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Managing Stakeholder Politics

10 June 2022

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The Big Bang Theory

Season 6, Episode 20: The Tenure Turbulence



What is Politics?

Exercise:

What keywords come to mind when you think about politics?

Please go to www.menti.com and enter the code below and your keywords

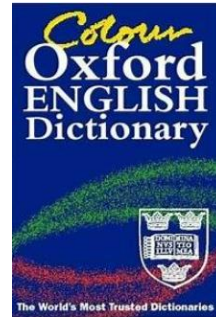
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Where might you find Politics?



Defining Politics



Politics

- 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*

Exercise 1: Defining Politics

In your groups, please use the materials provided to create a definition of politics

(10 minutes)

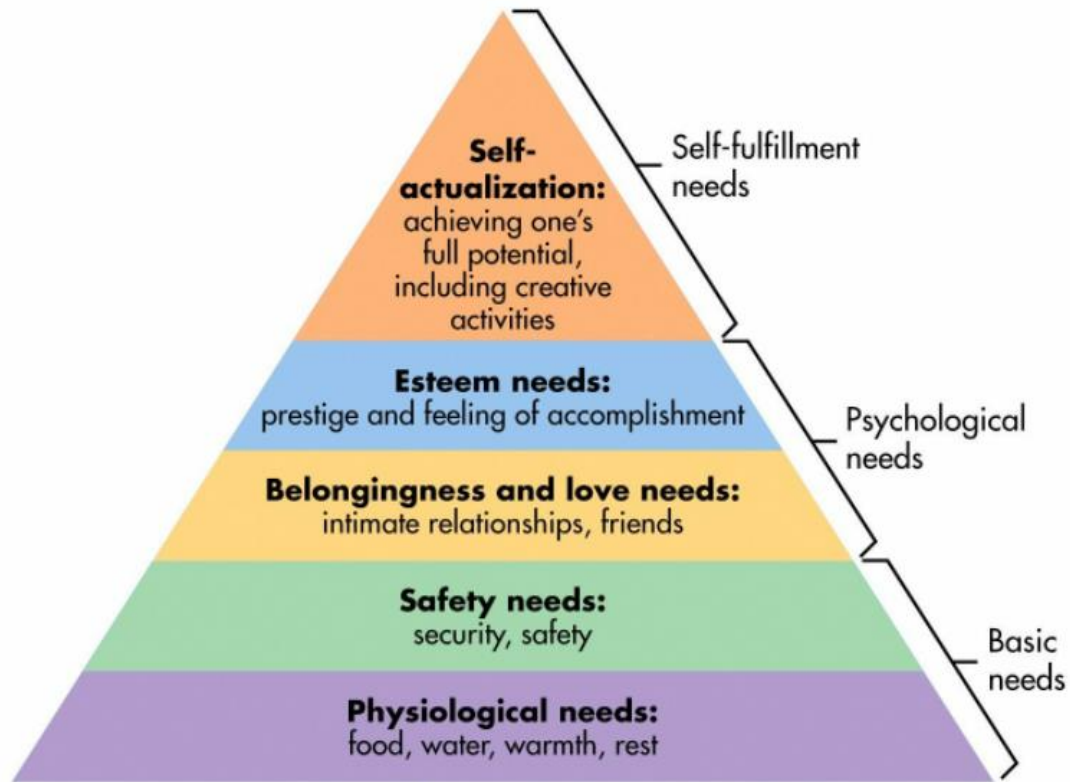


Personal definition of Politics

My definition:

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.

Political drivers



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Image credit: www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html



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



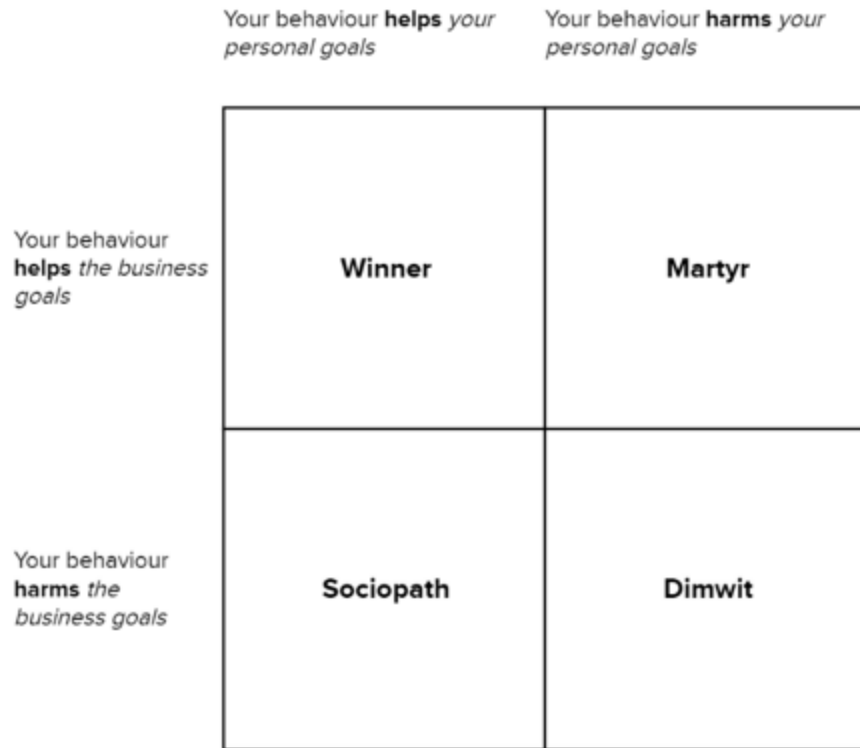
Exercise 2: Individual personas

The Four Types of Political Player

(10 minutes)



Exercise 2: The Four Types of Political Player



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*)

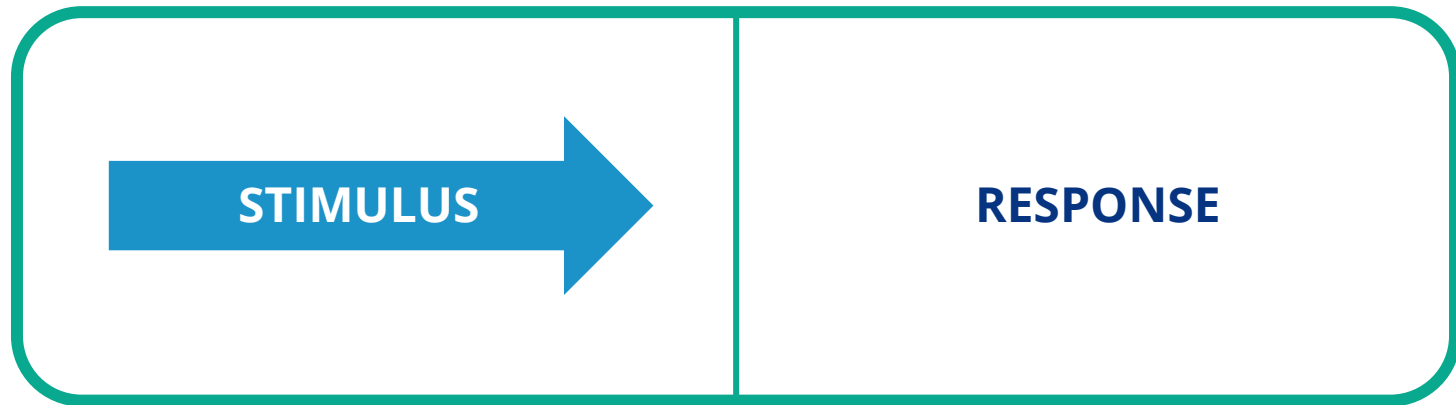
Winner - The optimum political player, likely to come out on top over the long term. Their behaviour helps them achieve their goals in a way that the organisation benefits too.

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.

Between Stimulus and Response



"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response"

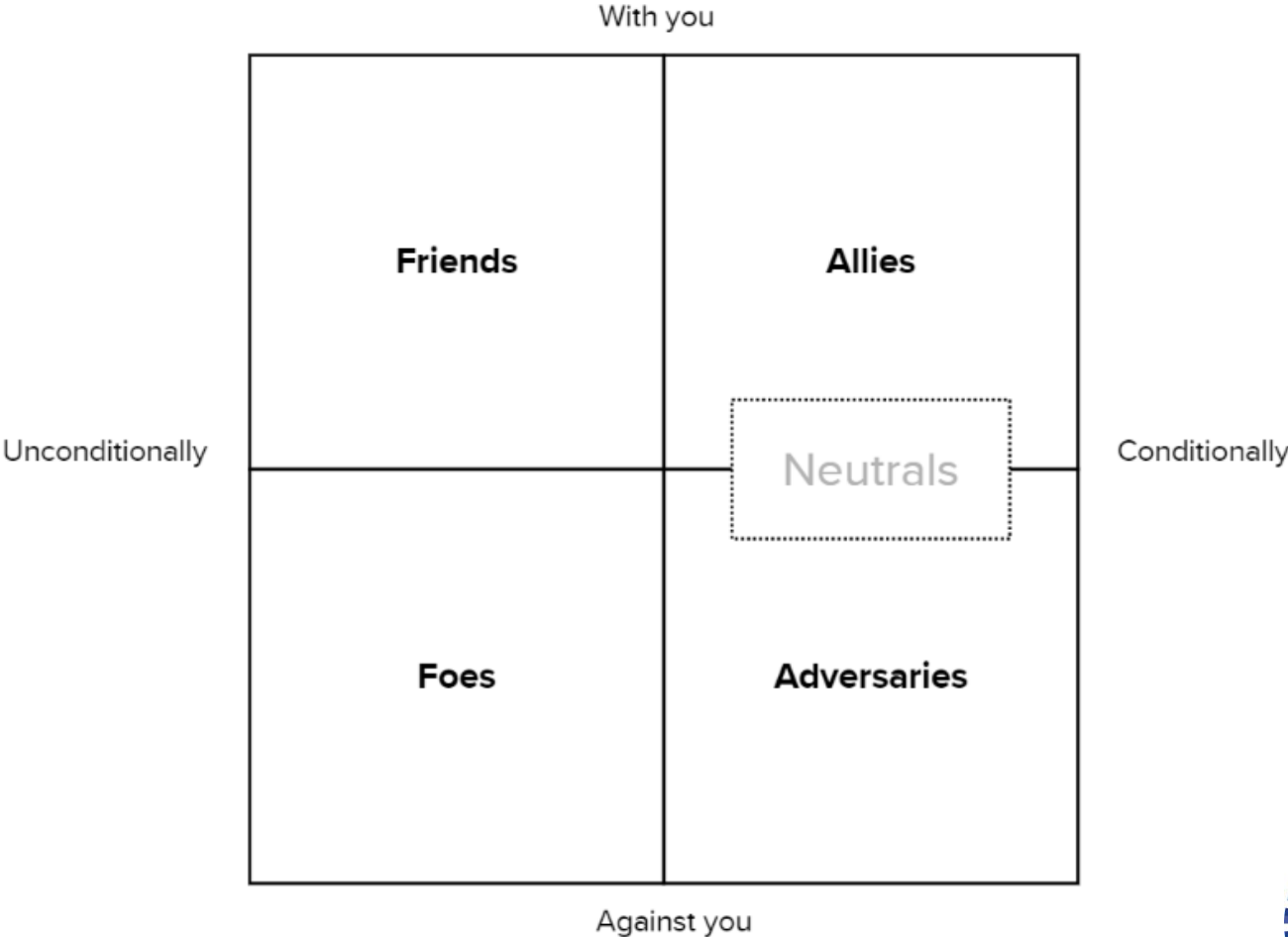
(Viktor E. Frankl - Stephen R. Covey's - The 7 habits of Highly Effective People)

"When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves"

(Viktor E. Frankl - Bing.com)



Understanding Relationship Types



Relationship Management Sheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	Team Relationships - BA Team & SMT							
2								
3	Stakeholders - SMT							
4	BA Team Member	Joan	Hugo	Ian	Anjana		Relationship Key	
5	Alberto	Friend	Foe	Ally	Adversary		Friend	
6	Gabby	Friend	Adversary	Ally	Adversary		Ally	
7	Diane	Ally	Friend	Ally	Friend		Adversary	
8	Luis	Ally	Ally	Friend	Ally		Foe	
9								
10								
11								

Which team member is in **immediate political danger** and is unlikely to be able to do much about it?

Which team members are **in danger** but may be able to **improve** the situation?

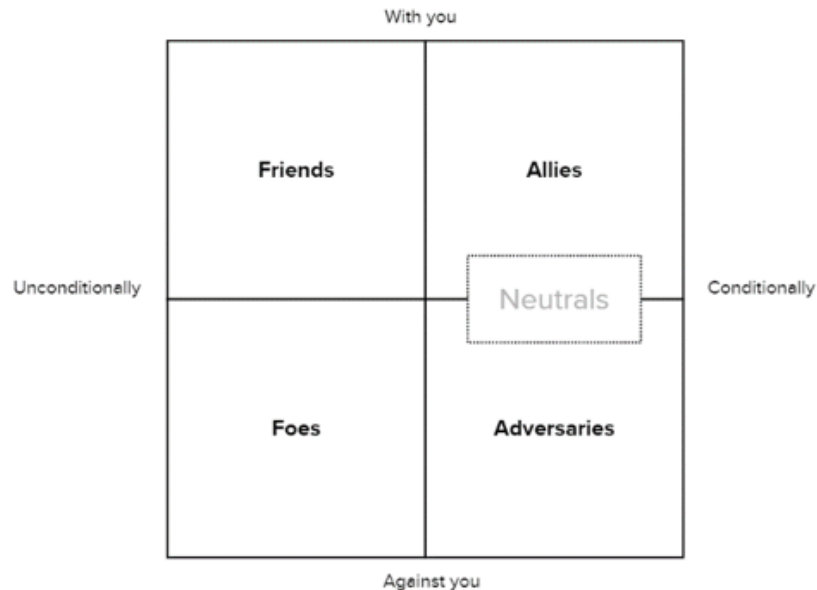
Exercise 3: Team Improvements

Understanding Relationship Types

(10 minutes)



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.

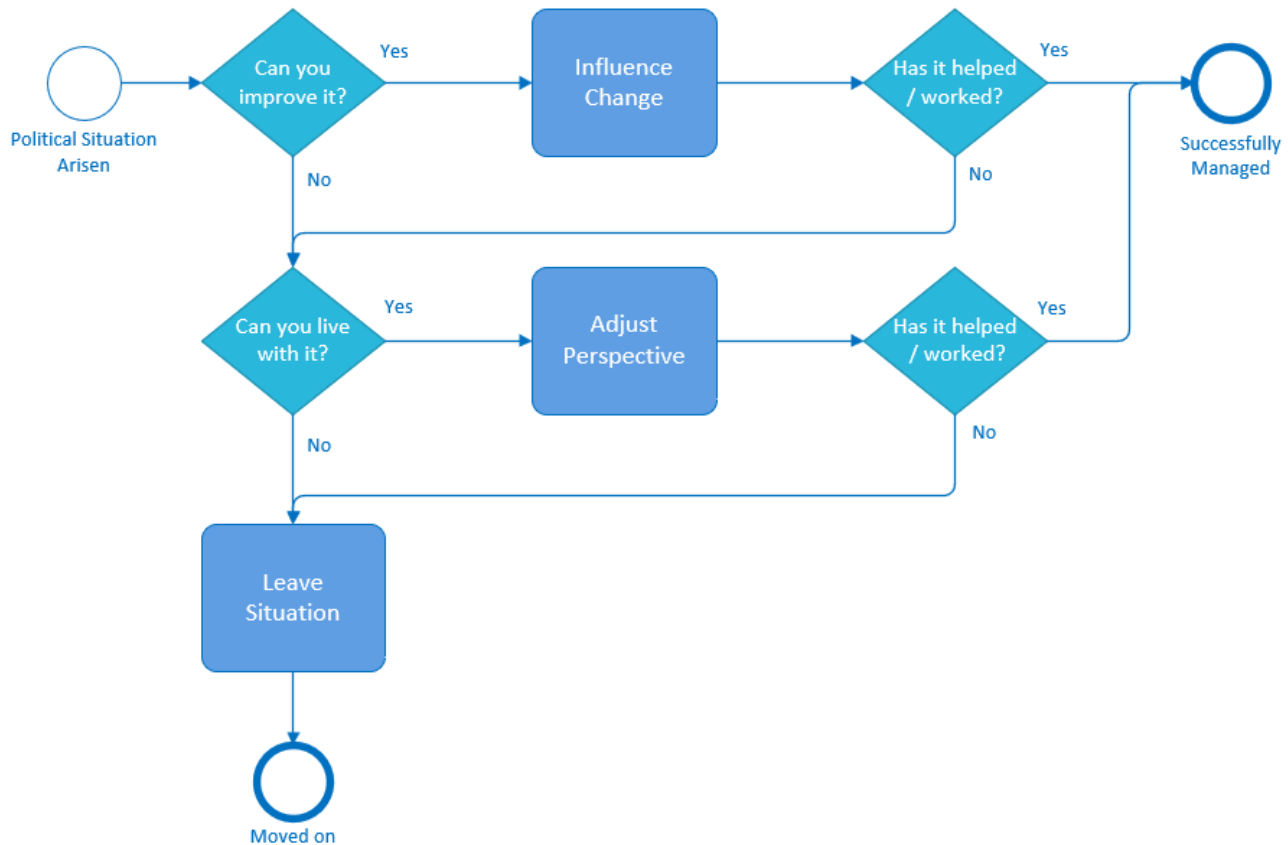
Relationship types (Jocelyn Davis, 2016, The Greats on Leadership)

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.

A formula for managing politics at work?



Practical Guide: Political DO'S & DON'TS



Practical Guide: DOs

DOs – Positive things to do	
✓ Do	Suggestion
Stay humble	Whatever situation you find yourself in, stay humble and manage your ego. Don't over-compensate or defend yourself if someone has an unfair opinion of you. It's not up to you to change their mind
Work on your personal brand	Your personal brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room. Aim to maintain as many positive relationships as possible, be helpful and useful to colleagues
Be careful with all communications	This is especially relevant where you are sending typed messages such as emails as there is room for misinterpretation of tone. Remain professional and make sure your intended tone is clear
Utilise your network / keep your ear to the ground	Be in the know about company issues and direction and use that information wisely to enhance and protect yourself and your team
Have a networking hour each week	Make networking activities an absolute priority, they are just as important as your daily deliverables. Take time each week to think about each of your stakeholders and pre-empt any negative relationships and interactions and take steps to negate them
Understand who's in the game	When new members of staff join the organisation take some time to assess who they are, where they came from, who they know and where they are likely to fit in. Also understand why they have been brought in, for example, do they have other objectives in addition to their role? How much political currency do they already hold through association?
Arrange regular catch ups with key players	According to the Power/Influence & Interest Grid used in stakeholder management, the stakeholders who have a high level of Power/ Influence and high levels of Interest require <i>constant active management</i> . Arrange regular catch ups with these <i>key players</i> , especially if they are adversaries or even foes. Make an extra effort where relationships are strained
Don't change your values to fit into a dysfunctional culture	Don't get too caught up in work. Remember that work doesn't define your value as a person!

Practical Guide: DOs

DOs – Positive things to do	
✓ Do	Suggestion
Think win / win	Aim to help your personal objectives and the organisational goals
Follow the political flow in your organisation	If the politics in play are indirect, emulate the same style
Manage your emotions	Know your emotional triggers and manage them. Use strategies to look after your own wellbeing such as exercise, healthy eating or talking to someone. Try not to be too transparent with your emotions at work. If you need to talk to someone, consider confiding in a family member, a friend or a coach rather than work colleagues
Accept that there is no way of avoiding politics	Be realistic in your view of office politics and understand the rules of the game. Hard work will only get you so far, your approach, attitude and quality of relationships will be just as important and will more likely dictate your career trajectory
Engage in ethical politics	Once you understand the rules of the game, use the formula for managing politics at work or adapt it / create your own version
Help others	Be a friend or ally for others who don't deserve to be a political target
Show empathy and understanding	You may need to make hard business decisions in your career which are detrimental to others. Always aim to be empathic and understanding during the implementation of difficult changes
Ask key colleagues for regular 121s	In a politically charged environment, it is imperative that you have regular catch ups with powerful colleagues, especially if they are foes or adversaries. Get to know them and help with objectives that are important to them
Sit next to foes or adversaries	In the Office or the Boardroom, try to sit directly next to a challenging colleague, especially if they are likely to bring up their unhappiness with you or a change. They are likely to go easier on you if you are physically closer
Find common ground with everyone	Aim to identify at least one genuine thing or interest that you have in common with each of your colleagues

Practical Guide: DON'Ts

DON'Ts – Negative things to avoid doing	
× Don't	Suggestion
Be passive or avoidant during negotiations	According to Thomas Killman's Conflict Negotiation Model , the optimum response to conflict is <i>Collaborating</i> which is achieved through high levels of <i>assertiveness</i> and <i>cooperativeness</i> . The opposite ends of the scale are <i>passiveness</i> and <i>avoidance</i> which are unhelpful. Remember that your opinion counts and don't be afraid to assert yourself and collaborate with colleagues to reach a decision
Be too honest or say more than needed	Know when to keep your thoughts to yourself and when to stop talking
Be too direct	The level of directness or indirectness in an organisation needs to be understood and emulated. If you are naturally a direct character and your organisation has an indirect communication style, you may need to adjust your approach
Engage in gossip or speak negatively about colleagues	Nobody is perfect, we all have development areas and strengths. Try to challenge your negative opinions about people or at least keep such thoughts to yourself
Tell jokes at the expense of others	However well intended, some people can take jokes the wrong way and feel hurt or insulted. If in any doubt, don't do it. It may feel like bonding to you but it's not worth damaging your career over
Be reactive	Remember that you can choose your response to stimuli!
Send a message / email when a call or face-to-face conversation is more appropriate	If you have something negative to communicate, avoid using a messaging tool. Hold a face-to-face discussion privately with as few people as possible. Never send a group email that has the potential to anger or embarrass someone, particularly a senior manager
Trust too quickly	It takes time to get to know new people, take the time to assess how trustworthy a person is before confiding in them
Believe the flatterers	If someone is always flattering you and showering you with compliments, BEWARE! They may be genuine, but they may want something from you

Key points

Be thoughtful

Take some time to reflect on your analysis and consider your next moves



Work with integrity

Be an ethical political player



Be analytical

Use the available techniques and resources to analyse and improve your political standing



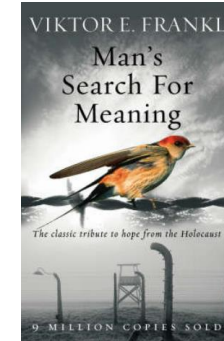
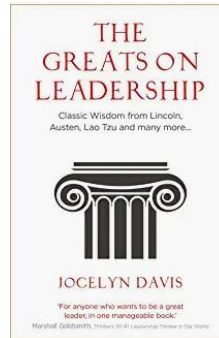
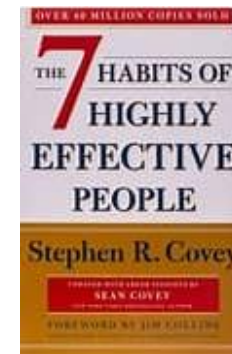
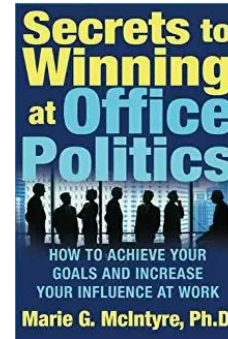
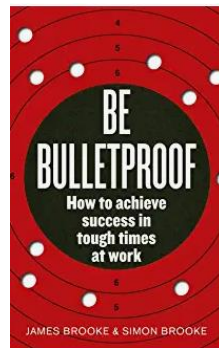
References & Useful Resources:

Books, Course & Techniques



References & Useful Resources

Books:



Thank you

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Book Review: [If You Don't Do Politics, Politics Will Do You by Niven Postma](#)

BA Brew: [Episode 36 - Niven Postma](#)

