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NAVIGATING THROUGH OFFICE POLITICS

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One of the most challenging aspects of managing yourself successfully in the workplace is figuring out how to deal with the office politics. So here are a few things I've observed and learned over the years that may be of help.

Office politics grow out of a variety of things:

1. **The culture of the organization** can certainly impact the type and intensity of office politics. In a healthy culture, politics can be minimal and not difficult or

- bothersome. In a toxic culture, they can be very difficult to understand while trying to navigating through surprises and unpredictability with a lack of psychological safety.
2. **The values of the leadership and others you work with** can shape what behavior is acceptable, what becomes a priority and how you gain recognition.
 3. **How strong the desire is to move ahead despite core values of the organization**, which goes back to the last item. For some people, competitiveness and personal values for climbing the ladder or putting money over quality or people or other values can create some difficult situations to handle.
 4. **The desire to “promote” (not necessarily just in title) some people over others because of personal relationships or competitiveness** also plays a significant role in the politics of who gets recognition and promotions and who will play ball with them on setting priorities and strategies for the organization.
 5. **Human nature** – need I say more?

A lot of what I just mentioned is out of your control and some, even out of your ability to influence. So what can you do?

Here are some suggestions:

- **Pay attention to relationships.** Who is cozy with whom? Who seems to be favoring a specific employee over others? Who is friends outside of work with whom? Before you jump to any of those things being bad – those answers in and of themselves are not problematic. The important thing is to observe those relationships and know that it gives you the knowledge to speak and share things tactfully, especially if the information may work against those whom someone is close to. This issue is explained further in the next bullet.
- **Share information and ideas giving respect to those with whom you might disagree** – honoring their opinions while offering a different perspective. Acknowledge the validity of the opinions of others and offer that different perspective, using the word “and” instead of “but”. Example – “Don has created some great strategies for our sales goals **AND** I’d like to offer some alternatives for us to consider as well. And I’ll share the reasons I favor these ideas.”
- **Don’t say anything about another person to anyone and you won’t suffer the pain of the person of whom you spoke finding out what you said about them.** This is simple but it also goes against human nature which is why it gets so many people into trouble. No matter how observant you are, there will always be relationships you’re not aware of. There are also secondary, tertiary and on in terms of the relationship chains and there’s no way for you to be sure what you say won’t get back to the person about whom you said something. Remember, one way for people to ingratiate themselves to others is to share a juicy bit of information to them – and juicy is often who said what about whom. Keep your negative thoughts and opinions to yourself lest you fall victim to another’s selfish use of that information. This is even more important for managers. Never say anything about

one direct report to another direct report. That's a real "no no" that breaks trust that you may never regain.

- **Be aware of the pet projects and priorities of those above you.** Know who is responsible for methods and systems before you open your mouth to criticize them. It might be a system your boss created. Can it be updated and improved, maybe, so be careful how you present your idea.
- **Another way to challenge the status quo is with reflective questions.** Rather than jump right in with objections, talk about what is good and working well and then ask questions that make others think such as: I'm wondering how this group of customers will be impacted by...; What might be the cost of this method vs perhaps this other method that would...; How do you see this playing out in XYZ scenario?
- **Take advantage of mentors.** Mentors who have been around for a while often have a better handle on the political landscape and have experience with the culture of your specific organization. Ask them for the do's and don'ts they have learned along the way. Learn what you can from them. Ask them what political pitfalls they've encountered and what they've learned as best practices and strategies in your organization. They may not think to talk with you about this topic unless you ask.
- **Most importantly, behave in a way for which you will never need to apologize nor be ashamed of.**
- **Whatever you do, before you do it or roll it out, ask yourself, who needs to know this?** Leaving people out of the loop is one very quick way to get on the wrong side of anyone, so be sure you are thoughtful about that.
- **In dealing with someone who seems particularly competitive with you or who has "stolen" your ideas in the past, be careful and thoughtful about when and how you share ideas.** Who can be your ally? Whom do you trust? With whom you can share the idea for some feedback and who can support you when you present the idea within the team or the group? Can you even share the idea with your boss or team lead before the meeting so that someone above you and your competitor will know the idea did originate with you? Another technique is to put your idea in an email so you have documentation that it came from you and when.

Politics are different everywhere and they can be tricky. If I can help, reach out for a complimentary call with me. I will be a safe haven and a confidential thought partner.

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NO-OBLIGATION COACHING SESSION!**



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I am an experienced career, leadership and executive coach. I work with folks who are in the early stage of their career all the way to individuals in the C-Suite who are seeking a new position or promotion, internally or externally, those starting a new role, and those in leadership roles who need a thought partner with tools and experience to help them.

If you're looking for a job change, let me share a little about the process I use to help you land in the RIGHT job and then start strong to show that you were the right choice!

First, I will work with you to understand and help you get clear about what you want.

Second, I am skilled at helping you uncover strengths and skills you don't recognize in yourself. I'll show you how to dig deep and raise your awareness of the value you bring to a potential employer.

Third, it's not enough to recognize your value. I will help you develop your "elevator pitch" and learn how to characterize and communicate your value, skills and strengths in ways that cause networking contacts, interviewers and hiring managers to sit up, take notice and remember you in a very positive way.

Fourth, I will show you effective ways to broaden your network and open doors.

Continually, I will be a thought partner through your job search or promotion process and beyond. I will help you strategize for interviews, serve as a consultant in preparing for and negotiating job offers, and walk you through a process to prepare for your first days on the job and make onboarding a tool you use to fast-track your success in the first few months.

Reach out and let's chat.



Joy Conley Kacik

Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and leadership coaching.

As an Insights Discovery® licensed practitioner, Joy provides clients the added value of the Discovery® Portfolio of tools when working with individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to create inspiring visions for collaborative, cohesive teams to produce superior results.

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