

## ***OFFICE POLITICS***



## **INSTRUCTOR GUIDE 4-HOUR COURSE**

**HRDQ<sup>®</sup>**

***OFFICE POLITICS***

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# Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

## Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

## Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.











# Trainer information

## Materials needed

- Student workbooks
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- PowerPoint presentation or overheads
- Slide projector or overhead projector

## Course timing

### Module One: Understanding Office Politics

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Objectives	5
	What is office politics?	5
	The good and bad of politics	10
	Backstabbing	10
	Stealing credit	10
	Dividing and conquering	10
	Manipulation	10
	Retaliation	10
	Real-world application	30
	Lessons learned	15



Reading



Written Exercise













Facilitate



Group Activity

## Course timing

### Module Two: Surviving Office Politics

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	How political are you?	5
	Survey says ...	10
	Ways to make office politics work for you	5
	Success breeds opposition	5
	Rules of the game	5
	Cubicle rules	10
	Friends and co-workers: drawing the line	5
	Recovery strategies	10
	Real-world application	30
	Lessons learned	10



Reading



Written  
Exercise



Facilitate



Group  
Activity

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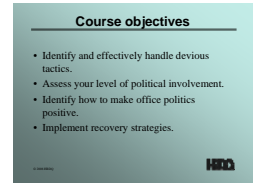
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# Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge of and ability to:

- Identify and effectively handle devious tactics
- Assess your level of political involvement
- Identify how to make office politics positive
- Implement recovery strategies





# ModuleOne



## ***UNDERSTANDING OFFICE POLITICS***

**Opening activity:** Start this segment by placing several pieces of flipchart paper around the room. Give participants sticky notes and ask that they list all the words that come to mind when they hear the phrase "office politics."

After a few minutes, debrief this exercise by asking representatives from various parts of the room to read the list of words that have been generated. Follow this activity with a discussion of what office politics really is. Then ask participants to answer the questions on this page and share their responses with a few people around them.



## What are office politics?

The art of trying to accomplish things in organizations  
Influencing people through means other than position power

Write down your answers to the following questions:

1. How important are tact and poise in today's working environment?
2. How do you handle confidential information that is shared with you at the office?
3. How do you react when your ideas or suggestions face opposition?
4. How important are your working relationships in terms of your career success?

# The good and bad of politics

Good	Bad
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can support grassroots efforts to obtain resources to make changes</li> <li>Can uncover hidden agendas or clarify mixed messages</li> <li>Can assess opinions and feelings in a low-key, nonthreatening way (as opposed to a formal employee survey)</li> <li>Can help people find creative solutions to problems</li> <li>Can help make employees more adaptable to change</li> <li>Can advance career aspirations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can fuel unproductive or downright nasty gossip</li> <li>Can be used as a power trip to pursue personal agendas at others' expense</li> <li>Can provide inaccurate information - grapevine talk may not reflect feelings of the entire organization</li> <li>Can result in lying and deception</li> <li>Can undermine authority</li> <li>Can damage a positive corporate climate</li> </ul>

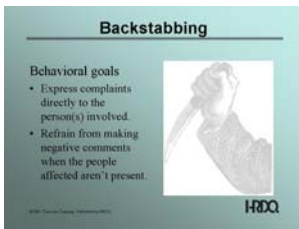


**Transition:** When you hear the phrase "office politics," most people associate it with negative behavior. However, office politics can be beneficial both to individuals and the organization as a whole.

Tie this into the sticky note activity by asking a few participants to divide the sticky note responses into two columns: "good" and "bad." Compare and contrast the two columns, tying the participants' examples into the information given on this page.

If there's time, continue the activity by asking participants for examples of each type from their own experience.

Segue to the next section by explaining that since most people associate office politics with negative behaviors, we'll look at this subject in detail next.



**Transition:** Briefly introduce the five devious tactics with the OHs. Each will be covered in detail in a similar way: with a definition, examples and a chart for possible solutions and behavioral goals. For each tactic, ask participants to come up with possible solutions and behavioral goals that would offset the effects of the tactic.

For example, a **possible solution** to the first example of backstabbing is to talk to your co-worker and tell him you thought your comments were made in confidence, and then go to your boss and explain what you meant.

**Behavioral goal:** Express complaints directly to the person(s) involved, and refrain from making negative comments about people or situations when the people affected aren't present.

# Dealing with devious tactics

## Backstabbing

Backstabbing is an obvious attempt by a fellow employee to ruin your image or career.

### Example

A co-worker complains to you about a difficult project that you are both working on. You express your concern, too, and your co-worker then shares your complaints with your boss.

### Example

During a departmental meeting regarding quality improvement, a co-worker displays an example of your work that contains errors.

### Example

An administrative assistant responsible for typing the budget leaks the information that your department has been granted twice the amount of funding than any other department.

Possible solutions	Behavioral goal

# Dealing with devious tactics

## Stealing credit

Stealing credit is an attempt by another person to pass off your idea or work as their own in order to receive recognition.

### Example

You prepare a report summarizing customer feedback and your boss puts his name on it and sends it to upper management.

### Example

During a team meeting, a co-worker presents an idea as her own that you had previously discussed with her.

### Example

You are working on a project with another person, and she talks about the project to others as if you weren't involved.



The second devious tactic is stealing credit. Probably the most difficult situation is when your boss steals credit for your work.

**Possible solution** to the first example: Talk to your boss and see if there was an honest misunderstanding. Try to have an open conversation about why he did what he did.

**Behavioral goal:** Always put your ideas in writing, even in the draft or brainstorming stage. Carbon Copy management members when you're exchanging ideas via e-mail or voice mail. Also, bring up your ideas at team meetings—especially if there's a "recorder" who tracks input and keeps a permanent record of such interactions.

Possible solutions	Behavioral goal



The third devious tactic is dividing and conquering. These are often passive-aggressive behaviors and can be hard to spot.

**Possible solution** to the first example: Talk to your colleague and express your disappointment at being left out. Get a copy of the meeting notes. Look into group scheduling software so you can be aware of all scheduled activities.

**Behavioral goal:** Actively maintain lines of communication among departments. Share information freely with others so they will reciprocate.

# Dealing with devious tactics

## Dividing and conquering

Dividing and conquering is an attempt to create dissension among team members or departments in order to gain power and control.

### Example

A colleague "forgets" to tell you about an important meeting at which your department should have been represented.

### Example

A team member has been saying different things to different team members about you (the boss) in order to pit groups against each other.

### Example

Your office receptionist purposely withholds information she heard about your biggest customer but shares it with another department.

Possible solutions	Behavioral goal



# Dealing with devious tactics

## Manipulation

Manipulation is an attempt to use emotional blackmail to control you and your actions.

### Example

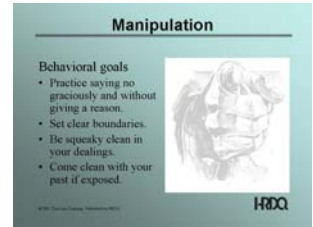
A colleague asks you to stay and work late on her project so she can go watch her son play soccer.

### Example

Your administrative aide found and read your performance appraisal and has threatened to share its contents unless you give her glowing input for her performance appraisal (and you don't believe she deserves it).

### Example

Your boss has promised you a raise if you agree to serve on the social committee, even though you've already said you weren't interested and didn't have time.

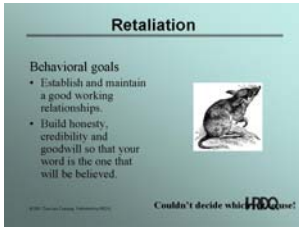


The fourth devious tactic is manipulation. This manifests itself in many forms, running the gamut from mild guilt to serious blackmail.

**Possible solution** to the first example: Just say no. If you caved in and said yes, find a time when she can reciprocate for you.

**Behavioral goal:** Practice saying no graciously and without giving a specific reason. Remember that your time is as valuable as anyone's. Additionally, don't be shy about setting clear boundaries. Work on responding to threats and manipulation by using statements like: "It sounds like you're threatening me. Am I reading that right?" and "I feel uncomfortable with the circumstances we're discussing. I think we need to involve management."

Possible solutions	Behavioral goal



The final devious tactic is retaliation. Again, the consequences range from mild to disastrous.

**Possible solution** to the first example: Be glad you at least heard about it and can take steps to rectify the situation. Talk to your co-worker and boss individually and express your feelings constructively—don't lose control.

**Behavioral goal:** Establish and maintain a good working relationship with your boss; the honesty and credibility you demonstrate and goodwill you build up will ensure that your boss doesn't jump to conclusions.

# Dealing with devious tactics

## Retaliation

Retaliation is an attempt to "get even" with you for real or perceived injustices.

### Example

A co-worker tells your boss that you have been badmouthing him (the boss) even though you haven't.

### Example

The sales manager makes an excessive promise to a client that you must deliver on because you had mentioned some concerns about his department to the CEO.

### Example

Your boss assigns you a task with an impossible deadline because she believes you want her job.

Possible solutions	Behavioral goal

## Real-world application

### Case study

Marsha had been working with the Stanton Corp. for the past six months, serving as both the sales representative and the product development specialist. New project management processes were instituted in Marsha's organization, which allowed her to focus more on product development. Marsha was relieved because she was too swamped to fill both roles for the client. However, shortly after the transition to the new process, Marsha discovered that the new sales representative, Judy, was bad mouthing her to the client. Marsha is aggravated because Judy is making a commission on a client Marsha originally brought to the organization. Additionally, Judy's negative comments about Marsha are weakening the relationship Marsha has with the Stanton Corp. Answer the following questions.

1. What type of devious tactic is Judy using against Marsha?
2. What possible solutions should Marsha consider?
3. What should Marsha's behavioral goal be?

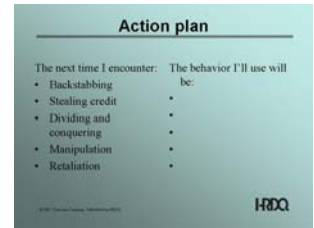
Have participants read through the case study. Then ask them to form small groups and answer the questions. Debrief by getting feedback from various groups. Point out that Judy's behavior falls into the "backstabbing" category (Judy is going behind Marsha's back to make her look bad with the client).

Marsha needs to talk to Judy and tell her that her comments to the client are unprofessional. Marsha should also point out that failing to present a "united front" to the client could result in the customer going elsewhere. This means Judy would lose her commission. Marsha's behavioral goals should be to foster open communication and ask a management member to participate in these discussions.



# Lessons learned

The next time I encounter:	The behavior I'll use will be:
Backstabbing	
Stealing credit	
Dividing and conquering	
Manipulation	
Retaliation	



The final activity for this section is to set behavioral goals that will support the participants' ability to deal with office politics and devious tactics.

Help participants fill in their action plans by listing examples of situations they have encountered or expect to encounter.

Specific behaviors to counteract the devious tactics should be listed in "The Behavior I'll Use Will Be..." section of the action plan. Use the overhead provided for suggested behavioral changes.

