

## Office Politics: The Unwritten Rules of Workplace Power

Every workplace, whether a corporate firm, a government agency, or a small business, has its own political ecosystem. Office politics refers to the informal power structures, alliances, and rivalries that influence decisions, promotions, and workplace culture.

Unlike formal hierarchies (where job titles define authority), office politics operates through relationships. A mid-level employee who has the boss's ear may wield more influence than a higher-ranked manager who is out of favor. Networking, loyalty, and perception management often matter as much as—or more than—competence.

Key elements of office politics include:

- **Alliances & Factions:** Colleagues form groups to support each other's agendas.
- **Gossip & Reputation:** Rumors can build or destroy careers.
- **Power Plays:** Subtle moves like taking credit for others' work or sidelining rivals.
- **Leadership Dynamics:** A CEO's management style can create either a collaborative or toxic culture.

Those who navigate office politics well advance faster, while those who ignore it may find themselves sidelined. Ethical dilemmas arise when politics leads to favoritism, discrimination, or unethical behavior. Some workplaces try to minimize office politics through transparency, while others thrive (or suffer) because of it.