

Venues for Machiavellianism

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1) Preamble:

'Machiavellianism' or 'Cunning' (euphemistically referred to as 'people skills' or 'social skills') is applicable to every area of life imaginable. Human psychology never changes, however the specific strategies and tactics that are useful do change, and the venues change.

Psychology is evergreen but strategies, tactics, and venues, are ephemeral. Sun Tzu faced warfare on the plains of ancient China. Machiavelli faced the politics of the aristocratic court. In our world today, we face the corporate office and client meetings.

What follows is a list of the venues you are likely to face in 21st century America, and the machiavellianism involved. The venues with the highest stakes are *Job Interviews*, *Office Politics*, and *Sales/Marketing*, because these are the venues where money can be made or lost.

In your own life some venues will be immensely important and others will be inconsequential. For those immensely important venues, take the time to map them out; list out every person in the venue from the most to the least powerful. Recognize the powerful individuals whose favor you must win for the sake of succeeding in the venue. Do thorough analysis of these individual's psychologies; know their tastes, so that you can best guess what will and will not appeal to them.

2) Cold Reading and Charm, Key Facets of Cunning:

For our modern world and the venues you are likely to face the most important competencies you must master are Cold Reading and Charm. If you can accurately read people's psychologies and make them like you, you will win. If you can't read people's psychologies and people find you to be dislikeable, you will lose.

All the other facets of cunning (Persuasion, Mask Wearing, Intimidation) are of secondary importance.

3) School:

The primary drivers of your grades in school will be your IQ and Conscientiousness. Smart people who work hard tend to succeed in school, while dumb people who are lazy tend to fail in school. However, your ability to charm your teachers also matters. If your teachers and professors like you, you will notice that the grades on your essays magically improve.

Law 38 is critical; appear to agree with whatever your professors' opinions are. If your professor is a bleeding heart liberal, your essays should imply Donald Trump is Satan. If your professor is an old fashioned conservative, your essays should have a Rightwing bent to them.

4) Family Politics:

If you come from a poor family, then family politics is a venue where the stakes are low; your family members have no significant amount of money or valuable connections (networking) to offer you, so even if they hate and ostracize you it doesn't matter.

However, if you come from a rich family then family politics is a high stakes venue. If your family members like you, they will give you immense financial support and access to valuable connections. On the other hand if they dislike or ostracize you, you will miss out on these assets.

As such, if you come from a rich family *do* take the time to thoroughly analyze the psychologies of each of your family members, and the social interactions between them. Getting your family members to like you (particularly the one's who have direct control over financial resources and networking connections) is critical.

5) Job Interviews:

In theory job interviews are done for the sake of finding the most competent candidate and hiring them. In reality job interviews don't select candidates who are competent; they select candidates who are likeable.

If in a job interview you can successfully charm those who wield decision-making power over who gets an offer and who does not, you will be given an offer. In some interview processes technical skills may be assessed, but ultimately the make or break factor will be "Which candidate do I *like* the most?"

6) Office Politics:

Office Politics is the venue that will make or break your career, no matter what your profession is. As a corporate employee, you are a 21st century courtier; read Law 24.

That chapter of The 48 Laws will serve as a beginners guide to succeeding in the game of office politics.

You are in zero sum competition with coworkers who have the same rank as you for seizing the same promotion opportunities, and for keeping your jobs when layoff season inevitably arrives.

While being in intense zero sum conflict with them, you must always maintain the pretense that you are all on the same team. Fail to maintain this pretense, and your superiors will view you as a monster; they will fire you. It is a paradox; intense conflict whilst at the same time maintaining the appearances of friendliness and teamwork.

The corporation that employs you could not care less whether you live or die, and would gladly get you killed if it would boost quarterly profits. Yet at the same time you must always maintain the pretense that you are a loyal employee, and that you enjoy being a corporate employee. ***Hide your displeasure, fake your contentment.***

At minimum you must hide your displeasure; fail to do this, and your superiors will view you as having a 'bad attitude' and fire you. At best they will keep you around but never promote you up the hierarchy. It is yet another paradox; maintain the pretense you are loyal to the corporation that employs you and happy, even though in reality you are loyal only to your own interests (or at least you should be) and are possibly very unhappy.

The main strategy for succeeding within office politics will be this: triangulate who your critical superiors are, those people who wield decision-making power over whether you are promoted or fired. In some office environments, it will be obvious who these people are; in others it will require some investigation.

At all costs you must ensure that your critical superiors view you as both likeable and competent. For the sake of making them perceive you as competent, prioritize their work over everyone else's. Give A+ work to your critical superiors, and A- or B+ work to everyone else.

This strategy may sound obvious, yet the corporate world is full of employees who will never bother with trying it, or who will try it but botch the execution.

7) Sales/Marketing:

The venue for machiavellianism that can take you from rags to riches. Your goal is to manipulate people into buying product, and your main tool for this is charm; the single biggest reason people will buy from a salesman is because they like him.

Whether or not it is actually in the target's best interest to buy product is supremely irrelevant; you must persuade them to buy product, the consequences be damned.

8) Negotiation:

Negotiation is an intrinsically machiavellian activity; strategy, manipulation, and persuasion are involved.

One useful strategy is this: charm the other party. They may give you a better price or deal terms simply because they like you. At the same time, ensure they do not get away with using this strategy on you; in the words of Baltasar Gracian "Do not take payment in politeness".

At no point in negotiation should you ever insult the other party; if they feel offended in any way, they may refuse to do business with you even if it would objectively be in their best interest to.