# ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AS A MOTIVATIONAL TOOL FOR EFFECTIVENESS OF EMPLOYEES

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**ABSTRACT:**

*The inevitable and the pervasive thing in the organizations is Organizational Politics. Many people believe that organizational politics is all about misuse of power, hidden agendas and offensive and defensive strategies which alter legitimate flow of information. But it is important to understand that it can be beneficial to the organization if applied positively. Managers can think and apply various political strategies and tactics through which employees can be motivated. This paper tries to highlight how organizational politics if applied in line with code of conduct of the company, enhances the effectiveness of employees by motivating them towards productivity. This paper also highlights how important it is to exercise control over dysfunctional politics to avoid negative consequences.*

*Keywords:* *organizational politics, political strategies, tactics, motivation, effectiveness, productivity, dysfunctional politics, negative consequences.*

## INTRODUCTION:

Organizational politics refers to the pursuit of individual agendas and self-interest in an organization without regard to their effect on the organization's efforts to achieve its goals. Organizational politics are informal, unofficial, and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organization, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives (Brandon & Seldman, 2004; Hochwarter, Witt, & Kacmar, 2000). Pfeffer (1992) defined *politics* as the processes, the actions and the behaviors through which potential power is utilized and realized. Another author (Dubrin, 2001) defined organizational politics as informal approaches to gaining power through means other than merit or luck.

Politics is a part of organizational life. Aristotle wrote that politics stems from a diversity of interests and these different interests need to be aligned. Thus, political behaviors in organizations are unavoidable and can be seen in almost all types of organizations. This is because of two major reasons. First, we need to deal with 'people' in organizations, who are quite diverse in nature and interests, and, second, humans are emotional creatures who are filled with unconscious ambiguity and insecurities. In that sense, one may regard politics as an inevitable force of nature to which we must adapt in order to survive.

Many people believe that a person has to engage in political behavior in order to be successful in the organization. Few others who follow the procedures feel that there is unfair

distribution of resources, rewards and recognition. Such employees will have lower levels of job satisfaction, depression, low productivity, and very less commitment. Such people need to acknowledge that organizational politics can benefit the organization to a large extent.

Organizational politics is a crucial social influence process that can either be functional or dysfunctional to employees and organizations.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand organizational politics in the positive light.
2. To study the challenges faced by managers in handling political behavior at workplace.
3. To suggest few political strategies and tactics to overcome the challenges.
4. To examine how organizational politics can motivate employees and improve their effectiveness.

## METHODOLOGY:

This paper is conceptual in nature. Secondary sources available on the title have been consulted for the development of the concept.

## THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS:

Organizational politics is not inherently bad. The various influence tactics of organizational politics can contribute towards the improvement of personal and organizational interests. But it should always be remembered that the effectiveness of politics lies in maintaining relationships while achieving results, rather than the motive of winning at all costs. Thus, it is vital to pay attention to organizational politics and create the right political landscape.

It is possible to use the political motives of workers and others in an organization to accomplish broader goals and to increase an organization's efficiency.

Politics play a huge role in business, from governing how decisions are made to how employees interact with one another. Politics may directly influence who has the power and determine whether the overall culture of the workplace encourages productivity.

Some of the positive aspects of organizational behavior can be listed as under:

- *Productivity:* Employees who know how to navigate organizational politics are found to be more productivity than their counterparts.

- *Competition:* A healthy organizational politics instigates a competitive spirit throughout the organization which may result in competitive advantage.

- *Leadership:* A candidate if recognized to play suitable politics beneficial for the organization can be selected as a leader who can be given the responsibility of running the organization.

- *Stress management:* A politically skilled organization can successfully employ certain actions that support the feelings of trust, confidence and sincerity that reduce the stress levels in employees.

- *Power:* ethical political strategies may help the individuals to gain power and build the career, which can benefit many people.

- *Adaptation:* appropriate politics in organizations facilitate the process of understanding the organization's vision and objectives, develop teamwork and confidence which helps in fostering organizational change and adaptation process.

- *Efficiency:* organizational politics make the members of the group aware to the fact that they need to work harder to survive and succeed in the organization. This promotes efficiency.

- *Equality:* Constructive political behavior is necessary to create equilibrium in the views of organizational members, by bringing together the dissimilar interests of stakeholders.

- Confidentiality: when indulging in political behavior, it becomes obvious to keep up the secrets. Thus with very less cost and without excess of trouble, confidentiality is maintained.

- *Bargaining:* Successful bargaining is possible in the presence of organizational politics.

- *Learning:* at group level, an open form of politics enhances learning within the organization. It stimulates flexibility and innovativeness in the organization and also allows interconnectedness.

- *Information:* Certain political games by managers can provide as a tool to extract some tricky information which is otherwise resisted.

Apart from the above mentioned benefits several other positive aspects of organizational politics include, better connections and alliances, trust and conformity in employees, motivation

and morale, recognition and status and successful attainment of personal and organizational goals.

## THE CHALLENGES IN HANDLING ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS:

The limited resources in an organization, in general, must be allocated rationally. But the members of the organization may disagree with the way in which the scarce resources are allocated. So they indulge in organizational politics in order to gain the resources by themselves. Some of the political behaviors include bargaining, negotiating, alliances, conflicts resolutions etc.

If these political behaviors are positive and results in a win-win situation for the individual and the organization, it is regarded as functional organizational politics.

Dysfunctional organizational politics is the result of negative political behaviors where members involve in feelings of distrust, insecurity and backstabbing. Dealing with this internal political struggle takes a keen awareness of the landscape, players and rules in which the political game is played.

It is important to be aware of the potentially destructive aspects of organizational politics in order to minimize their negative effect.

The negative aspects of organizational politics are….

- Negative change in the attitude of employees
- Demotivation
- Dysfunctional conflicts
- Harsh display of power
- Unethical behavior
- Back stabbing
- Exerting undue pressure
- Manipulations
- Lower motivation and morale
- High turnover
- Loss of time and effort
- Low performance and productivity
- Increased stress in members

To avoid these negative consequences, leaders should combat political behavior when it is excessive and dysfunctional. The organizations can overcome above mentioned challenges by handling the situation in an effective manner.

Some of the ways in which the challenges of dysfunctional politics can be handled are:

- Provide clear rules for resource allocation
- Managing organizational change by providing free flow of information
- Educating and involving employees
- Supporting team norms and ethical corporate culture
- Having leaders as role models to organizational citizenship
- Goal congruence
- Avoiding favoritism
- Being aware and alert of the political games and the players of it.
- Physical or mental detachment from workplace

Author and consultant Patrick Lencioni recommends the following four steps for overcoming ineffective politics due to turf wars.

1. *Create a thematic goal*. The goal should be something that everyone in the organization can believe in, such as, for a hospital, giving the best care to all patients. This goal should be a single goal, qualitative, time-bound, and shared.

2. *Create a set of defining objectives*. This step should include objectives that everyone agrees will help bring the thematic goal to fruition.

3. *Create a set of ongoing standard operating objectives*. This process should be done within each area so that the best operating standards are developed. These objectives should also be shared across the organization so everyone is aware of them.

4. *Create metrics to measure them*. Measuring whether the standard operating objectives get done is a vital step in the process. Rather than someone else pointing out what isn't working, all the people within the department will have the information necessary to come to this conclusion and correct the problem, because ultimately, everyone in the organization cares about achieving the thematic goal.

## POLITICAL STATEGIES AND TACTICS:

It takes a lot of effort from management's side to interact in a politically charged environment. The initial step is to realize that politics is inevitable in the organizations and we

must ease into it rather that panicking. Then we need to understand the political landscape and start working on it for the benefit of the organization**.**

The following political strategies and tactics can be applied by the organizational members for smooth applicability of organizational politics.

- *Being data driven:* Rely on facts because facts can always disrupt any kind of political agenda by members of organization. Decision making based on facts and proofs can be one of the best tool for apt decisions

- *Being rational:* Giving more emphasis to the factual evidences and logical arguments demonstrated by the employees prove that their requests are reasonable. Actions based on such information are more rational.

- *Help others:* Trust and confidence can be built in employees by helping them. This tactic is helpful because those who receive help will be grateful and will be ready to help back when needed.

- *Consultation:* consultation with the organizational members creates a sense of involvement and generates motivation. Moreover, inputs from many people can help in effective planning and decision making.

- *Agree to disagree:* Certain situations may appear wherein we need to take a harsh decision of disagreement as it is the only apt solution for the problem confronted. Such a disagreement is mandatory even if it is contrary to the beliefs of the organizational members.

- *Exchange:* Life is all about give and take. Thus in organizations the best strategy to adopt is to exchange information, resources and benefits with respect to the requirements and requests of the members. This can boost the morale of employees.

- *Foster alliances:* Any political conflicts can be encountered with the help of alliances. It is one of the way through which we can help each other so that nothing goes beyond the ethical limits of organizational politics.

- *Constantly adjust the approach:* There is no single best solution to all the problems in the organization. Contingency approach plays a crucial role in organizations. Reading the political situation in hand carefully and selecting the best approach for success is essential.

- *Foster relationships:* Looking up for the best interests of all is the strategy to build up relationships among organizational members. Politics in organizations can rip its members apart. Conducting activities and practices that blossom cohesiveness, collaboration and coordination and build strong relationships.

- *Common ground:* Consensus among the employees regarding the plans, activities and decisions is crucial. A common ground where everyone agrees with the situational solution accomplishes trust and security in members. It also creates a peaceful environment in the organization.

Persistent efforts to maintain functional politics in organizations is the best solution possible to overcome the effects of dysfunctional politics.

## ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS: THE MOTIVATIONAL TOOL:

An effective way of dealing with politics is taking it in a positive way. One must try to accept the reality and must concentrate on learning the strategies of development in political manner.

Leaders manage the tensions within groups to enhance team performance and, in turn, organizational effectiveness. To do this, the best managers recognize the psychological underpinnings of office politics and do two things in response: they manage the way they themselves behave, and they are careful about how they motivate others.

*Organizational politics as a motivational tool*

FUNCTIONAL POLITICS → POSITIVE POWER → ENHANCED INVOLVEMENT → IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY → MOTIVATION

Good leaders with their functional political behavior generate a positive power within the organization. Giving employees the power to make decisions, and take necessary actions make them feel involved. By these employee involvement activities, employees become responsible for their actions and start performing strongly. This in turn builds confidence in employees and ultimately results in employee motivation with cohesive goals.

As such, good leaders focus on the bright-side personality characteristics associated with their ability to navigate office politics: social skills, emotional intelligence, and intuition. They

recognize that the more secretive, selfish, hypocritical, hierarchical, and incompetent they appear in the eyes of employees, the more political the organization will become. So they are driven to come across as competent, transparent, approachable and altruistic.

And in motivating their employees to try harder, they avoid pitting employees against one another and instead focus on out-performing common adversaries: the company's competitors. They do this through articulating a meaningful mission — a vision that resonates and motivates people to achieve a collective goal. This keeps the team focused on beating their competitors, rather than each other.

## CONCLUSION:

Organizational politics is the lubrication that oils the organization's internal gears. Apply the proper lubrication and things will work fine. Organizational politics are important since these provide an understanding of the informal processes of conflicts and co-operations in organizations, and their impact on the employees' performance. Proper functional politics if applied in the organization can enhance productivity and profitability of the organization. Negative political behavior in the organization needs to be identified and nullified as soon as possible with the help of political strategies and tactics for the benefit of the organization. The stress, conflict, anxiety, back biting, back stabbing, ambiguity, manipulation, rivalry and unproductivity can be replaced by self-interest, involvement, coordination, cohesiveness , group goals and positivity. Like fire, if organizational politics is tamed properly, it can serve as a powerful motivational tool. The most important aspect of organizational politics is the acceptance that it is impossible to avoid it and being well equipped and prepared for it.

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