other co-worker for that matter. Critique ideas, not people. No personal attacks (easy on people, tough on problems). Treat everyone with respect and dignity, the way you would like to be treated whether you like them personally or not.

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4. Communicate in person whenever you can. Memos, e-mail messages, and comments that get passed through numerous people are usually wide open to interpretation. Write all emails and voice mails as if your worst enemy's attorney will be reading or hearing them-- be discreet, neutral and professionally appropriate in emails. Never write or say anything that could come back to haunt you. Email and voice mail are NOT for conversation, chatting, or personal communications!

5. Learn to address problems using the appropriate channels. Go directly to the source of the problem or to a manager who could address the issue. Don't be a victim.

6. Be 100% response-able for all breakdowns at work whether you caused them or not. Be a team player and help your co-workers.

7. Keep your ego out of political battles at work. Being strategic and smart and taking the long view is always much more important than winning each individual battle just for the satisfaction of it.

8. Don't belabor a small point. Pick your battles carefully and make them worth your efforts to go to bat for them.

9. Focus on "musts" and "needs," not "wants" or "positions."

10. Keep your own counsel as much as possible unless you are specifically asked for your advice or opinions.. Be your own best friend; share your opinions and ideas only when appropriate and with the right people.

One basic fact about office politics is that every office team has them, whether they want them or not. But, whether office politics are good, bad or ugly is up to you! And remember, "Choose to be Happy!" is a practical philosophy for daily life!

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