



BA Manager Forum Workshop

Lisa Hudson – Managing Stakeholder Politics

The notes below have been produced following the BA Manager Forum workshops held on 10 June 2022. Attendees were split into groups and asked to participate in numerous discussions and play their thoughts back to the wider group on the following topics:

Exercise 1: Defining Politics

Attendees were asked to create their own definitions of politics.

Exercise 2: Individual Personas

Attendees were asked to plot three pre-defined personas onto the *Four Types of Political Player* quadrant.

Exercise 3: Team Improvements

Attendees were asked to think about a difficult situation at work, either for them personally or for one of their team members and plot the stakeholder relationships involved onto the *Relationship Types* quadrant. Attendees were then asked to identify 3 actions that could be taken to improve the situation where a *Foe* or *Adversary* relationship was present.

Exercise 1: Defining Politics – definitions, keywords and thoughts

- **Definition:** Driving agendas through perspectives and desired outcomes
- Gain: power, outcomes, influence, agenda, people events
- **Definition:** Influence people, events, agendas, outcomes with power
- **Definition:** Influence of people and events to achieve an outcome
- Doing things for your own game
- Influencing others
- Bigger personalities often win
- Best ideas don't often happen
- Only political with others
- Influencing to your own agenda
- Conflicting ideas and beliefs (a battle)
- Compromise
- Lobbying
- Relationships
- Tribal behaviours

- Different stakes
- **Definition:** Different tribes competing to influence a situation for their own agenda

- Dynamics of people – do they like you
- Greatest good of everyone (ideally!) – negative - backstabbing – power
- Using power
- Own agenda – everyone has their own world view
- Push for change to meet people in power's agendas
- Re-assert authority
- Work out what buttons to press – what do they need
- At all levels – listen to others – what they're saying and showing it
- Focus based on good leadership
- External factors – suppliers, economic
- Convergence of different aspects – aspects, power

Definition (Lisa's suggestion):

- When an individual wants something for themselves or others, now or in the future, and they behave in a way that positions them effectively for success

Oxford English Dictionary definition:

1 the activities concerned with governing a country or area

2 a particular set of political beliefs

3 activities concerned with gaining or using power within an organization or group: *office politics* (***most relevant to this session***)

Exercise 2: The Four Types of Political Player

	Your behaviour helps your personal goals	Your behaviour harms your personal goals
Your behaviour helps the business goals	Winner	Martyr
Your behaviour harms the business goals	Sociopath	Dimwit

INSTRUCTIONS

Please consider the three fictional personas below and plot them onto the *Four Types of Political Player* quadrant:

Persona 1 - Lucinda, Age 38 – Personal Assistant

Lucinda is an excellent PA but a people pleaser by nature which is starting to impact her career and reputation. She regularly cancels her annual leave and training plans when she feels that she is needed at work. How could we plot her on the grid?

Persona 2 – Tim, Age 45 – Business Change Manager

Tim is politically savvy and aims to make an excellent impression through the delivery of quick impactful changes when he joins an organisation. Tim always starts off well and impresses his employers but becomes complacent and bored over time. How could we plot Tim on the grid?

Persona 3 - Sarah, Age 27 – Apprentice Business Analyst

Stakeholders have fed back that Sarah is a confident person and a sterling analyst, although she has been missing deadlines recently. On questioning Sarah, it is apparent that she has been prioritising studies over her work. How could we plot Sarah on the grid?

The Four Types of Political Player (Marie G. McIntyre, 2005, *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics*)

Winner – The optimum political player, likely to come out on top over the long term. Their behaviour helps them achieve their goals in a way that the organisation benefits too.

Sociopath – Can do quite well out of their behaviour and may look like they are on the path to success. May cause fear and contempt and be seen as untouchable for a long time until the impact of their actions catches up with them.

Martyr – Committed staff who are hugely dedicated to their organisation. However, behaviour taken to this extreme often comes at a significant personal cost as they are ignoring what matters to them personally.

Dimwit – People who behave in a way that is both self-destructive and damaging to the team or organisation. The least effective political player with no upside to their actions.

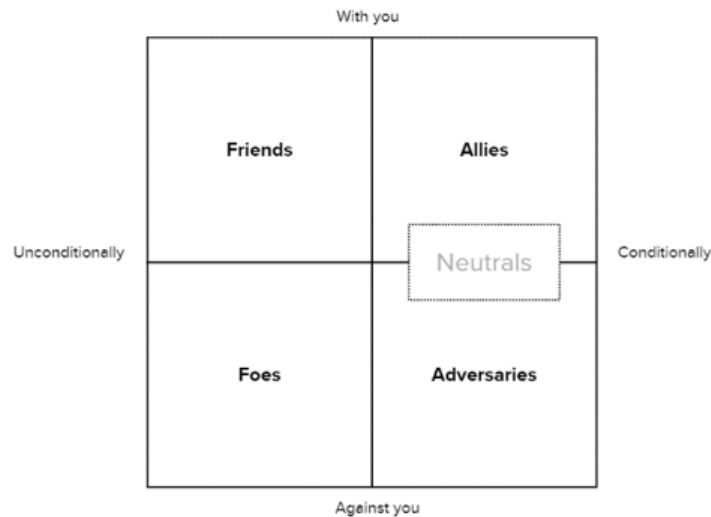
Suggested answers:

Persona 1 – Lucinda = **Martyr**

Persona 2 – Tim = Starts off as a **Winner** but progresses to **Sociopath** or even a **Dimwit**.

Persona 3 = Sarah = Usually a **Winner** although the recent missing of deadlines could indicate that Sarah is presenting as a **Sociopath** in these circumstances. This is a complex example though, as Sarah is an Apprentice and should be allowed a percentage of time dedicated to her apprenticeship studies. This example implies that Sarah has gone beyond her allotted apprenticeship time.

Exercise 3: Understanding Relationship Types



INSTRUCTIONS

With your group:

- 1) Think about a difficult situation at work and the relationships with stakeholders involved. This can be a personal situation or one that relates to one of your team members. Plot the stakeholders onto the appropriate position on the Relationship Types quadrant.
- 2) Identify **3 actions** that can be taken to improve the situation where a **Foe** or **Adversary** relationship is apparent.

Relationship types (Jocelyn Davis, 2016, The Greats on Leadership)

Friends – are the people who are unconditionally with you, on your side, no matter what.

Foes – are those who are unconditionally against you, irrespective of what you do, or will ever do.

Allies & Adversaries – support you, or don't support you conditionally, depending on whether it suits them or their interests. If adversaries' conditions can be met, they can be converted to allies. If allies' conditions are not met, they can become *neutrals* or *adversaries*. Where resistance is conditional, it is in your power to meet the conditions and get these political players on your side.

Suggested actions / improvements from the attendees included:

- Foes – do we need to change it? depersonalise, Adversaries – communicate, admit failure / adjust / back down, find common goals
- Confront the situation – talk it out
- Independent mediation
- Compromise – lose / lose

- Ensure stakeholders understand the reason / background
- Clearly articulate the benefits
- Work with the stakeholder to create a transition plan and mitigate any concerns
- Direct – speak to each stakeholder individually, facilitate session to discuss
- Escalate
- Remove from situation
- Question – what can they do to me? How receptive are they to change?
- Understand why (foe or adversary)
- Negotiation (conditions)
- Continuous engagement / conversation
- Build trust
- Find an ally, use them to create positive PR
- Mediate, escalate