



CUTTINGS

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Positive Organisation Politics

Do you find the above headline a little strange? If so, you are in the majority of people working in organisations today. In numerous research projects people position organisational politics in the negative and claim that it has a major downward influence on staff morale, productivity and profitability. Findings also indicate that negative political behaviour is experienced in almost all organisations. Some organisations even encourage negative politicking by implementing processes that cause internal competition for resources, budgets, recognition, etc..

However, in its positive form politics can be necessary to get things done and to achieve success for both the individual and the organisation. Research at Roffey Park has identified how politics can be used constructively, and why – and how – organisations should encourage its use.

Welcome to the real world

Reporting in Director Magazine researchers identified that 45 percent of people claimed to have gained power and influence as a result of politics; 70 percent have suffered as a result of politics; 49 percent think that politics is on the increase; 48 percent think politics impacts negatively on profits with several people leaving organis-

ations because they felt that politics was damaging the business interests.

One person responded that the worst politicking they had seen was in an 18 person organisation! If you want lots of examples of the political games that people play, then look at the website www.politicsatwork.com.

The real world is that politics is a fact of life in organisations. As researcher Linda Holbeche says: "People will deploy political skills and use their power and influence to enhance or protect their interests." Interestingly, those constructive protagonists who use politics to achieve a beneficial outcome for others as well as themselves are more likely to be seen to have strategic, influence or leadership skills.

So if there are few organisations where political behaviour is not seen on a daily basis; that this political behaviour has a major impact on people's careers, individual stress levels, motivation, productivity (etc), and, it also has an impact on customer satisfaction and shareholder returns, this is sufficient justification to not ignore it or – like the literature often suggests – 'how to cope with ...', 'how to avoid ...', 'how to get even', or even worse! What is needed is an approach to the subject in order to respond that

responds to the problem and creates the positive effect, rather than reinforcing the negatives.

Positive organisation politics

Helping people to see the different perspectives of political actions can help them engage in effective networking, lobbying and the like rather than seeing these as negatives. Further training in influencing, communications and in being well informed and well known will then help people to develop the skills to be able to pursue own and organisational goals in tandem whilst also being politically aware.

Company politics does not have to be about hidden agendas, internal rivals, manoeuvring for power, blame culture and lack of trust. With the appropriate skill and a congruence of personal and organisational goals, positive organisational politics provides the real foundation for competitive advantage.

The Power of Constructive Politics, Linda Holbeche, Roffey Park
Backstabbing, mistrust, stolen ideas, blame, scapegoats, Director Magazine
Organisational politics is about to go positive, David Bancroft-Turner and Don Morley, Training Journal
For more on Political Intelligence™ go to www.3D-training.co.uk

Receiving Catastrophic News

In *Cuttings 61* I quoted Judith Glazer on delivering bad news. At the same time, the excellent CorporateCoach newsletter had a lead article on the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Her famous model, commonly known as the grieving cycle, was developed around terminally ill people receiving catastrophic news – effectively the stages of development that are needed before grieving can begin.

This makes the model very relevant for some of its common uses in

managing change – especially in the handling of redundancies, take-over, mergers, reorganisations and closures.

I recall my own learning when first encountering the Kübler-Ross model was the realisation that our natural responses to help the 'patient' through the stages are often counter-productive; e.g. when someone is in denial providing them with more and more data causes more denial – allowing them time to allow the change to sink in is a more effective approach.

The use of the model is in helping people to move more quickly through the stages to dealing with the situation.

To remind you (or inform you) of the 5 stages, they are:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

CorporateCoach newsletter
On Grief and Grieving, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

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Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations ...

- ✂ “Dreams pass into the reality of action. From the actions stems the dream again; and this interdependence produces the highest form of living.” *Anais Nin*
- ✂ “Don't be blinded to the good things obscured by the trouble spots. They could be the way to the future.” *Automotive Design and Production*
- ✂ “There are people who, instead of listening to what is being said to them, are already listening to what they are going to say themselves.” *Albert Guinon*
- ✂ “No man ever listened himself out of a job.” *Calvin Coolidge*
- ✂ “The question is not whether we will die, but how we will live.” *Joan Borysenko*
- ✂ “The power to question is the basis of all human progress.” *Indira Gandhi*
- ✂ “Every subconsciously deliberate mistake is a successful discourse” *Jacques Lacan*
- ✂ “Nothing shapes our lives so much as the questions we ask, refuse to ask, or never think of asking. The question is the helmsman of consciousness. The questions we ask determine whether we will be superficial or profound, acceptors of the status quo or searchers. The difference between Einstein and Hitler depends on the questions they asked. What you ask is who you are. What you find depends on what you search for.” *Sam Keen*
- ✂ “The purpose of life is not to win. The purpose of life is to grow and to share. And when you come to look back on all that you have done in life, you will get more satisfaction from the pleasure you have brought to other people's lives than you will from times that you outdid and you defeated them.” *Harold Kushner*
- ✂ ““He pretends to be better at what he does than he is. I prefer people who are better at what they do than what they think they are” *William Gibson*

And a seasonal one to celebrate the World Cup from Bob Paisley, one of the greatest British football managers:

- ✂ “If you're in the penalty area and don't know what to do with the ball, put it in the net and we'll discuss the options later.”

Appreciative Intelligence

When the Hubble Space Telescope was first used in 1990, blurry images caused by a flawed mirror were all that came back to Earth. A traumatic outcome for NASA. Nobody could see how to fix the problem. Except for then-NASA director Charles Pellerin. He not only had insight on how to solve the problem but found the funding and resources to repair the telescope.

What gave Pellerin the edge over the dozens of other rocket scientists at NASA who had high IQs and world-class technical knowledge? His mind perceived reality differently. He reframed the situation as an unfinished project, not a failed one. He saw how that positive future could happen as the result of technical solutions — repairs performed by a astronauts — that were possible with a rearrangement of funding and resources that already existed. By reassessing the situation, recognising the potential and envisioning the repaired telescope, he was able to help orchestrate the unfolding of events that changed the future.

Pellerin possessed appreciative intelligence — the capability of perceiving the inherent generative potential within a situation at hand. Put simply, appreciative intelligence is the ability to see the oak in the acorn.

Consultants and management everywhere look for what's broken and try to fix it. The problem is this often returns a situation to a minimal level of functioning—not an optimal state of productivity. Rarely does such an approach bring about a great future. Appreciative intelligence builds on strengths and looks to create the future.

Enhancing your appreciative intelligence will not make you happy all the time or keep you from making mistakes. What it can do is to help you to reframe situations so you can solve problems in a creative way. You may begin to see innovative solutions. You might blame yourself and others less and get what you want more. You may find yourself bringing out the best in others; seeing connections you hadn't noticed; and finding, appreciation or fulfilment in new places.

Extracted from Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn, by Tojo Thatchenkery and Carol Metzker (Berrett-Koehler, 2006)

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Internal Consulting Skills –focusing on consulting and interpersonal skills for internal consultants.

London, UK: 23-24 November

Focus on Influence –developing interpersonal skills, reflection, insight, responsibility and flexibility in achieving goals with others.

Netherlands (English language):

12-15 September; 21-24 November

Belgium (Dutch language):

3-6 October

Igniting Creativity for Workplace Excellence

Dubai: 24-28 June

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