

Breaking the corporate politics taboo to get ahead

 By [Michelle Moss](#)

22 Mar 2018

Politics was once a dirty word in business. You did not play politics to get ahead. It was just not done.

Rubbish!

Corporate politics have always been played. The challenge is to play without deceit and duplicity while boosting the business. Of course, smart political players boost themselves as well.

Currently, a corporate politics rethink is underway overseas. International literature confirms it. A similar reassessment is underway in South Africa.

Local indicators include executive search feedback to job candidates that their 'political' skills need attention and growing demand in the executive coaching arena for assistance with this aspect of personal development.



Stalled careers are a key driver.

Long hours and impressive gains should have resulted in career recognition but haven't. The individual then asks, "What more can I do?"

The answer is "Learn to play the game", and that game is corporate politics.

Many newcomers to the game are shamefaced about it.

They confuse politics with 'brown-nosing' and manipulation. They believe good people do not network for self-advantage.

However, a good executive coach will point out that access, visibility and credibility are essential for personal and corporate success.

Good ideas are useless unless they're shared with decision-makers. Access to senior ranks is therefore essential. Once access is gained, the ambitious manager has to be seen as a credible performer making a visible difference.

Credibility is rarely an issue. The go-getter usually has the qualifications and experience, has put in the time and achieved success.

The challenge relates to access and visibility, but first mindsets must change.

This is no problem for those who are aware their career has stalled and change is overdue.

Good coaches also point out that personal values are not compromised by networking and relationship-building. Behaviour might change, ethics remain intact.

Behavioural change helps put a name to developments that were previously anonymous.

Bosses are swamped by data. Often, they don't have time to ask "Who worked on this project?" or "Who led that team?"

By changing behaviour and creating favourable awareness, players make it easier for superiors to remember a face and name.

Once the mindset has been adjusted, it is necessary to identify decision-makers and influencers; external as well as internal. Impress some clients or suppliers and the word may go all the way to the top of your own organisation.

Once identities have been established, relationships can be developed. Often, this is through participation in various initiatives or at certain social occasions.

Take an interest. Get on to the invitation list.

This can be difficult for introverts. They need to become more outgoing. Extroverts face a different challenge. They can come across as pushy and egotistical.

One way forward is to tell a story that subtly conveys the contribution of the ambitious manager without bombast. There may be a humorous pay-off line, but the story-teller is positioned as a key actor.

These techniques involve no play-acting. Superiors are not being deceived. They are being alerted to interesting developments and the impact of new role-players.

Advancement from this base can be impressive. Stalled careers may go into overdrive.

Stellar success like this is not built on a lie. You have to be the real deal to make real progress. Play the political game to win recognition. But remember; real winners always deliver results.

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