# OFFICE POLITICS

By: Mosi Dorbayani

iD / 0000-0002-8362-1034

Recently I had a nice chat with a couple of newly appointed managers at a Canadian Bank on 'Office Politics' and that gave me the idea for writing this.

What is "Office Politics"? Well, every Executive Coach or Consultant might define it differently, but in my view, Office Politics can be interpreted as careful strategies that staff implement in order to gain advantage in their office.

Such strategies might be justified for personal gains or for a cause they believe in. Yes, it has negative connotations and it is often dubbed as taking advantage at the expense of others and it certainly affects the workplace environment and relations.

Is there such a thing as "good" Office Politics? Affirmative. Good Office Politics helps you to gain promotion, gather support and get your cause realized. Good Office Politics can be called 'networking' and 'managing influence'. Since such office strategy is generally considered a negative play, staff tend to avoid it; however, to secure success for projects, eventually one would need to find the safest way to navigate through this highly sensitive aspect of career.

If you reject Office Politics and constantly deny it, you may suffer, simply because others take unfair advantage of it, and if you do not learn how to practice "good" Office Politics, you might miss opportunities. So, here are certain highlights for you to remember, learn and practice:

A) Office Politics are inevitable and can be found in any organization regardless their size or form, private or governmental, profit or non-profit.

B) Gaining profit, Promotion, and Superiority create competition; therefore, where there is a competition, there is a need for Office Politics.

C) Resources and opportunities are not endless and often staff experience conflict in attaining and maintaining resources and their competitiveness.

Now in order to have Office Politics work for you, you need to:

1. Be a good observer and gather information to build up a proper network for yourself;

2. Study the organizational chart/staff accountability carefully and analyze it in practice. In the chart of hierarchy, the person who is on the top may not be the most influential one;

3. Pinpoint those who are truly influential, who has authority, who are coaching and mentoring others, and who are the brain and strategists of your organization;

4. Understand who gets along with who, who is suffering from conflict, who is hard to please, and who is easy to get on with;

5. Know which fundamental factors make interrelations work or not work, what influences relations and friendship at work;

6. Know what manipulative factors are, and what people see as 'respect'.

Once you accepted A, B, and C, and studied 1 to 6 above, it is time to develop yourself a Good Office Politics Strategy:

True powerful people are not necessarily those with highest income, who are on the top of your organizational hierarchy with fancy titles and letter. Do not be reluctant nor afraid of approaching those you have learned are powerful. Approach them, get to know them better, and try to be associated with them.

Make sure your relations and strategies do not cross your professionalism, formal line of hierarchy, and that they do not shortcut your immediate supervisor, other executives, or even peers.

Form your relations based on trust and not based on kissing up to others. And don't forget, "Trust is givable".

Be part of several networks such as other departments, affiliated companies, suppliers and providers. This shall give you a greater and wider vision on your organization, its system and / or its market place.

Avoid making or extending gossips. Be a good listener, but do not take an active role in gossips.

Remember: "first we try, then we trust". Unless you do not try and trust, nobody will do that for you. Gaining others' trust and your projection of genuine good intentions are the key elements in playing "Good" Office Politics.