About the Tutorial

Workplace politics is the tact of implementing power of social networking within an organization so that decisions can be influenced to certain people's personal benefits – like access to assets, benefits, status, and pseudo-authority – without regard to their effect on the organization itself. It is also known as Office Politics or Organizational Politics.

Audience

This tutorial is designed primarily for those who have become working professionals recently and are looking for guidance in ways to conduct themselves in order to get promoted to a managerial position in a target-oriented job. This tutorial aims at teaching them the difference between being an achiever and an abuser.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are expected to have a detailed knowledge on the working process of your company, and the job responsibilities that you will handle, and the expectation your management has of you, in terms of productivity and performance.

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1. Workplace Politics – Machiavellianism

Workplace politics is the tact of implementing power of social networking within an organization so that decisions can be influenced to certain people's personal benefits – like access to assets, benefits, status, and pseudo-authority – without regard to their effect on the organization itself. It is also known as **Office Politics** or **Organizational Politics.**

To its advantage, it can be said that in certain cases, organizational politics can boost interpersonal relations, increase efficiency, facilitate speedier change, and profit the organization and its members simultaneously.

Workplace Politics is linked to a human personality trait called **Machiavellianism**, which means employing cunningness and duplicity in workplace. It is named after the 15th century Renaissance historian and political theorist, **Niccolò Machiavelli**.

Niccolo' Machiavelli

In his infamous book **The Prince**, Machiavelli has provided his observation on the way rulers should govern their subjects. He imagines the prince to be someone who has been elevated to the throne and newly entrusted with the responsibility of the empire, and compares him with a prince who occupies the throne automatically through the traditional process of dynasty.

Machiavellian Comparison of Two Princes

In his comparison of two princes, Machiavelli mentions that the hereditary prince has the responsibility of only retaining the power handed over to him. All he has to do is to now carefully maintain and provide the lifestyle the people are accustomed to living in, so as to not spark a rebellion or public outrage.

In contrast, **a new prince faces a much more difficult task**: he has to first get accustomed to his new found power quickly, and then earn the respect of the courtiers and public by stabilizing that power to build a lasting political structure. Machiavelli wonders if the new prince will be as easily accepted as a prince born to the throne, especially with dynasty politics in play where people are generally aware of who the next ruler is going to be.

In conclusion, he tries to make his readers realize that while the hereditary prince is going to gain acceptance and authority as his birth-right, the new prince will have to **resort to some sort of corruption to achieve** the same stability and security during his rule. While many writers and thinkers of his time would have probably said the same thing, what set Machiavelli apart was his belief that public morality was different from private morality.

In his observation, a person may be moral in his personal life, and yet he should be ready to take immoral decisions if his position so demanded. A ruler should not always be concerned about his reputation, and must be prepared to implement brute force, deceit, even annihilation of entire lineages of noble families, if need be, to establish order and respect for gaining authority.

This line of thinking introduced people to the concept of leading two different lives, divided by different responsibilities, expectations, and needs. In modern world, we call them **Personal life** and **Professional life**.

Machiavellianism at Workplace

Machiavellianism has been a subject of intense study over the past many years, especially with the introduction of industries and companies, when a hierarchal model of passing orders and extracting work from end laborers was established. Physical toil wasn't easy or sustainable over a period of time, so people started practicing Machiavellianism as a means of moving up the ladder and become instructors.

This "**ends justify the means**" justification has been observed in the functioning of many of our present-day organizations by industry experts, and the verdict that they have collectively given is that Machiavellianism not only exists in today's workplace but is also an indispensable part of managerial tactics in today's age.

People adopt Machiavellianism at work to meet three broad ends:

- Gaining and maintaining power
- Gaining and maintaining influence
- Managing different groups through manipulation

The power to control people is a hidden desire in most of people, so many individuals are drawn towards engaging in office politics. While some of these go up the ladder using their social networking skills, the majority face highly destructive these Individuals and groups may engage in office politics which can be highly destructive consequences.

The biggest blow is perhaps faced by the organization itself. A company works due to its employees, and when they start competing with each other through under-handed means instead of collaborating, then it brings a creativity crisis as people focus on personal gains at the expense of the organization. This also causes severe collateral damage as sincere, hard-working employees also sometimes have to unwillingly take a stand with either of the parties to avoid being manipulated by seniors and managers.

2. Workplace Politics – Negative Effects

There are a lot of people who don't see office politics that way. Many social experts say that Office Politics is just the manner in which different people with varying personalities perform on their way to gaining advantages due to their social skills, persuasion and abilities. Although, they do mention the dangers of manipulating employees, which most often than not, results in **Counterproductive Workplace Behavior** and **Workplace Deviance**.

Psychological manipulation is the craft of using social influence to change somebody's perception in the minds of people, through the use of deception, misdirection and abuse. The objective of these tactics is to gain personal benefits or get an elevated designation at workplace, often at other people's expense. It must be clarified here that social influence, in itself, is not a negative thing but when it's used to undermine someone and make the other person appear unproductive, then it becomes a sinister tool.

Industry Experts have studied the presence of Machiavellianism extensively in organizations, and link it with two detrimental forces at workplace:

- **Counterproductive Workplace Behavior**
- **Workplace Deviance**

Counterproductive work behavior (**CWB**) is the behavior that describes an employee indulging in activities completely opposite to what he was hired to do. This makes him not only unproductive but also harmful to the legitimate interests of the company. This

behavior is also linked with the personalities of the employees exhibiting it. A stressful event could lead a calm person to behave in a completely different manner as compared to someone with anger issues.

Workplace Deviance is derived from the term 'deviance' which means deflecting off the accepted norms. At workplace, it is identified as inappropriate employee behavior. Employees exhibiting this behavior do so as retaliation for their unfair treatment at the hands of people. This borders on revenge and could lead to multiple kinds of deviance like:

- **Production deviance** – Leaving early, intentionally delaying work, or taking long breaks.

- **Property deviance –** Sabotaging assets, thieving, and making underhanded solicitations.

- **Political deviance –** Showing favoritism, gossiping, or blaming others.

- **Personal aggression** – Harassment, verbal abuse, and reprimanding.

Case Study

A recent survey revealed that **5% of workers in Europe are victims of bullying and harassment** at their workplace. Comparing these numbers to the previous empirical evidence on this type of behavior in companies over the world, a Brazilian banking staff had reported that 7.9% of employees have been the target of bullying, at least once a week in the last 6 months.

These members of staff explained bullying as being assigned unmanageable workload that damaged mental and physical health, being given confusing deadlines, and being assigned low-level work that was below their standards of competence.

According to the findings of this study, victims of bullying stopped defending their rights like getting paid for overtime or taking sick leave after being constantly exposed to such decadent behavior.

Apart from the usual empirical instructions on Paid leaves, Sick Leaves, Salary, Increments, Targets and Components that are explained to employees in a clear manner when they join an organization, employees often create a set of unwritten expectations about their workplace too.

Psychological Contracts are defined as the standards of behavior, assistance, respect, understanding and empathy that an employee expects from his company. These standards may not be mentioned in Offer Letters, as they cannot be quantified or standardized in any way, yet they are as essential to an employee as any other parameter.

Employees make psychological contracts with their organization and when these expectations are not met, the employee perceives that as a contract breach by the organization, the same way an employee's unapproved leave will be considered a contract breach by the employers.

In the recent years, many employees have given to workplace deviance due to their perception that the company is not treating them properly. Interestingly, this improper treatment is now lesser related to salary, increments, leaves, perks, commission, etc. and is being increasingly associated with **mistreatment at work**.

Employees who report misbehavior at work often retort through detrimental actions themselves. However, this comes as a great cost to the organization as employees resort to deviant behavior as a passive, non-confrontational revenge tactics which is not directed at the person mistreating them, but at the company itself. They might not openly revolt

against their boss for the fear of losing their jobs, but will take their suppressed anger out through acts of indifference towards their organization. These acts often involve abusing office resources like internet and supplies, fudging data, providing wrong information, working slowly, deliberately being late for office, or through increased absenteeism.

4. Workplace Deviance

People used to think earlier that Workplace Deviance is a cultural phenomenon and depends on understanding of interpersonal skills alone. However, recent data proves that employees exhibiting deviant behavior come from various organizations and almost all countries. This has changed people's view towards the way work is managed in organizations worldwide.

Some very common examples of Workplace Deviance are listed below:

Absenteeism

Absenteeism is defined as the ratio between the number of unauthorized leaves (employee being absent without informing) and the frequency of such incidents. Experts find a significant link between absenteeism and job dissatisfaction, role conflict (unclear authority), role ambiguity (unclear job description), and feelings of tension. Women are more likely to exhibit the deviant behavior of remaining absent from work than men.

Workplace Abuse

Acts of aggression like display of anger and interpersonal conflict have been linked to workplace abuse. Many times, employees are subject to abuse at the hands of their supervisors because of organizational constraints like steep deadlines, heavy workload, and bad time management.

Bullying

Workplace bullying is defined as mistreatment of an employee by his supervisors, colleagues, and co-workers. This includes verbal assault, gossiping and spreading rumors. Extreme cases may also include isolating someone from the professional circle. Bullied employees reduce their productivity, quality of output, and increase absenteeism. Many bullied employees quit the organization and sue it later, resulting in financial losses for the company.

Cyber Loafing

Cyber loafing is a time-wasting process where employees keep surfing the Internet, not for any work-related tasks, but for personal use. A recent survey states that 64% of people only in US have admitted to using the Internet for personal gains and completing personal tasks while at work. A 1999 survey held cyber-loafing responsible for **a 30-40% decrease in employee productivity**, costing US businesses $5.3 billion in just that year.

Incivility

Workplace incivility is treating others disrespectfully and rudely. It can be caused due to an unhealthy competitive spirit, withdrawal, and inept social skills. However, majority of incivility has been linked with lower job satisfaction, lesser agreeable co-workers, and violation of workplace norms for employee respect.

Lateness

Lateness is the action of deliberate arriving late at work and early leaving. Lateness has cost more than $3 billion dollars annually in US alone. The reason behind lateness is reduced efficiency and output. Employees who arrive late at work keep others waiting for approval or delay team targets. Cases of employees deliberately being late to work and early to leave are established cases of workplace deviance.

Substance Abuse

Deviant behavior also involves employees engaging in substance abuse at work which causes lesser attendance, lower performance, compromising on safety and can lead to other injuries both for that particular employee and his co-workers.

Withdrawal

Unsatisfied employees withdraw in order to avoid work tasks or pain, and remove themselves from their jobs. Withdrawal behavior may be explained as employee retaliation against inequity in the work setting. Withdrawal may also relate to job dissatisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment.

Most often, companies have informal teams that employees form among themselves as per their comfort levels and agenda. These unassigned teams move together, dine together, and form their own plans together. They may not welcome people freely into their group from a lack of transparency.

The following worksheet is intended to present a realistic assessment of your workplace so that you reflect on the working conditions of your company, and facilitate a discussion about office politics, business networking, professional socializing and personal behaviors with other employees.

- Recall a brief incident of something that went well in your office this week:

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What actions caused the good event? What was your contribution in that action? How much did others contribute?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Why don't these successful events happen every day or every week?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Are the staff in your office expected to be formal or informal with each other? What social functions are new associates asked to attend? What is the appropriate attire at the office and other business events?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What tips would you use to impress your supervisor?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What, according to you, would be the best methods to socialize and get to know other people in your business community?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What are the social or office behaviors that could spell doom for a new associate's career while working in your office?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- Are employee's titles, business relationships and job responsibilities clearly explained to the new associates when they join the company?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- Do the support staff get treated with respect in your company?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What, according to you, should be the "do's and don'ts" of dealing with support staff, colleagues, and co-workers.

  _____

  _____

  _____

- If your boss has an assistant, what are the tasks that you could assign him and how would you go about that?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- Do you seek assistance before taking action on something that you are not sure about? Do you report your mistakes immediately when you realize it, or do you try to cover up?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- Is decision-making an easy process in your office? Is there too much conflict on the right decision or is there a passive acceptance of ideas?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What are your strengths and how do they help in creating a support system for your co-workers to depend on, in their time of need?

  _____

  _____

  _____

6. Counterproductive Work Behavior

Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBs) are deliberate acts of carelessness and indifference engaged in by individuals, and are completely unrelated to accidental or unintentional actions. CWBs do not involve acts such as the inability to successfully complete a task, or getting involved in accidents. However, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that **organizations face losses worth $145 million annually due to accidents.**

Although all top organizations provide world-class safety standards for their employees at the workplace, there have been significant increase in accident-related incidents in the recent past. Experts observed that the most accident-prone employees have been typically younger, more distractible, and less socially adjusted to their co-workers and workplace.

Very few employees who face abuse at the hands of their supervisor will directly retaliate or quit the job as they fear being out of a job in today's testing times of unemployment, but in reality many strike out against their employer by engaging in counterproductive work behaviors. Since employees control many of the organization's resources, these counterproductive employees can abuse supplies and services, working time, production and quality of their output.

In worse cases, counterproductive workplace experiences may fuel the worker to act out through his slackened working speed, indifferent attitude towards feedback and lax productivity. An employee who is not satisfied with the situations he is working in will definitely become less productive.

The factors mentioned below influence Counter-productive Work Behavior (CWB):

Informal Organizational Hierarchies

The way in which the workforce of an organization gets played into informal hierarchies is based on multiple factors like company goals, size of the company, number of resources, and the type of leader. This hierarchy keeps on changing as newer individuals with different job roles and authority keep being introduced to the organization. People quickly realize who the boss is, whom they depend on for valuable information, and who knows all the office gossip. People who don't fit into this informal organizational model frequently end up displaying counter-productive behavior.

Office Gossip

Many individuals use office gossip as a tool of controlling the flow of conversation and extracting information through a mutual information-sharing. People engaging in gossip hope for a 50-50 chance of getting some genuine information back from the listener after they have gossiped enough with him. Gossip creates a hostile environment where people no longer feel comfortable trusting each other with sensitive information. It also is directly responsible for reducing the work efficiency of the person all this gossip goes against.

Personal Aims

People don't always practice Office Politics with promotion in mind. They might simply desire a greater power or influence. Many people who indulge in office politics have also have been found out as victims of low self-esteem. That makes them want that people respect them more. They can't handle competition and would plot traps to get their competition out of the race, so they tend to discredit and malign competitors for their selfish gains.

Some in the industry say that **Office Politics is not necessarily a wrong thing** all the time. A deserving team manager may, through skillful manipulation, turn a decision his way and end up getting a promotion and a stable project for his team. In cases like these, he will need to work with people he closely trusts and has a comfort level with, as opposed to others. In this case, his personal motive ended up as a boon is disguise to others and they won't ever accuse him of any wrongdoing.

Mind Games

Mind games are essential to get a large organization motivated and to prevent people from negative feedback. Mind Games also help in extracting truth from employees so not all mind games are bad. There are situations where employees get into a "No Bad News" mode where they suppress information that may trigger negative reaction from their boss, saying that the timing isn't right.

However, **it's bad when people use Mind Games in Leadership**. When a supervisor plays mind games with an employee, he is basically engaging in a game of "Divide and Conquer" where he is pitting employees against one another other so that they don't unite and threaten his stance someday.

Cronyism

Cronyism is displaying favoritism towards long-standing friends, by ignoring their errors, not giving them corrective feedback, or by appointing them to positions of authority, in spite of their limited qualifications.

Places that practice cronyism are breeding grounds for counterproductive behavior, which is observed especially among those deserving employees who feel shortchanged and cheated.

When you are working in an organization full of ambitious people with different thought processes and priorities in life, **Organizational Politics is inevitable**. In a politically charged environment, employees need to understand that they have master the art of concealing weaknesses.

They cannot be overwhelmed in the face of these oppositions, but have to learn to take this in their stride. This is not to suggest that they have to play politics the way it is there in the workplace, but they have to treat Office Politics as the norm rather than the exception.

Joanna Strinstrom decided that she needs a change after ten years of working in the same office. There was nothing wrong with the place she was currently working with: the working environment was pleasant, management was responsive, and the staff friendly.

However, the irony was that this perfect working environment caused a low employee turnover, i.e. very few employees quit the company so promotion opportunities were low. Hence, she applied for a job with Affable Guys Inc. and successfully got herself placed as the deputy Process Lead. She was happy and happily set off to work in an organization where she had no idea what was waiting for her.

First Day of New Employment

From the first day with Affable Toys Inc., Joanna started getting doubts if she had made a wrong choice. The environment was all right: a bit too formal for her liking, however that's expected when you walk in as a new face among a workplace full of strangers. What concerned her more immediately was the introductory talk given to her on the day of joining by the Process Lead, Rachel Cramson.

Rachel stated it clearly that she hardly ever walked into the main body of the building as she preferred to work from her room. **Joanna was to be her eyes and ears**, and by that she meant that Joanna was supposed to be in the main building and report any such activities, gossips, and moods that might seem like questioning Rachel's authority.

Although it was hard for Joanna to contradict Rachel on the first day of their meeting each other, it did sound odd for her to be given only the task of reporting on staff activities and the general mood of the workplace with regards to the working style of Rachel. There was no discussion on the usual responsibilities associated with this job, such as providing guidance, meeting targets, setting deadlines, etc.

Realization of Workplace Politics

Joanna wondered if the staff will notice her being nosy and suspect her of being a snitch, however she soon found out that that the staff already had figured out how to deal with her. The excessive formality was not, after all, because of her being new to the place. They knew exactly what she had been recruited for, as her predecessor was had performed the same role for Rachel.

This had made the staff wary of discussing anything important or serious with me. They limited themselves to superficialities and trivial talk in front of her, and were guarded and diplomatic in their responses when asked anything. They avoided discussing anything with even their colleagues in her presence that could have an adverse interpretation.

Understanding Work-culture at the Workplace

Respite arrived in the form of Andrea, who was a supervisor on the process Joanna was recruited for. She opened up and was frank with Joanna on the first day itself. She told Joanna that the ongoing personality clash between the Process Lead and the staff was on account of the former Deputy Process Lead reporting on the employees daily to Rachel, and in a negative light.

All this made Joanna wonder how, if at all, Rachel managed to run an efficient organization, when he didn't interact with his team members and spied on them, instead. In the following days, Joanna attended a team meeting and soon realized that the staff didn't want to discuss anything related to the process in her presence. They only listened to what instructions their supervisor, Andrea had for them and that was it- no questions, no queries, nothing.

While talking to Andrea later, Joanna came to know that the employees would have gossiped and while their time away if Joanna hadn't been there. In short, there would have been no work-related discussion even in her absence. Joanna understood that the employees had lost the interest and drive to try and improve the organization, fearing that their jobs will be in danger if they spoke their minds out. The employees only did what the supervisors told them and nothing more. The working procedures were outdated and there was no joy in the workplace.

To Joanna's mind, **this was the worst brand of Office Politics** where people supposed to work as a team were distrustful of one another. On her part, Rachel didn't want anything to do with the office staff too. She gave them as less instructions and guidance as possible and severely distrusted the staff.

Joanna rang up her previous company just to see if her positon was still available but ironically, they had promoted someone to fill up her position. Instead of running her career by simply leaving, she decided to set up her own program to encourage open communication between staff and management, with the aim of increasing efficiency through a more relaxed and friendly working environment.

Fighting against Corrupt Office Politics

She knew that Rachel was a lost cause so she didn't aim that high, but spoke to the supervisors and their team-mates. Andrea was a great help at this. Joanna figured that if efficiency and productivity increased, then Rachel couldn't possibly complain.

There was some hesitation in the beginning. **People were cynical of this approach** and suspected this was some ploy to earn their confidence and draw words out of their mouths, however with an increasingly transparent and frank working environment, they could notice the change and communication improved. This brought in a flurry of positive criticism, innovative ideas and frank suggestions which increased the overall efficiency of work. The happiness quotient of working at Affable Toys was back. It took some time to break through the initial barriers but it was worth it.

That being said, Rachel Cramson is still the Process Lead, however the office had changed their way of working through mutual understanding and respect. They were working as a

team and cooperating with each other. In short, they had decided to not let Office Politics get in the way of their success.

And if you thought cases like these will only be found in small to medium-sized companies where there is little to no attention on production values, you will be surprised to know that even the most efficient and organized bodies have witnessed instances of Office Politics, which often leads them to disastrous consequences.

When it comes to a perfect marriage of intelligence and efficiency, one of the first names that would spring to the mind would be that of **NASA**. So imagine how the entire nation of USA must have reacted on hearing of how space shuttle Challenger ended up meeting its doomed fate.

On January 28, 1986**,** NASA's space shuttle **Challenger** tore apart just 73 seconds into its flight, causing the deaths of all the five NASA astronauts and two Payload Specialists aboard. The disaster cast a dark shadow over the country. The then President, Ronald Reagan appointed a special commission (Rogers Commission) to investigate the accident. The Rogers Commission went on with their investigation, during which NASA's space shuttle program was halted for 32 months.

When Rogers Commission submitted their report, the details of their investigation were chilling. It was found that NASA's organizational culture and poor decision-making processes had been key contributing factors to the accident. NASA managers had been warned by their engineers about the potentially catastrophic flaws in the shuttle's design since 1977, but they chose to ignore those warnings as they felt that the program needed to look successful and a delay would ruin that image and invite political ramifications.

Many managers, and almost all the engineers, had grave concerns about launching the spacecraft on that cold morning of January 28, 1986 as the temperature was 18 degrees, while the spacecraft was designed to work at the much higher temperatures of about 40 degrees. Although many of these people knew exactly what was coming**,** they didn't speak out fearing personal retribution. Many of them thought their careers would have been severely harmed, if not over.

If an organization like NASA could come across such glaring issues in workplace politics, every company can have it too. Although we are not dealing with as fatal an issue as a spacecraft crash and lives lost while talking about Office Politics in the rest of the companies, this deadly phenomenon could crash the company itself through an ever-increasing performance-pay gap**.**

9. Managerial Mistakes

The biggest challenge companies are facing right now while weeding out Office Politics is that they are trying to implement their advanced interpersonal strategies through some very two-dimensional, first-generation managers whose view of an organization as a "Work & Pay" model is devastating in today's times. These managers still believe in **the concept of strict hierarchy and stringent flow of authority** where deadlines and managerial command are supreme.

For many years, Management Theorists have persuasively debated the idea that organizations are just groups of people with mutual interest who collaborate for their own gains. Any other method to interpret the working of an organization has found few successful examples to corroborate the definition. All organizations with strict hierarchal structures and stringent line of command have been perished in the last couple of decades. Those who have survived have an extremely flat management methodology from the start, or have adapted to it.

Many managers are yet to fully understand the concept of effective politics. A survey taken of managers by a management journal reported that managers think of political skill as just 'disarmingly charming' behavior. They also wrongly relate office Politics with employability market, assuming that Office Politics tend to be negligible when there are plenty of jobs in the market. Some related it with economic prosperity. They thought that if people earned enough, they wouldn't need more, and hence, would steer clear of politics.

The Way Old-school Managers Think

However, the fatal flaw in their assumption is that politics needs any environment at all for its survival. A person's will to grow in an organization could simply be motivated by his own personal ambition, rather than any other impeding factor in his life that he needs to address. It could also be his **need of power and influence over others**.

As per the standard definition of management, organizations are places of a single-minded pursuit towards a common goal. This goal runs through the entire organization at various levels and processes. When employees are encouraged to think of the organization in this light, they tend to share organizational knowledge and collaborate with the different teams to deliver what's best.

Participation and involvement is a crucial factor in team-building and there is now ample evidence to show that the top-down approach towards management seriously hampers the empowerment and motivation of the employees. Study reveals that employees working under instructions of those managers who believe in the **"top to bottom" model of management** become frustrated, stressed and disempowered by their complete lack of any participation in the working process.

Despite this evidence, many companies still appoint managers who believe in laying out a singular vision for the rest of the employees to realize. They believe that this provides a clear objective to the rest of the team and makes them commit to the purpose. What this thought-process ignores, is the way people in the team would like to contribute new ideas to the final decision.

For a person to be wholly able to engage a vision, there has to be some part of it that he agrees to. A person who is dissatisfied with what he is working for won't ever give his best to the process. Even if the final decision has nothing of what he suggests, at least he will have the satisfaction of having put his point across.

The failure of managers world-wide in trying to renew their organizational approach can be compared with **the repeated failures of Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo**. Napoleon had tried to advance using the same old battle techniques, and the result was that the enemy also kept following the same defense tactics, which Napoleon couldn't breach.

With managers worldwide, there is a deep-seated drive for a streamlined flow of command and instructions however, it is this very linear, one-dimensional approach of instructions running down from the top to the bottom of the management that has been the stumbling block to organizations in their efforts of adapting to the increasingly inclusive working principles of the business world.

It must be made clear that discipline and hierarchy are not evil forces, in itself. They are needed to run an organization smoothly. However, it's the underlying interpretation of hierarchy as a commanding authority, who is immune to alternative viewpoints that needs to changes.

How Motorola Realized What's Wrong

Motorola, a global company, gained success in the US with its Compensation and Benefits strategy. This gave the employees who performed exceptionally well a chance to own stocks of Motorola Company. However, this didn't prove to be a successful strategy

throughout their global operations. For example, people in Philippines were happier with other benefits like an extended weekend, or a five-pound bag of rice. This is a simple example of how strict linear thinking creates problems while dealing with different people, and also tells us the value of taking local interests, preferences, and alternative views into consideration before chalking out a final strategy.

Old-fashioned managers have traditionally interpreted multiple viewpoints as chaotic and confusing. They won't understand the concept of constructive politics, which is all about having the same authority and powers through listening to everyone and forming an all-inclusive strategy. The only difference here is that the obedience comes not from the designation a manager holds, but from mutual respect.

The tremendous pace with which global businesses are now being conducted has clearly stated the need for a changed way of managing business and the real story is only now revealing in front of us, about what the true application of politics in workplace is- the idea of constructively using mutual interests and competitive nature in people for individual and organizational benefit. The manner in which this is implemented needs to be reframed so that the organizations received better managing powers and achieves higher goals with added efficiency.

The biggest impediment to interpreting Office Politics as something constructive comes from the negative connotation they bear. Over the years, disgruntled employees have reported the politically-heavy environment of their workplace as the biggest hurdle to their careers.

According to a survey conducted among employees from different companies, the first words that came to their minds when they thought of office politics were - "game-playing", "snide", "aggressive", "sabotaging", "negative", "blaming", "withholding", "non-co-operative behavior".

According to them, Office Politics was the act of indulging in creating negative/inferior perception of others in front of superiors by certain individuals, who do so in order to achieve their personal agenda in their workplace, often at the expense of others.

And many of them are not altogether wrong. Many people want to attain a **"vantage point" over their colleagues**, and while that in itself is not a wrong ambition, the method some of them implement to do that is. Many of them deliberately demoralize the motivated employees, which sabotages the company's success. These people are always in small numbers but just like the case of a few bad apples rotting the entire barrel, their negative influence is considerable.

These past experiences, combined by the anecdotes shared by the people from different companies worldwide, have led to the widely-held belief that indulging in office politics for self-interest can never be a positive thing and is bound to weaken the company. With so much prejudice against it, one can hardly be hardly surprised that 'politics' has become such a dirty word.

Over the years, companies that realized the truth that individuals will always have personal goals that often go against company policy, so getting a team committed exclusively to a common goal without caring about personal agendas may be pointless. They have now shifted their focus into a "You win, I win" formula where they think of the team's returns on their efforts while calculating their profits too.

12. Un-demonizing Office Politics

The results of a recent survey undertaken among senior managers covering a diverse range of organizations reported that the newer and innovative ideas, which managers keep coming up with, are generally frowned upon by the key decision-makers and bosses of that organization due to their hesitance towards change.

It was also revealed that in many cases, higher authority even **shot down ideas with the old-fashioned "I am the boss" attitude**, with no further explanation offered. It is not surprising therefore, when managers describe Organizational Politics with words such as secrecy, lobbying and spin.

Within six months of executing the change, 80 per cent of the managers conceded that their greater knowledge of self-interest was of direct use in effectively managing the higher decision making authorities. They also acknowledged that political motives was inevitable and was crucial to their growth. **Around 95 per cent thought** that managing political behavior was a central proponent to manage change, personal competence, and loss of face and status.

People who participated in this analysis were a small sample of those managers with whom the researchers had worked over the last five years. A large part of this work has focused on enabling these managers to have a demanding perspective of the rational model, and training them on the importance of constructive political action.

While working from a political perspective, these activities become a crucial part of management, whatever perspective one uses. Sometimes, managers are bound to be engaged in Office Politics for the organization, even against their better judgement. Learning about the centrality of politics to handling is the base for noticing personal interests as a way of encouragement to get things achieved.

In order to manage the Centrality of Politics to Organizations first, we need to think of Organizational politics as central to all important organizational activity. The most important thing was to change the definition of politics for these managers. They now rationally perceive office politics as "**Group Dynamics**", where competing and collective interest groups with differing perspectives are united, change is acknowledged, strategy is formulated and so on.

Thus, politics is the deliberate attempts made by people individually and groups in organizations to use power for their own particular interests. As shared interests are of managing and controlling, managers engaged in this process actively participate in this continual process of political positioning. This includes them tempting by unofficial ways like lobbying and behind the scenes alliance building.

In fast moving and pressurized companies, it is difficult to maintain the encouragement and commitment necessary to make things happen. In addition to this, contradicting well-intentioned ideas can be considered as an asset, not a liability. They can create productive dispute that formulates innovative thinking.

Putting this in another way, **handling contradicting interests is important for companies** to be able to renovate themselves frequently in the face of furious environmental change. As long as causes are in the interests of others, there won't be any issue over the legitimacy of political activity.

Constructive managers should be able to create a meaningful justification for their agenda. It has to be established with a clear picture on key business issues, and on how development with these will be ensured via influential relationships. It is very difficult for an individual to achieve all these requirements, and there are considerable implications for the progress and capabilities of managers.

We cannot balance these objectives just through new managerial concepts. This task demands a commitment to personal and interpersonal awareness. This will develop a better understanding of the motivations of oneself and others. It explains what really makes companies work, discarding the superficial aspects of the rational model.

The Redefinition of Managerial Work

The new definition of Workplace Politics leads us to question the nature of what managers actually do. For example, in the rational model, decision-making is done through a hierarchical process, managers at different levels are given the authority for that very purpose.

Politically able managers are much more critical of rational processes of corporate decision-making. They are aware of the fact that power does not always demand formal authority, strategic decisions can sometimes be made informally, irrespective of that authority. Thus politically able managers acknowledge the chance to make initiatives happen irrespective of accepted ways of working. This necessitates developing a range of strong Organizational relationships, up, down, sideways and external to the Organization. This type of network facilitates them to stay tuned to emergent issues, lobby for support, test out the value of different projects etc.

Realizing that organizational strategies arise from negotiations between parties with shared interests make makes managers spend their time and energy in relevant operations. For example, politically capable managers mostly generate change from the bottom-up, through local initiatives. Sometimes, these initiatives run counter to official policy but are completed by using power and political stealth. But in all cases, such initiatives are encouraged by individuals who willingly take responsibility to make things happen, as their managers can make them see a personal benefit for them in achieving the goal.

There is no backing out. It is a bitter truth that, politics is the head of all organizations. Being a politician is part of the job for management. Constructive Organizational politics must be accepted for what it really is, as without this starting point, no manager is likely to be encouraged to improve his or her own political skill.

We start the discussion with a simple question 'What is meant by power?' It is important to ensure a clear answer to this as, in spite of the obvious use of Organizational power that all managers address day by day, it is an elusive concept.

One noticeable similarity to be considered is how many of the vexed issues surrounding Organizational politics appear to be a microcosm of the problems people see in upholding the standards of democratic government. In opposite, however, while many managers may struggle with the thought of legitimizing Organizational politics, few debate that the standards of political democracy should be eliminated.

The Problem of Power

Power is problematic for two reasons. First, as so many of the management and Organizational thinkers to study the subject have found**, it is difficult to define Organizational Power.** This is surprising in some aspect because on the face of it, there often appears to be little doubt about who powerful and why they are able to wield their power. Anyway, on closer examination, there is complexity and contradiction surrounding the idea of Organizational power, which rationally has a direct impact on any attempt to use it in the management process.

Second, the potential and **actual use of power leads to moral dilemmas** for managers that are confused, and in some situations, deep anxiety. Power attracts others towards the issues of personal duty that is in the heart of management, and to the question of how much individual executives should participate to the companies that hire them.

In short, power can be defined as the capacity of individuals and groups to flatter or coax their own preferences upon others, to execute their choice in such a way that everybody has to do it.

There are precise three questions that needs to be answered to understand the features of power:

- First, how much power can be given to specific individuals or groups? Is it a property?

- Second, does power have to be seen with all aspects? Is it being practiced?

- Third, how centered is power in any Organizational process when it is not practiced over one another?

Primary Sources of Power

It is essential to acknowledge that the sources of power that are completely unique from one another. In simple words, one source may facilitate managers with access to another, however many of these sources are independent. It has to be made clear that when an individual enjoys access to all the main sources of situational power, there is real scope for Organizational influence.

The primary conditional sources of power are as follows:

Formal Authority

It is also called as 'legitimate power'. It derives its lawful status from the core social value of rational organization, in which control and co-ordination internally build a pyramid structure. This value marks the importance of today's society. Generally, it determines the 'natural' shape of organizations engaged in the process.

Control over the Flow of Information

This is based on an old thought i.e. 'information is power'. In spite of the liberating effects of information technology, this school of thought gives good organizational reasons to manage information flow. 'Classified information' is not just a formal way of acknowledging prohibited access but it states what people unofficially select to withhold from others.

People 'in the know' have a habit of 'privatizing' information, mainly when they have gone out of their way to acquire it. Physical closeness is an essential factor even in today's generating where 'geography does not matter'.

The importance of an individual or group to the Organization

It is referred as 'nobody is indispensable' but in the short term practice they may be, as others rely on Legitimate Politics.

The dependencies between the range of major sections of activity within organizations shows that one unit is capable of reducing uncertainty for others, it enjoys a powerful position. For example the role of financing operations in controlling spend, influence certainty of work for other sections of an Organization. The best part is the budget is always approved.

Control over Hard Rewards

Career progression, remuneration, regular employment and autonomy of function are all tangible rewards, and those make decisions regarding individuals to be rewarded are more powerful individuals. Rewards need to be valued by the beneficiaries if they have to work in this way. Less tangible rewards of praise and recognition are excluded from this section, because these are closely linked up with the credibility of an individual with power.

It is essential to acknowledge that these conditional sources of power are completely unique from one another. In simple words, one source may facilitate managers with access to another, these sources are independent. It has to follow that when an individual enjoys access to all of the main sources of situational power there is real scope for Organizational influence.

Situational sources of power are precise capacities of individuals to influence in the sources that are awarded, gifted or captured, and so are temporarily 'owned'. In contrast, personal sources of power, are easily recognizable as individual capabilities. They are considered as the permanent personal possessions.

There are many personal attributes that provide their owners a special ability to influence others, we can categorize them in three categories:

Referent Power

It is the ability to influence others through what they see as desirable personality traits. They provide the subject for role modeling. Some examples are: integrity, emotional intelligence, aim, drive, confidence and resilience. Leadership, embodies all the above mentioned qualities, and the true source of the leader's power is admiration.

Anyway, with respect to all personality traits, it is noticed that behavior facilitates the reference point for others. The traits themselves must be inferred as expected behavior can be imitated. This makes us think of traits as qualities that can be learnt.

Expertise

When someone possesses knowledge, talent and skills that are superior to our own, and we are willing to let them guide us, they practice expert power. In terms of Organizational context, this source of personal power is mostly linked with professional and highly specialized work, and people with expertise knowledge have invested time and energy in acquiring it.

In order to be usable it is expected to be **both credible and inaccessible** to those the expert wishes to influence. Expert knowledge is strongly linked with individuals, so there are times when people will make no difference between knowledge and the individual. They will rely on any information provided by the person as the final word, so many times, personal credibility that is at stake.

Social Competence

There is little confusion regarding skills like the ability to read the motives of others, current ideas engagingly, diffuse disputes, conduct interviews, behave in a collaborative fashion, or be good at small talk, are an important source of influencing. These skills are not expert skills, and acquiring them does not rely on knowing something that most other people do not. For example: praising someone or recognition to someone are **considered as the 'soft' rewards** which anybody can give to anybody.

One need not be a manager to commend the efforts of others but to praise effectively one has to be sincere, time it well, be precise, handle the negative reactions like disbelief or embarrassment, and to be sure not to overuse it. After learning, the skill of praising it can be used as a personal source of power. The limelight is not only on the recipient but on the giver too that is the one praising.

Success

We often say '**everyone loves a winner** 'or' success breeds successes. But behind these achievements lies a bitter truth. The importance society gives on success enables that people who are successful are more powerful. Success represents achievement, prosperity, victory, and social acceptance.

It is linked with outcomes, and to frame another phrase, you can't argue with the winners. Basically we attribute it to the efforts of some individuals and groups. Instead of explaining it as the product of collective effort, the outcomes of contributions too interrupt to unravel.

Even when success is the outcome of good luck we contrive to personalize it. Thus success seems to be direct conditions of deliberate attempts made to use it as a source of personal power.

Simply put, not all behavior is talent-oriented or skill-related, but it that doesn't make it less influential. Let's see the other way around. Social skill may protect us from seeing the self-centered or even malign intentions of others as we are tempted by the plausibility of what they say and the way they say it.

16. Conclusion

As we discussed in this tutorial, political activity in workplace doesn't necessarily sabotage company success. On the contrary, proper implementation of politics at workplace opens the doors to mutual and competing interests, which yields long-term benefits of the Organization.

The simple working principle behind this concept is that individuals are more likely to be productive in achieving a goal if they can see something for themselves in it. There has to be a personal win at the end of the road for them, and not just a team victory or organizational achievement.

Earlier, companies used to stick to the traditional top-down approach to team management, where personal relevance was almost made negligible. Corporates have realized now that inspiring teams to achieve success just for the sake of fulfilling a higher purpose is simply not sufficient to extract the best out of the people working with them. Office Politics is here to stay. The way it's channelized into the improvement of the workplace is the way forward.