

Politically Speaking: How to Handle Office Politics

In a Robert Half survey, more than half (56 percent) of workers interviewed said getting involved in office politics is at least somewhat necessary to advance their careers.

Still, professionals wading into political waters need to know how to handle it right. The key to navigating office politics is to be an office diplomat who remains aware of political undercurrents without playing petty games that can damage reputations and working relationships. Following are tips on navigating office politics with finesse:

Don't go negative. Here's a simple rule that can save you significant stress: Never say anything about your boss or colleagues that you wouldn't say directly to them. Slinging mud behind someone's back only makes you look bad. Leave the smear campaigns for the professional politicians.

Stay true to yourself. Some workplaces have no shortage of unsavory characters roaming the halls, from glory hogs and gossip hounds to saboteurs and kiss-ups. Don't sink to their level. Integrity is a top trait sought in future leaders. Doing anything to "win" in the short-term is often a losing proposition in the long run. Prove yourself to be an ethical team player guided by a core set of values.

Be a man or woman of the people. Lobby for the respect and trust of all your colleagues, not just the perceived power players. Build alliances by sharing credit for successes, delivering on promises and following both written and unspoken protocol. Observe people's different work styles, priorities and communication preferences — and be willing to subtly adapt your approach accordingly. You never know whose endorsement could help you down the line.

Practice savvy self-promotion. There's a way to raise your visibility and get the credit you deserve without behaving like a blustering braggart. Tactfully toot your own horn by periodically apprising your supervisor of recent successes. Directly tie your contributions to the positive effects they've had on the bottom line. Thinking in terms of cost savings achieved and revenue generated conveys a results-oriented attitude, which will help you throughout your career.

Accountemps is the world's first and largest temporary staffing service specializing in the placement of accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. The company has offices worldwide and offers online job search services at www.accountemps.com.