AD725.01 Navigating Organizational Politics: A Winning Game Plan

Course Description:
Workplace politics permeates every organization. Some avoid it, believing politics is manipulative and competence alone will assure advancement. This puts career success at risk. Ethically approached, workplace politics can generate power and influence and advance an organization’s and an individual’s goals. Course addresses strategies to influence the outcome of political situations during different career stages. Focus is on developing emotional intelligence; conducting a political self-assessment; building networks of relationships based on trust; identifying and responding to the generational perspectives through which individuals examine issues; and handling political attacks. Course explores socializing with savvy; dealing with office romance and sexual harassment; assessing the career impact of work-life balance programs; uncovering an organization’s hidden politics; accessing opportunities and surviving reorganizations.

Texts:


Course Pack:
Includes the following two Harvard Business Review case studies:
• "Thomas Green: Power, Office Politics, and a Career in Crisis"
• "Martha Rinaldi: Should She Stay or Should She Go?"

Course Outline
Here is a broad outline of what we will be doing each class. I will be posting the complete syllabus, including assignments, on the course’s Blackboard Vista website just prior to the beginning of the semester. Course assignments include weekly readings, several written case study analyses and self-assessment surveys, and weekly journal entries related to course topics. You will be graded on class participation, completion and quality of written assignments, and the final project which is the creation of your own Political Game Plan.

Class 1  
Course Introduction • Initial Look at Organizational Politics
Why politics is inevitable in organizations; benefits, risks, and ethics of being a political player; individual and organizational factors that contribute to functional and dysfunctional organizational politics.

Class 2  
Need for Political Intelligence • Unmasking Hidden Corporate Agendas
Role of political intelligence in career success; assumptions of the politically astute; hidden political agendas your organization does not want you to know about; ways to assess your organizations culture and ethics which influence political behavior; a self-assessment of your political IQ; and generational perspectives on organizational politics.
Class 3  **First, Know Thyself: Importance of Self-Management**
Crucial role of self-management in career success; techniques for managing yourself in the workplace to avoid political suicide: developing your emotional intelligence, practicing self-observation, using self-control, and selecting the appropriate behavioral response to a given situation. Also included, building trust through character and competence; and a self-assessment of how well you manage yourself.

Class 4  **Recognizing Sources and Types of Power • Increasing Your Power**
Identifying sources and types of power in your organization; recognizing male and female power styles; diagnosing the strength of your political power base; strategies to increase your power to achieve your goals and your company’s goals; avoiding missteps that will decrease your power.

Class 5  **Political Clout of Influence • Building a Network of Relationships**
Importance of honing your influence skills to get what you want; strategies for building networks of influence in your immediate work circle and in the broader organization; building operational, strategic, and developmental networks; socializing with savvy when networking; assessing your influence skills through the “Influence Skills Inventory” diagnostic tool.

Class 6  **Influencing Your Relationship with Your Boss and Higher-Level Executives**
Recognizing your boss as the gatekeeper to your career success or failure; working successfully with your boss and higher-level executives; making your boss look good; becoming indispensable; dealing with a difficult boss; spotlighting essential skills that are rewarded; positioning yourself for performance reviews, raises, and promotions.

Class 7  **Case Study**
Class discussion of the HBR case study, “Thomas Green: Power. Office Politics, and a Career in Crisis”

Class 8  **Influencing Co-Workers and Subordinates**
Political obstacles for new and seasoned managers; practicing service leadership for results; presenting yourself effectively; building high-performance teams by influencing individual and organizational politics; understanding the generational perspective on formal authority and teamwork; using influence to resolve conflict.

Class 9  **Developing a Political Game Plan**
Creating your own game plan to achieve political success; a step-by-step strategy for identifying what you need to change, initiate, and continue doing politically to benefit you, your company, and ultimately your career.

Note: Your Political Game Plan will be your final project due at the end of the semester.
Class 10  **Case Study**  
Class analysis and discussion of the HBR case study, “Martha Rinaldi: Should She Stay or Should She Go?”

Class 11  **Negative Politics and Political Blunders**  
Moves and countermoves for defending yourself against political games and negative politics; avoiding political blunders and what to do if you make them; being aware of potential missteps that will put you on your organization’s hidden political hit list; winning over adversaries.

Class 12  **Managing an Office Romance • Dealing with Sexual Harassment**  
Pros and cons of an office romance with a boss, co-worker, subordinate, or client, and the potential political fallout; organizational views on sexual harassment, its victim, the perpetrator, and the associated legal action (what organizations don’t tell you); strategies for individuals and their managers to avoid or resolve predictable outcomes.

Class 13  **Political Game Plan Final Reports • Office PoliticsVignettes**  
Group discussions of class members’ final project, their Political Game Plan; and an analysis of office politics video vignettes to challenge your political intelligence.

Class 14  **Career Impact of Work-Life Balance Programs**  
Spotlight on popular work-life programs offered by companies and employees who use them; dichotomy between an organization’s PR about these programs and their hidden views; impact of program use on co-workers and their managers who are not using the programs; assessing the benefits and political risks of using work-life balance initiatives.