

## OFFICE POLITICS - 101

### 1. Office politics is not evil – *the key is its focus*

*Some unscrupulous people use it incorrectly and they should be taught to use it properly. Office politics should be used to forward the goals of the company, your department, and your team. Showing the skill of using office politics to help forward the goals of your company will demonstrate to your professional associates that you are someone who “gets things done”.*

### 2. Workers do work – *be aware of your political position*

*Workers do work. Leaders get work done. If you are seen as someone who does good work, those that get work done will use you to get work done. If you are often passed over while the person that you trained advances, you have just seen politics in action. You may have complained that politics was the reason. If so you would be right. Office politics is a skill to be mastered. Once you learn it you will be able to move forward in your career. Use discussion around this aspect of office politics and others to learn and make others aware so that careers can flourish.*

### 3. Information is power – *understand influential currency*

*Timely information is often the most valued asset anyone ever has. You must learn how to acquire information. This is done by doing favors. When you solve other people’s problems often they will feel obligated to help you in return. Talk to these individuals who are in the position to impart information on you. Ask them about who they know and what they know. Over time a trust will build up between you and valuable information will come your way without much effort. Remember though, that some information must be kept confidential. If people believe that you keep things in strict confidence even more information will come your way. This is how you build an information network. The more information you have access to, the more influence you can gain. The key is to use your information and associated influence to benefit the company, your department, or your team.*

*Know your business. Information is only valuable if you know how to use it. Having a keen knowledge of your customers and your product or service is very important. Knowing those who are most influential in your organization is just as important. Follow these principals and you’re on your way to becoming a person of influence.*

### 4. The virtual secret handshake – *pass this test the first time*

*Recognize the Secret Handshake. When you have excelled and your work is recognized you will get offered the secret handshake. The secret handshake is a test. People that are politically savvy will ask you a question that involves an answer that shows your political awareness. If your answer lacks political awareness then it is known that you are not ready for the big time. Why? Lack of political awareness means that you may say the wrong thing at the wrong time or your response will lack political depth which in turn will hurt your career, the reputation of the organization, and may impact others in a negative manner.*

*Don’t worry though. If you miss the secret handshake the first time it will be extended again if you continue to produce excellent work. Topics 1-3 will prepare you for your shot at being successful with this aspect of office politics. Knowing the business, having information and knowing who the important people are will help you see the conflict or nuance in the question that may hurt or help someone or the business. You must recognize that nuance and respond with an answer that shows you understand and know how to handle the responsibility that comes along with the secret handshake. After you pass the test you will be allowed into the inner circle. Again, be prepared.*

## 5. Disagree by agreeing – **create collaborative “right” ideas**

*When attending a meeting and you find someone saying something that you disagree with, start your reply by saying “I agree with (name the person) when he/she says (state the aspect you agree with)”. Then try to pull others in by saying “But like (another) said (state the more agreeable aspect)”. By the time you state the more agreeable belief it will appear like you agreed with everyone in the room. Doing this creates conversational synergy in the room and as a tool it transitions not so poignant ideas into stronger ones. Since you’ve included a part of the less agreeable point of one person and combined it with the better option the first person will appreciate that you didn’t point out the faults in their argument by highlighting the positive aspects of their thinking. Consequently, in the future that same person may return the favor by applying the same technique toward one of your ideas; that’s when disagreeing by agreeing has its payoff.*

## 6. Be prepared to speak publicly- **transform minds with words**

*If you can’t speak clearly and concisely people will become unsure of your meaning and doubt your ability to communicate. Toastmasters International is an invaluable local resource and has an excellent training program. The program provides you with the opportunity to practice your public speaking and leadership skills in a non-threatening environment alongside people who want to improve just as much as you. Solid public speaking abilities separate the real communicators from the pretenders. Check into Toastmasters. If you have any questions, email Gregory Allen (Toastmasters Competent Communicator – CTM) at [gallen@prologis.com](mailto:gallen@prologis.com)*

## 7. Compliments will get you everywhere – **recognize achievement**

*Compliments should be used to break the ice with those you don’t know or more specifically those who can have influence over future learning and career opportunities. When you give a compliment not only do you reveal a bit about yourself but you demonstrate that you are aware of other’s hard work and things they consider important. A complement brings down a person’s guard and creates an opening so that you can begin a conversation. Appropriate compliments range from commenting on a person’s dress to specific aspects of their professionalism that you admire, to an example having to do with how they demonstrated strength of character in a given situation. Be sure that your comments are short and to the point. Add making appropriate compliments to your professional toolkit. You’ll find that more people pay real attention to you if they think you are paying close attention to them.*

## 8. Gaining expert influence – **questions with depth show range**

*The fastest way to gain expert influence is to ask great questions. Great questions show that you fully understand the issue; you understand the potential problems and the potential benefits. Remember it must be a thoughtful question that provides a significant amount of information in the question. Write down a question that you will ask a day before the meeting. Practice saying it. Listen to how it sounds. Make sure that you sound confident asking the question and most importantly – **know the answer before you ask***

*Example – Michael: “Doug I agree with you. You’re right, but how will the process change in Europe impact global reports if the similar process in Japan, China, and Mexico are not changed?” Notice the agree by disagreeing bridge and how the question shows depth that provides an opportunity for more discussion – plus the question shows Michael’s understanding of the subject matter’s impact?*

## 9. Practice, practice, practice – *build on your political sensibilities*

Office politics is simply a skill that we all can have. To gain this skill you have to know what it is, how to identify it when you see it, and how to respond the right way to it. If you are unsure about where to begin, simply watch for the secret handshake. In meetings, watch which people are talking and which are asking those terrific questions. Be cognizant of those who are speaking just to hear themselves speak versus those whose words and statements have impact, depth, and promote thought. Watch as people agree when they disagree. Watch when people compliment others. Soon you'll find yourself participating. Expect that you will make mistakes along the way. Those who know office politics will see that you are trying to learn and will make an effort to help you.

Begin your journey by reading Kathleen Reardon's *"The Secret Handshake: Mastering the Politics of the Business Inner Circle"*