

Politician or Diplomat? There is a Difference

By Accountemps

If you think steering clear of office politics is good for your career, think again. More than seven in 10 (71 per cent) of workers polled for a [recent Robert Half survey](#) said involvement in office politics is at least somewhat necessary to get ahead in business.

No, this doesn't mean inserting yourself into sticky situations that put you at risk of compromising your working relationships or reputation. But there are some strategies for learning how to be an effective "workplace diplomat," so you can better navigate the complexities of your office environment – without getting mired in any political muck. Here are a few:

- **Build a broad coalition of support.** Because you never know whose endorsement or vote of confidence could benefit your career in the future, lobby for the respect and trust of all your colleagues – not just the top brass at your organization. Two basic but effective ways to build strong alliances with coworkers are sharing credit for successes and delivering on your promises.
- **Don't gossip or mudsling.** Talking behind a coworker's back is a surefire way to earn a reputation as someone who doesn't consider the feelings of others and perhaps can't be trusted. Even if you know that some unflattering information you're sharing about someone is true, think hard about whether you should be passing it along – and what you stand to lose if others find out you were the source.

Also, openly criticizing a colleague in the workplace because you're frustrated about something that person said or did is likely to backfire, putting the spotlight on your poor reaction rather than the deed itself. If you're upset, wait until after you've calmed down to express your concerns to your colleague. Depending on the situation, consider discussing the matter behind closed doors, with your boss or an HR representative present, so the issue can be resolved appropriately and without involving the entire department.

- **Avoid polarizing debates.** While you're at work, it's only natural to have conversations with your colleagues that aren't about business. Strive to keep them on friendly ground. Intense discussions about hot-button topics (such as real-world politics or other current events that may incite controversy) can generate unnecessary ill will among coworkers. When faced with potentially uncomfortable non-work conversations at the office, proceed with caution or politely decline to weigh in on an issue altogether.
- **Stay true to your values.** Being an effective office diplomat means recognizing how your actions and interactions in the workplace can quickly enhance or erode your reputation and credibility. Don't play underhanded games or step on others' toes so you can rise through the ranks. And avoid close association with people who will do anything to "win" in business. Staying attuned to the political undercurrents at your office is wise, but it doesn't mean you have to add to them.

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