

Corporate Politics 101



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Corporate Politics 101

- Overview

- What is corporate politics?
- How does it apply to/in an IT environment?
- How can we use it to our benefit?

Corporate Politics is:

- 1 the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing government policy
- 3 competition between interest groups or individuals for power and leadership
- 5 the total complex of relations between people in society

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary



Corporate Politics is not:

- The involvement of corporations in politics
- Just for managers
- Survivor
- Dilbert



The Corporation

- Since Corporate Politics involves how you relate to other people, let's examine a matrix, based on:
 - your position in the organization
 - the positions of the people you're interacting with in the organization

The Corporation

	Y O U		
	Entry Level Programmer or DBA	Senior Technical Position	IT Management
Subordinates			
Peers			
Superiors			

The Corporation

- Assumptions:
 - All of the people involved work for the same company
 - Permutations of the principles of corporate politics apply to:
 - Sales scenarios
 - Contractors

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Things you need to know because you really are starting out
- General principles that will be valid for your entire corporate career
- Emphasis on being productive and getting along with other people, not with formal power or management

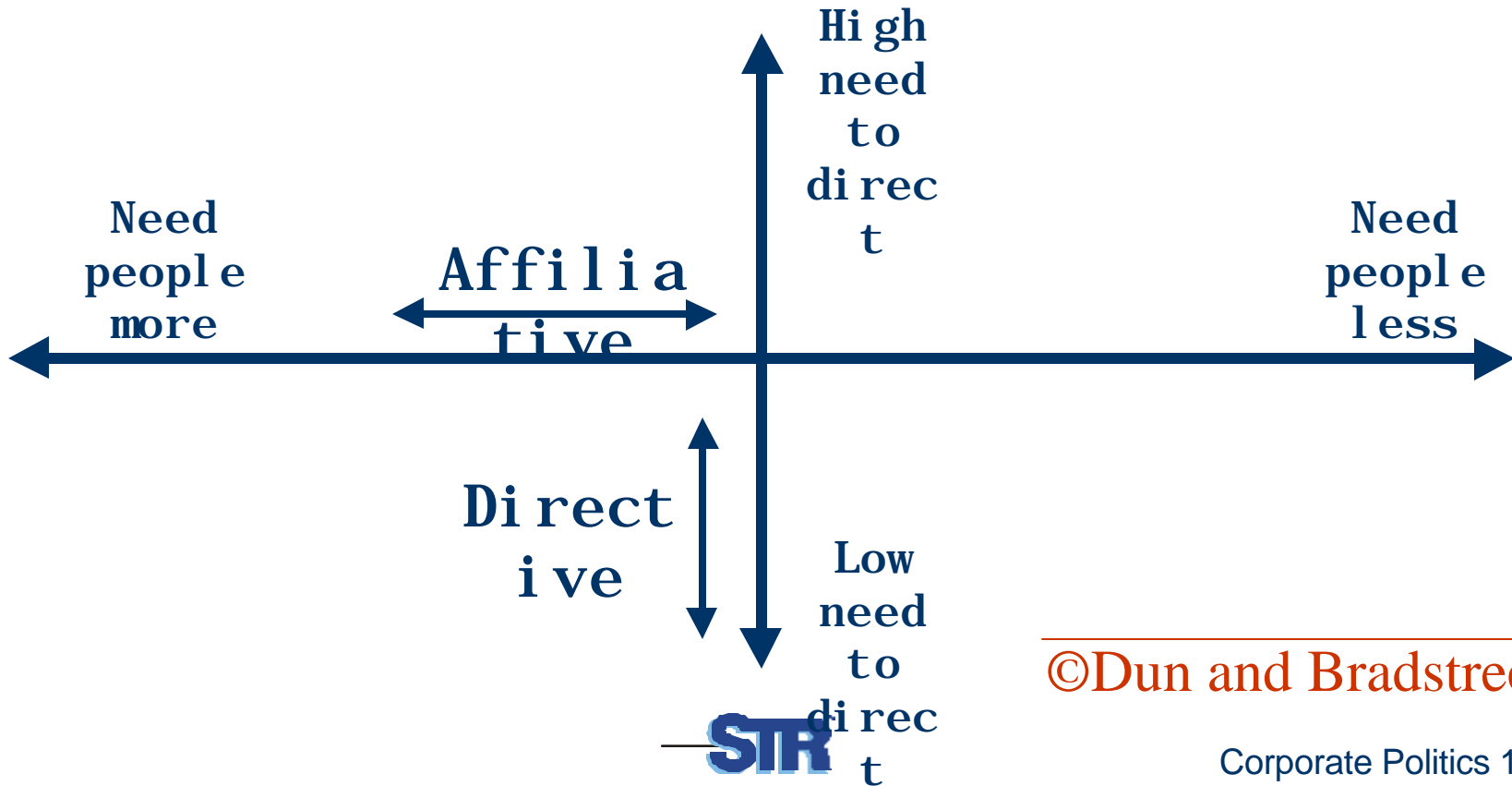
Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Know how to interact with your peers
- Know yourself
- “Quadrant-based” personality tests
 - What is your personality type/working style?
 - How do you relate to other personality types?
 - What type of IT job are you best suited for?
 - The Theriault DBA Test (®)

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	



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Corporate Politics 101

Entry Level

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- Meyers-Briggs Personality Test/Type Indicator (MBTI)

I/E	N/S	F/T	J/P
Introverted/ Extroverted	iNtuitive/ Sensing	Feeling/ Thinking	Judging/ Perceiving

- 4-letter Meyers-Briggs type predicts:
 - Communication styles , problem-solving approach, learning styles, conflict management, etc

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Your subordinates
 - What subordinates?

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Your peers
 - In your division/group
 - In other divisions/groups
 - With the same or different job descriptions
- Interesting Observation:
 - Corporate Organization is reflected in the corporation's web site

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Your superiors
 - More senior programmers/DBAs
 - Your boss
 - Your boss's boss
- Communications
 - Open door policy
 - Tierstein's Rule for Life #1
 - Mushroom Theory of Management

Entry Level

	YOU
	Entry Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Know when to get out
 - Project is a “death march”
 - Environment doomed to be disagreeable
- Rules:

Bluntness

Sarcasm

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Corporate politics comes into play, as you assume some management responsibilities
 - Ignorance is not bliss
 - Corporate Politics is a fact of life
- Many of the same principles apply to subordinates, peers, and superiors

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Formal vs Informal Power
- Formal Power (conferred by the organization)
 - Position power
 - Reward power
 - Coercive power

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Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Formal vs Informal Power
- Informal Power (earned, not conferred)
 - Expert power
 - Friendship power
 - Presence power

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Deadlines - Learn to differentiate between fake and real deadlines
 - A real deadline is one which is determined by outside, real-life forces.
 - A “fake” deadline is one instituted by management, or previously agreed to by the implementation team

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Real Deadlines

- Y2K
- You need to get the rocket turned around by midnight, March 15, or it will crash into the sun.
 - Case history: In September 1999, a rocket crashed into the surface of Mars because of a programming error that had been detected but could not be fixed in time.
- Year-end, period-end reports

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- “Fake” Deadlines
 - Your manager promised his/her manager, who promised his/her manager
 - Organizational pressures only (not real-world)

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Fuzzy Deadlines – Some real-life components, usually tempered by financial concerns
 - Tax software/fixes for the next fiscal year
 - The new system replaces a legacy application run by a service bureau. The contract with the service bureau expires on July 31. There is no money allocated for a new contract.

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Real Deadlines that look fake
 - Fiat: You need to finish this software by March 13.
 - Subtext: Or else we'll run out of money.
 - Explanation: Mushroom Theory of Management

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Real Deadlines that look fuzzy
 - You need to finish this software by March 13.
 - Question: The client has lots of money and no pressing need. Why can't we go back?
 - Answer:
 - Loss of credibility
 - Bureaucracy, eg Congressional funding

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Mentoring
 - Both formal and informal power are involved

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Get visibility
 - Get on a new project, using new technology, that is critical to the company's success
 - How?
 - Tierstein's Rule for Life #2
 - Have the project succeed

Mid-Level

	YOU
	Mid-Level
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Learn to recognize:
 - “Never make any decision you can avoid making.”



Manager

	Y O U
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Contractors/Consultants

- Some subordinates and peers may actually be contractors not employees
 - Special concern: non-shared goals
- Seagull Theory of Using Consultants
 - Benign version
 - Street version

Manager

	YOU
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	



obscure pun coming up

Manager

	YOU
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Original saying (from the 17th [?] century):
 - “Le roi, c’est moi.” (French)
 - “But I’m the king!” (free translation)
- Corporate Politics adaptation:
 - Le roi, c’est ROI. (“ROI rules!”)
 - ROI = Return on Investment



Manager

	YOU
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Return on Investment:
 - Amount of time to recover investment
 - E-commerce business plan: “4-years to profitability”
 - Percentage return on investment

Manager

	Y O U
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- ROI – how is it quantifiable?
 - Replace outsourced (service bureau/ASP) system with custom in-house system
 - Monthly costs vs costs to develop and maintain
 - Acquire new software development tool
 - Acquisition and start-up costs vs reduced expenditures over the product life cycle

Manager

	Y O U
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- ROI Examples

- Investment in a data warehouse/data mart

- Costs to develop and maintain vs strategic and tactical advantages

Manager

	YOU
	Manager
Subordinates	
Peers	
Superiors	

- Types of decision making
 - Vote
 - Consensus
 - Leader-directed
- When to use each method



Corporate Politics

- Why didn't they teach me this in school?
- They do teach it
 - American Management Association
 - Dun & Bradstreet Seminars
- They just don't call it "corporate politics"
 - interpersonal skills, management
 - team building, coaching skills, negotiation

Corporate Politics - Summary

- Learn it
- Use it
- Any questions?

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About the Author

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