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Business School

# Leadership, Politics, and Power

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# Who I am

Associate Professor of Management  
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PhD in Industrial and Organisational Psychology

*Research topics:*

Organisational politics

Leadership behaviours (positive and negative)

Individual differences (motivation, personality, emotions) and job performance



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# Office Politics

- Use of power and influence in organisations
- **“One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.” — Plato**
- Organizational politics is an unavoidable feature of modern organizational life
- May affect your career, performance, and job satisfaction



# Political behavior in organisations

- Actions not officially sanctioned by an organization
- Taken to influence others in order to meet one's personal goals

**“Politics isn’t about winning at all costs. It’s about maintaining relationships and getting results at the same time.”**

**John Eldred, MGMT Professor & Consultant, Kingston U. UK**

Conditions facilitating politics

- Unclear goals
- Autocratic decision making
- Ambiguous lines of authority
- Scarce resources
- Uncertainty





- Understand the social/political context ✓
- Accumulate and use power effectively for good of the organization
- Excel at the art of influence



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# Power

- Ability to influence other people
- Exerted by means of:
  - Authority:** (Mutually agreed upon) right to influence another person
  - Influence:** Ability to affect the thoughts, behavior, and feelings of another person

## Zone of indifference:

Range in which attempts to influence a person will be:

- Perceived as legitimate
- Acted on without a great deal of thought





# Forms of power

**Reward power:** Ability to control rewards

**Coercive power:** Ability to cause an unpleasant experience

**Legitimate power:** Based on position and mutual agreement

**Referent power:** Based on interpersonal attraction

**Expert power:** Based on specialized knowledge or skills

## Smart Alex



# The “What” of influence

What do you do to influence the people in your network or other key stakeholders?







- Understand the social/political context ✓
- Accumulate and use power effectively for good of the organization ✓
- Excel at the art of influence



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# The “How” of influence

“Political skill is the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives.”

- Understand others at work
- Use knowledge to influence
- To enhance personal / organisational goals



# Are you politically skilled?

**Social Astuteness**

**Interpersonal Influence**

**Networking Ability**

**(Apparent) Sincerity**

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# Political skill helps

- To be a better performer or leader
- To have greater career success
- To perceive less stress
- Better predictor as self-monitoring, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence



# Why is political skill important?

## Today's work environment

- Globalization
- Downsizing
- Reduced layers of management
- Team-based structures
- Flexible work-patterns



# How can it be developed?

Political skill can be cultivated, trained, improved.

- Self-awareness and self-assessment
- Seek feedback
- Learn your environment
- Listen to others
- Activate your networks
- Seek training and mentors

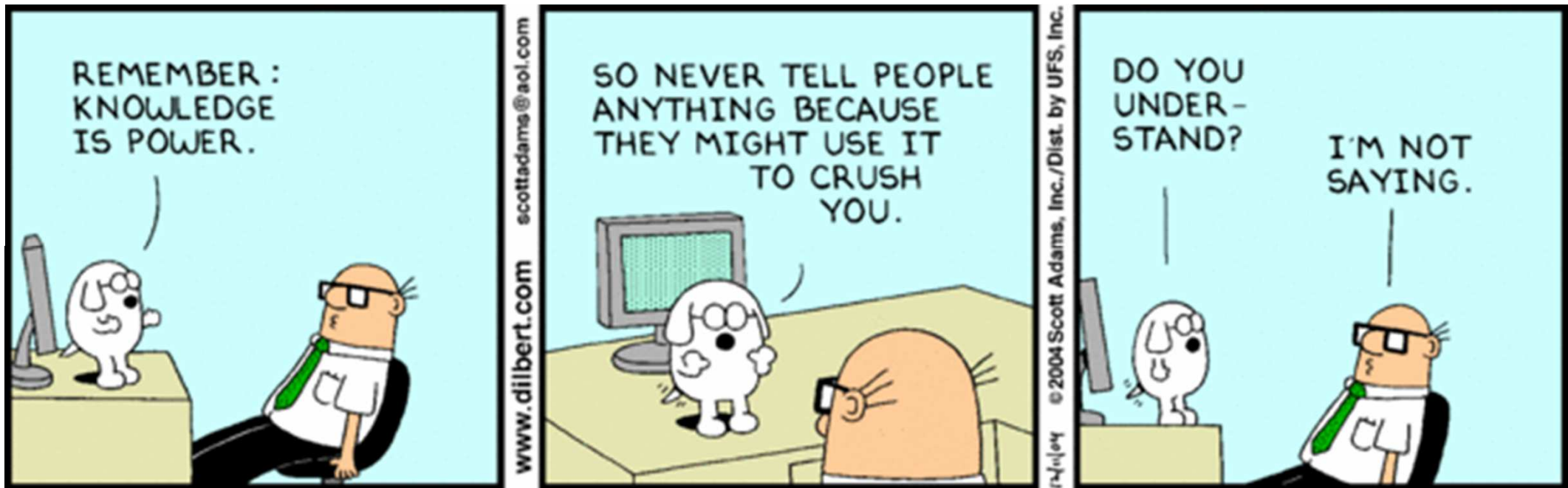
*“If you have political skill, you appear not to have it. Truly skillful execution of the behaviors associated with politics is usually perceived as genuine, authentic, straightforward and effective. Leaders who are not politically skilled come off as manipulative or self-serving” – Gerald Ferris*





# Summary

- Politics are an inherent part of organizations
- Develop your network and political skill
- Using power and influence requires connecting to those you want to influence and employing influence techniques effectively



# Wrap-up

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