



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

LSA Global | White Paper



The exact expertise to ignite and sustain performance™

Are Politics Helping or Hurting You and Your Company?

How to use "high-integrity" politics to succeed.

Each business day, a corporate version of "survival of the fittest" is played out. Power plays, turf battles, deception, and sabotage block individuals' career progress and threaten companies' resources and results.

Being Organizationally Savvy means never having to say, "I didn't see it coming."

It also means achieving career success, maximizing team impact, and protecting your company's reputation and bottom line. How? - By utilizing ethical but street-smart strategies for navigating corporate politics to gain "impact with integrity."

We often hear about careers being derailed or people not being executive or leadership "material." When we dig deeper, we often find personal and company "politics" as the culprit. Based upon our experience, we have identified Organizational and Political Savvy as one of the core competencies for successful leaders in over the next decade.

Leaders with strong organizational savvy are good stewards of their company's resources and reputation. They provide this stewardship by employing three main skill sets:

1. Identifying and diminishing the impact of overly political individuals.

Overly Political leaders consistently put their self-interest above the company's interests and look at business activities with the question, "What can I get away with?" To achieve personal agendas, they often develop abilities to control and distort information, and mislead the company in a variety of ways.

2. Identifying and elevating competent leaders who possess integrity and the right core values.

A critical mass of leaders in positions of power will move the organization closer to a meritocracy of ideas and people. Those individuals are guided by the questions, "What is the right thing to do?" And, "What is in the best interest of the company and its customers?"

3. Reducing dysfunctional political behavior throughout the enterprise.

Teams have a finite amount of time, energy, and items on which they can focus. Certain political behaviors waste a team's time and energy, divert the focus to the wrong things, and lead to decisions based on inaccurate information.

The lack of these key skills and overly political leaders can cause problems.



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The Impact of Overly Political Leaders on You and Your Organization

Unfortunately, the negative influence of Overly Political leaders rises with their astuteness about corporate politics and human nature. Their ability to ingratiate themselves with powerful individuals allows them access and opportunity to manage the airwaves—send messages early and often to achieve their objectives.

That further enables them to create the “halo effect” for themselves, while taking undeserved credit, blaming others, and tarnishing reputations when it furthers their interests. If the Overly Political leader gets into power or a pocket of power in an organization, he or she often will establish control over information. A situation called a “closed shop.”

Characteristics of the closed shop

The leader of a closed shop has a vested interest in controlling access to his or her team and the information going to people outside the team. Most recent corporate scandals illustrate aspects of the closed shop, but many more occur on smaller levels. In every case, however, they inhibit innovation, information flow, teamwork, and openness.

If you are observing any of the following at your organization, you are witnessing typical “closed shop” behavior:

- Upper management has a blind spot or hands-off approach to the Overly Political leader.
- The Overly Political leader consolidates power by hurting the careers of direct reports, peers, or consultants who challenge him.
- She guards access to people in her organization.
- He tells direct reports to not communicate or share information with specific other parts of the company.
- When people outside of the team ask for information from direct reports, they're uncomfortable and guarded.
- Direct reports often say, “I need to check with my manager.”
- Team meetings lack candor or real debate, and people learn not to challenge the leader.
- Clear, personal favorites exist on the team.
- Direct reports can get in trouble for being seen talking to someone the Overly Political leader doesn't like or fears.

In our opinion, the establishment of the type of environment listed above works against building a sustainable business required to attract, retain, and develop top talent. To succeed, organizations need “Savvy Leaders.”

The impact of the savvy leader

When savvy leaders get into positions of authority, they try to optimize decision making and foster innovation. They use skills and strategies to ensure the flow of accurate, timely information and useful suggestions from every part of their organizations. In fact, savvy leaders typically use their influence to help their organizations become meritocracies.



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Here are some of the key behaviors that the savvy leader demonstrates:

- 1. Receptivity to feedback and challenge.** Unlike the Overly Political leader's punishment of candor, the savvy leader seeks feedback and rewards people who add value through criticizing or pushing back against ideas.
- 2. Admitting mistakes.** The savvy leader admits mistakes and is accountable for them. That action, plus phrases such as "I didn't know that ""I never looked at it that way "and "You've elevated my thinking in this area "encourage team members to come forward with ideas.
- 3. Changing the risk and rewards equation for candor.** When a savvy leader coaches high-level executives, he says ,“You see that woman on your team who challenges your ideas and decisions whom you refer to as ‘annoying.’ She is your real friend. You see that guy on your team who waits to know your point of view before giving his and never really disagrees with you. He is not your friend.” The savvy leader knows that and delivers consequences accordingly.
- 4. Detecting deception.** To obtain accurate information, a leader needs to be attuned to deceptive practices. That allows a leader to effectively filter and screen for self- serving or misleading information. Here's a few of the most common behavior patterns of deceptive behaviors:
 - over-promising
 - exaggerating
 - lying
 - providing partial or misleading information
 - hiding bad news
 - taking undeserved credit
 - refusing to admit mistakes

Exposing and eliminating closed shops.

In many ways, this is the highest and best use of the savvy skills. The closed shop is potentially so damaging to resources, people ,company reputation, and learning that the sooner the behavior is made transparent and diminished the better. The characteristics of a closed shop stand out in neon to a savvy leader, and he or she may have the power or influence to make changes.

About LSA Global

Since 1995, LSA has helped organizations create and maintain competitive advantages through people. Over 85% of our business comes from repeat clients and our customer satisfaction rating is 97.5%. Our clients tell us that we are different. Our clients tell us that we save them both time and money. Our clients tell us that they appreciate access to experts across many areas.

Our Leadership and Management clients report that we decrease their costs by up to 50%, while helping increase speed-to-productivity by 60% and decrease unwanted attrition by up to 40%.

Our Sales clients confirm that they have grown sales by 40%, increased units sold by 42%, increased average pricing by 12%, and closed over 50% of their pipeline.

Our Project Management clients inform us that, by regularly completing projects that meet or exceed expectations, they have become an anomaly in the world where most projects disappoint or fail.

Our clients succeed in the marketplace through increased revenue, decreased costs, and higher productivity. They maintain that our rigorous assessment, implementation, and measurement capabilities bring them tangible results. As an organization, we are fiercely devoted to supporting their success.



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