



Office Politics and Backstabbing: An Impact on Employees Performance

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Abstract

It is a fact that backstabbing is dangerous because in some situations we may lose a good career development opportunity or even it ruined our career in that particular organization.

So, we firmly believe that one need to prepare a strategy to deal with politics and backstabbing by applying a blanket protection strategy in advance.

If we are developing a career in a corporate environment, the question is not if will experience office politics and backstabbing attempts. It is just a matter of when this will happen. This paper explores together how to best defend ourself against office politics and backstabbing.

Keywords: Professionalism, Trust, Corporate Environment, Backstabbing, Politics, Stress, Goals, Friendship, Career Opportunity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Office agreed is a tricky place to forge friendship as one moment you are threading on thin ice, and on the other sharing like a soulmate. It is a place where a colleague's promotion can make you jealous, thoughtful or even spiteful. Admits Manmeet Ahluwalia, marketing head with an online travel company, "our work schedules are such that we end up spending more of the day in office. In such a situation forging friendship with immediate colleagues is but natural." Explains senior clinical psychologist **Dr. Bhavna Barmi**, "Friendship entails a sense of intimacy and interdependence based on common goals and interests. Therefore, people relating closely at work are bound to develop friendship. Besides, it fosters a sense of competition and camaraderie as well."

Gopika Misra, content manager with an online travel company, too feels the same way. "If we have friends in different departments it would be smooth sailing, but if it a reporting relationship or we have regular work dealings, stress (one major factor of stress at workplace is due to political games played by the employees of the organization) would creep in," she opines.

Dr. Bhavna sheds more light on this apparent friendship between colleagues. She says, "it is imperative to consider that lack of trust among employees, an extremely competitive work environment, backstabbing and sabotage, undermines common goals and hampers team spirit."

2. BACKSTABBING : ITS MEANING

In real life, things are different. Even more so when there is something at stake. In an office environment, some people choose to get ahead by any or by almost any means. This is how backstabbing comes into the picture.

It refers to actions of other people that are done behind our back and which are directed against us. Backstabbing is dangerous because most of the time we don't know something is happening, until it is too late. The damage is done and we get in a reactive mode, i.e. we need to manage the outcome.

For example: A colleague who acts friendly in face to face interaction may undermine your position behind your back with the boss or colleagues. He may take credit of the work done by you or present your idea in front of the boss before you do it, or the person whom you consider your good friend turn out to be your fierce enemy.

3. WHY BACKSTABBING WORTH WORRYING

It is a fact that backstabbing is dangerous because in some situations we may lose a good career development opportunity or even it ruined our career in that particular organization.

So, we firmly believe that one need to prepare a strategy to deal with politics and backstabbing by applying a blanket protection strategy in advance.

4. HOW CAN WE APPLY BLANKET PROTECTION STRATEGY?

Firstly, identify the key influencers in your organization and make productive relations with them. But make sure that they should know that you do your job very well consistently. Then, it would be ideal to ensure the support of more than one key influencer by understanding their agenda within the company and supporting them to achieve their goals.

- do extra work in your job.
- volunteer yourself for important projects.
- identify an opportunity and take proactive actions.

When you actually support people in achieving their goals they usually reciprocate and when the backstabber initiates actions against you, such influencers are less receptive.

Try to get the influencers support on your side, if you do have issues in the organization and by doing so, a backstabber would have a hard time to put you in bad light.

5. STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE ORGANIZATION

You should keep yourself away from office gossips but still need to be in touch with what is going on in the organization as to make yourself informed about any backstabbing attempt.

6. EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

The research highlighted that increased political behaviour undermines trust between people at all levels in organisations, a mistrust caused by people creating their own hidden agendas and being encouraged to compete with one another rather than work collaboratively.

Smith(2007), The negative side of office politics:

- Is the fight factor where employees respond by fighting when faced with a threatening experience.
- Fighting does not resolve conflict but rather heighten the negativity and animosity.
- The more angry employees become, the further they get away from the solution to their conflicts. The ugly side of politics indulges in distrust, dishonesty and a counterproductive work environment.

7. STEPS TO TAKE WHEN BACKSTABBED

When surprisingly we face backstabbing attempt, here are few tips to deal with them:

1. We should calm down: Don't react and don't take decisions when nervous.
2. We should gather as much information as possible and assess the whole situation.
3. We should select your battle: Sometimes it is better not to react at all, as it will create greater damage to us. Other times fight fiercely to defend ourself, make conscious choice.
4. We should decide our action quickly: If we decide for action, do it quickly. Or if there is any company program designed to help employees against abuse, follow the procedure of the company.
5. We should take a constructive approach: Our objective is not to engage in endless fights but to solve the problem to minimize damage. So, we should take most constructive approach.
6. We should learn your lesson: Try to learn something from the experience and move on.

8. FINAL CONSIDERATION

In own opinion your approaches are different against backstabbing in a corporate environment versus your private life.

For example: In private life, we throughout the backstabber out of our life, but we can't get this luxury in our professional life as we have to work with such kind of persons continuously.

As they say "business is business." We totally disagree with the "business is business" approach. We believe that we are human beings first. But the reality of working place is that we need to smile, clarify situation, establish a decision on how we will deal with each other in the future and move on.

Remember, behaving professionally and helping people will protect we from backstabbing and office politics (Tushman," politics refers to the structure and process of the use of authority and power to affect definition of goals, directions and the other major parameters of the organization. Decisions are not made in a rational or formal way but rather through compromise, accommodation and bargaining.") to some extent.

9. OBJECTIVES

An attempt has been made to explore the understanding on the following aspects of backstabbing.

1. Office Politics
2. Friendship with colleagues
3. Professionalism
4. Backstabbers
5. Trust
6. Stress

10. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Office politics and backstabbing is an important issue faced by the employees of any organization. The reason behind this might be jealousy, grabbing new opportunities, getting promotions by showing others work as yours. But still you can tackle this situation of backstabbing by the way like, helping your colleagues, behaving professionally, getting support from the leaders by helping them in their important projects and they would definitely reciprocate in terms of solving your issues within the organization.

Robbins et al. (2009: 358) concur with **Brenner (2005)** in that they view organizational politics as any illegitimate political behaviour such as sabotaging and whistle blowing that violate the implied rules within the organization, thus sabotaging and whistle blowing implies the dirty tricks eluded by **Brenner (2005)**.

Drory and Romm, "Organizational politics refers to intentional behaviours that are designed to enhance or protect a person's influence and self interest."

The Greek philosopher Aristotle noted in his book, "politics" that man is, by nature, a political animal. So it is no surprise that political animals of all shapes and sizes can be found roaming around the office.

As careers author Erin Burt states, "Avoiding (office) politics altogether can be deadly for your career. Every workplace has an intricate system of power and you can –and should- work it ethically to your best advantage."

Miles has included self- interest concept in defining politics. He says that,

"Organizational politics is the process whereby individuals or groups use whatever power they can amass to influence organizational decisions in the direction of their own interest."

"It may be best to ignore impulses that tell you that you are the victim of office politics." Says lead author **Prof. Karl Aquino**.

Robbins et al. (2009: 363) argued that office politics can become too much to handle, decreased job satisfaction, increased anxiety, stress (it is basically the impact of one object on another) and reduced performance.

Office politics is a display of greed, power and pushing all limits in an attempt to get ahead. We can say that you get into office politics from day one. Don't think that it can't happen to you.

The negative organisational politics, as **Mc- Shane and Glinow (2000: 383)** viewed, represents an attempt by organisation members to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives. **Tan (2009)** posited that negative office politics can reduce productivity, diminish trust levels, negatively affect morale and increase internal conflict.

Tan (2009) also provided the following as examples of negative politics;

- Back stabbing and lack of team spirit;
- Pushing the blame on to others and finger pointing;
- Plenty of fault-finding and lame excuses for self-justification;
- Favouritism and preferences based on personality; and
- Accommodating individuals who do not deliver results.

The right approach is not to avoid the politics but to take part in positive ways for good ends.

But keep the following things in mind:

- Survive the initiation
- Deliver massive value added to the organization.
- Make your manager shine by considering the following points.
 - Align expectations
 - Adapt to your manager's style.
 - Take responsibility for building a sound relationship.
 - Push back wisely
 - Over deliver
- Develop productive relationships across the organization.
- Demonstrate integrity: We can also become a key influencer via leveraging the power of expertise, of integrity, of enthusiasm, of the favours bank we developed while helping others and via applying consistently your influencing skills.
- Take a long-term perspective.
- Build sound partnership with the key influencers.
- Become a key influencer ourself.
- Become a source of enthusiasm and positive energy in our organization.
- Make our choices in terms of ethics.

Selye, who has done considerable research on stress, has viewed stress as the "non- specifically induced changes within a biological system."

One major factor of stress at workplace is due to political games played by the employees of the organization. Politics makes individuals to fail to trust each other.

11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. The present study examines various issues and challenges due to the result of office politics (the Greek Philosopher Aristotle noted in his book, "politics", that man is, by nature, a political animal. So it is no surprise that political animals of all shapes and sizes can be found roaming around the office) faced by an employee in the organization. For this purpose, mainly secondary data has been gathered.

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