

Foxy/donkey guide to organizational politics

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Purpose

For many, an organization's politics are to be avoided or the benefits are misunderstood. Typically, the area is described in negative terms, but using this strategy can reframe it and the individual can identify the potential benefits for both themselves and the organization if they engage with integrity.

Description

This model has two dimensions relating, first, to the skills of 'reading' the politics of an organization and, second, to the skills or behaviours an individual brings to these situations that may predispose them to either act with integrity or play psychological games.

Process

In this exercise, help the individual to work out where they are on the model presented in Figure 10 by just showing the axis and four blank quadrants. Such is the closeness of these behaviours that it is not unusual for an individual to put themselves between two or more quadrants. Then explain the matrix in more detail. Do they recognize the animals? Do they sometimes move into the fox or donkey quadrants? Can they identify an owl who could be a good role model?

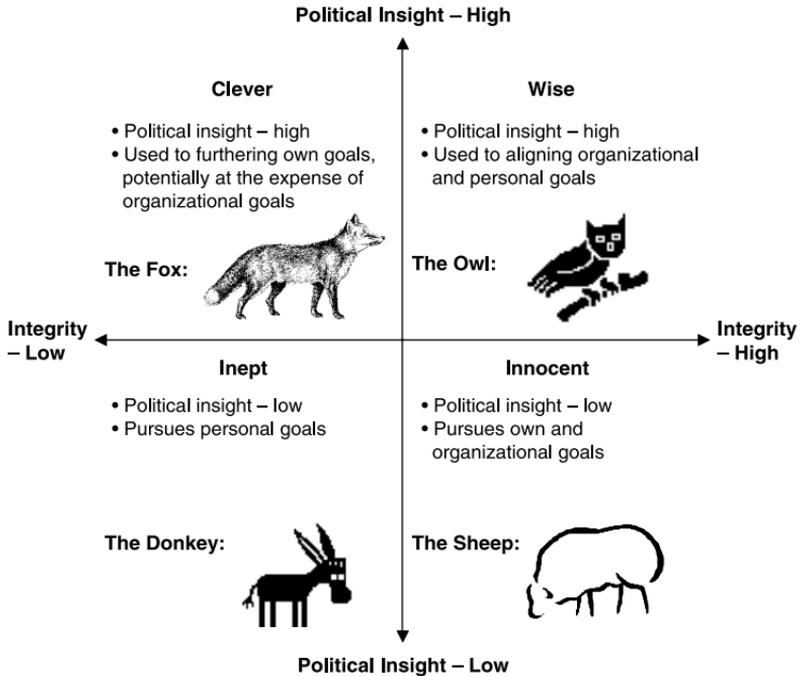


Figure 10 Organization politics exercise

Identify the ‘wise’ behaviours

The good news is that constructive and positive behaviours can be learned. Behaviours and strategies to develop include:

1 Influence

- Form ‘win-win’ alliances with others by aligning goals and demonstrating how a strategy can be mutually advantageous.
- Work with other internal resources to maximise the effectiveness of a business area.

2 Building relationships

- Do not make assumptions about how others may be thinking or feeling. Ask open questions to understand issues from another person’s perspective.

- Create a climate of trust – be open yourself by expressing your own views and beliefs, which will encourage others to be open and honest.
- Demonstrate active listening by checking and summarizing what you've heard.

3 Being seen and heard

Factors to be seen

- Create a profile and get your face known.
- 'Manage by walking about'.
- Give advice or an opinion in response to a request for information.
- Get your name known.
- Volunteer for extra projects that are cross-organizationally oriented.

Factors to be heard

- Respect.
- Trust.
- Knowledge credibility.
- Clarity of message.
- Confidence.

These strategies not only equip individuals to operate with integrity and pursue their own and the organization's goals, but will also address one of the key corporate challenges of developing highly effective teams.

Bibliography

Baddeley, S. and James, K. (1987) 'Owl, fox, donkey or sheep: political skills for managers', *Management Learning*, 18(1): 3–19.