



# THE POWER OF POLITICS IN THE BUSINESS OF HUMAN RESOURCES

---

## Learning Guide

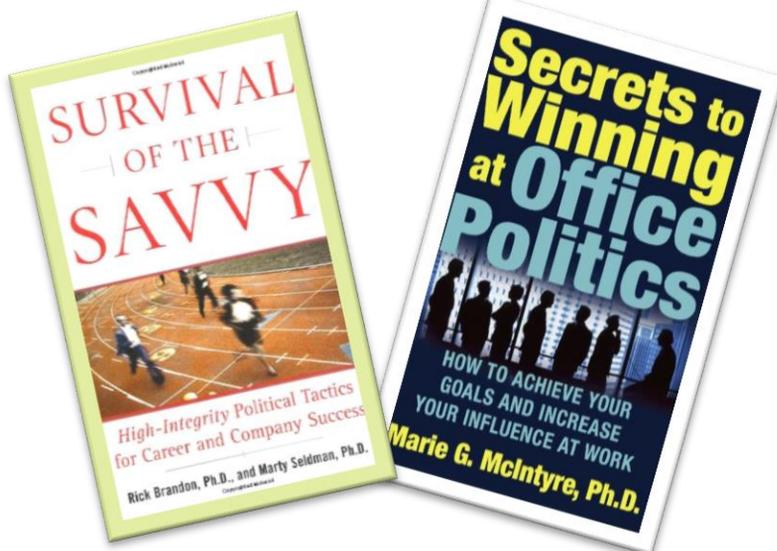


national association  
of african americans in human resources

Developed by Vanessa Phipps, President, NAAHR New Jersey Chapter  
and Principal, The Future Force Group  
for the National Association of African Americans in Human Resources  
March 29, 2017

# CONTENTS

- What is Organizational Savvy?
- Political Styles and the Style Continuum
- The Style “Pyramid”
- Political Do’s/Don’ts
- Your Savvy Self-Reflection
- Your Personal Board of Directors
- Building a Savvy Work Team
- Creating Your “Power Plan”



\*Based on material from *Survival of the Savvy* by Rick Brandon, Ph.D. and Marty Selman, Ph.D. and *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics* by Marie G. McIntyre, Ph.D.

# WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL SAVVY?

- Organizational Savvy is a workplace competency, which means that it can be built/strengthened! It is a set of skills, strategies, and behaviors that will help you maintain your integrity and work successfully in the political cultures that exist in most companies.
  
- Operating with organizational/political savvy enables you to be effective in many ways, including:
  - 1) Influencing and getting your ideas implemented;
  - 2) Receiving recognition for your accomplishments and the career advancement you deserve;
  - 3) Protecting yourself from deception, power plays, hidden agendas, and personal attacks.



# The Political Style Continuum

How politically driven are you, i.e., where are you on the Political Style Continuum? (Place a mark where you think you are at this point in your career.) Is it where you want to be?



## POWER OF IDEAS STYLE

- Substance Power
- Focus on Feedback and Learning
- Do the Right Thing
- Open Agenda
- Meritocracy-Based Decisions
- Results and Ideas Speak for Themselves



## POWER OF PERSON STYLE

- Position Power
- Focus on Image and Perception
- Do What Works
- More Private Agenda
- Relationship-Based Decisions
- Self-Promotion



### THE POWER OF IDEAS

These people believe that true power resides in the quality of their work and that they should be rewarded based on what they have produced.

They are more inclined to admit their mistakes and welcome feedback as a means to being able to learn more. They tend to have an intellectual curiosity to “get it right.”

‘Ideas’ people tend to say what’s on their minds in a forthright manner. In negotiations, their cards are typically out on the table.

Meritocracy-based decision makers believe true power resides in the substantive worth of a person’s ideas and work ethic and that results equate to the value they bring to their company.

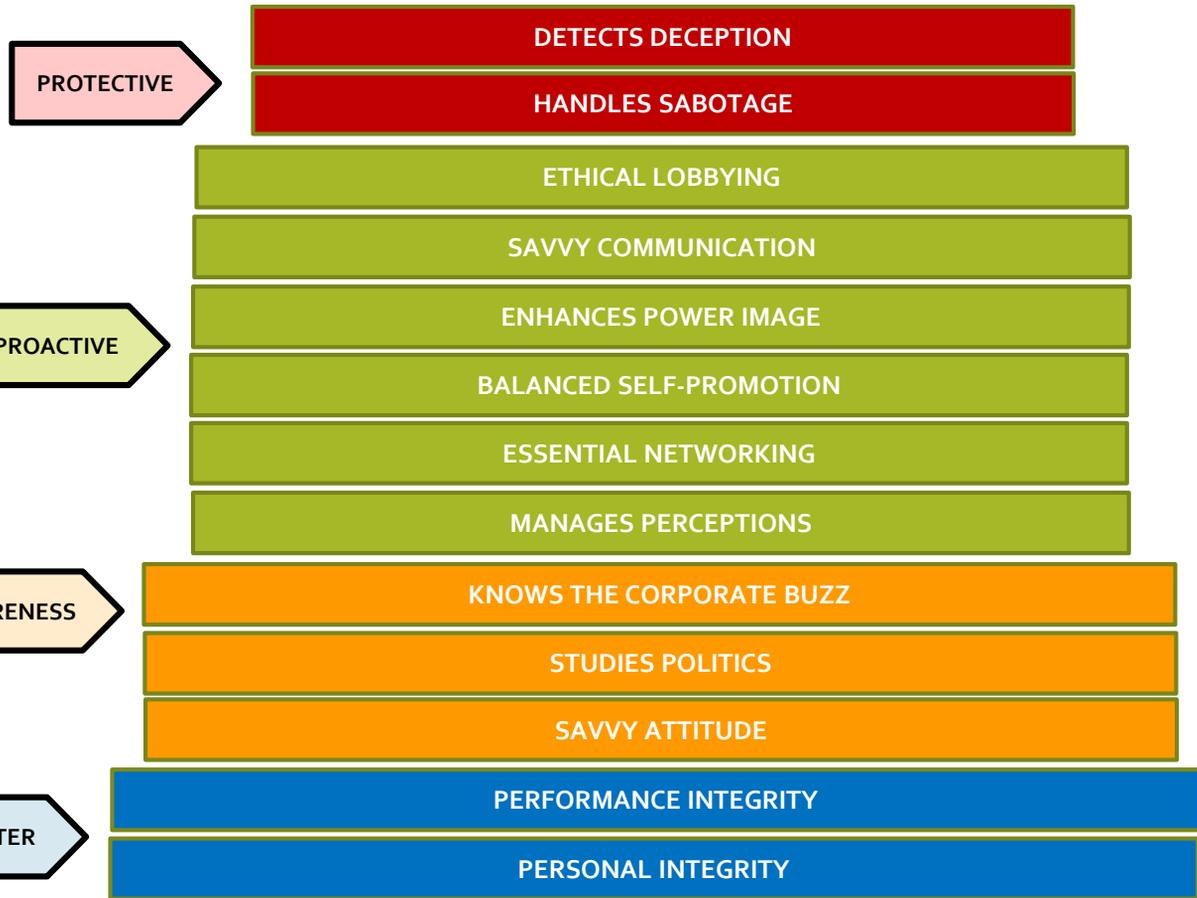
### THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

For these people power is seen as linked more to hierarchy than substance. These people are typically better connected because they are good at studying people who are powerful and aligning with them.

Power of Person leaders understand that many important decisions are made based on perceptions and image. Therefore, it becomes important that they continuously improve their reputations and manage their personal brand.

The power of person politician will already have had a few discussions with the influencers in the room in the interest of gaining leverage...or they may even wait until the day of the meeting to pitch their well-thought-out idea.

These people promote themselves along with the successes of their teams or larger groups.



**CHARACTER STRATEGIES:**

Considering what’s best for the organization and understanding the importance of ethical behavior

**AWARENESS STRATEGIES:**

Realistic/positive attitudes about what’s happening in your company and a willingness to increase your understanding of the “power players” and how you are perceived [your “corporate buzz”].

**PROACTIVE STRATEGIES:**

Taking initiative to build a personal and professional image of integrity, competence, positive influence and impact.

**PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES:**

Acting as a steward for the company’s resources, and protecting your own power image by learning how to defuse personal and professional attacks that call into question your work and reputation.

# THE FOUR P'S OF POLITICAL SUCCESS

- ❑ **Power Assessment:** How can you leverage what's "not fair" to improve your chances of getting what is best for the business and for you?
- ❑ **Performance:** How can your work make the business more successful?
- ❑ **Perception:** How can you enhance your reputation, especially with those who can help you achieve your goals?
- ❑ **Partnerships:** How can you increase your network of allies and supporters?

## DON'T DESTROY YOUR POWER IMAGE BY:

- Complaining about the company, your manager, or your team.
- Being rebellious and resisting authority.
- Forgetting to use your poker/pleasant face.
- Using your hierarchical power to yell at or ridicule anyone.
- Acting timid and/or never speaking up for fear of saying something "stupid" or wrong.
- Constantly asking for reassurance that you're doing things the right way. (It makes you seem needy)
- Hiding out. You may prefer to work alone, but unless you're at home, you aren't.



## SAVVY SELF-REFLECTION

Here are some statements to consider as you describe your own Savvy Skill Set.  
What would your answers be?!

---

- **PERSONAL INTEGRITY**
  - I give other people credit for their contributions.
  - I avoid undermining or sabotaging anyone's image, credibility or power.
- **PERFORMANCE INTEGRITY**
  - I genuinely (and non-defensively) seek feedback so that I increase my skills and become a better contributor to my company.
  - I don't allow any opportunities to build my image become more important than the quality of my work.
- **SAVVY ATTITUDES**
  - I realize that my results won't always speak for themselves, and that I deserve to get credit for my contributions.
  - I remain poised and professional when confronted by power plays or ego-trippers.
- **STUDIES POLITICS**
  - I figure out who has access to official and unofficial power.
  - I learn how decisions are made, so that I know how to get things done.
- **KNOWS THE CORPORATE BUZZ**
  - I understand what senior management wants in the next position I am seeking.
  - I track both positive and negative traits associated with me and my teams/work groups.
- **MANAGES PERCEPTIONS**
  - I avoid using self-deprecating labels about myself – even in an effort to be humorous.
  - I reduce negative perceptions by revealing how I intend to fix my flaws or weaknesses.
- **ESSENTIAL NETWORKING**
  - I build and maintain positive formal and informal relationships throughout the company.
  - I involve myself in cross-organizational activities such as task forces, employee resource groups, or professional affiliations.
- **BALANCED SELF PROMOTION**
  - I document my accomplishments and ideas.
  - I self-promote my capabilities and achievements and also give credit, when appropriate, to others who have supported me.
- **ENHANCE POWER IMAGE**
  - I project an aura of confidence through my appearance, dress, body language, vocabulary and voice/tone.
  - I work to build relationships that improve my access to decision-makers and that create a power base.
- **SAVVY COMMUNICATION**
  - I know when to be more assertive in presenting my ideas and when to take an invitational approach based on the egos and power dynamics that are "in the room."
  - I actively contribute during meetings in a meaningful way that shows a value-add, but doesn't eat up the "airtime."
- **HANDLES SABOTAGE AND DETECTS DECEPTION**
  - I respond non-defensively, yet firmly to public put-downs, sarcasm, or insults.
  - I probe beyond surface claims to detect if people are exaggerating or misrepresenting the truth.

# BUILD YOUR OWN PERSONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**YOUR SPONSOR**

Who would you pick?



**YOUR MENTOR**

Who would you pick?



**YOUR CONNECTOR**

Who would you pick?



**YOUR VISIONARY**  
Who would you pick?



**YOUR SPECIALIST**  
Who would you pick?



**YOUR CHEERLEADER**  
Who would you pick?

**Cheerleader/Motivator** is essential to keep you focused and enthusiastic about your career game plan. They should also be the ones giving you the tough love you need to keep you going when someone or something tries to sidetrack you.

**Specialist** is the person who can get your skills up to snuff – either in your current position or for any opportunities you might be eyeing. And it doesn't have to be someone at your job. Maybe you need a career coach - or you're moving into a role that requires budgetary oversight, so you have coffee with your friend who's a financial analyst or project manager

**Visionary** is someone who is tapped into what's going on outside of your day-to-day world, so can offer perspectives from a more macro level. So maybe they've been in the organization for a long time – or have worked in the same industry and have studied the trends.

**Connector** is going to help you enhance your network. And you can have a few, depending on who you think you need to know right now to influence your success and who you anticipate will be able to make some different introductions for you later on.

**Mentor** is your been there/done that person. You should expect candor, criticism, and to hear your story from their perspective. It's a relationship that you want to respect and for which you should show your gratitude.

**Your Sponsor** is the one who can sell your accomplishments to the influencers. They are putting their reputation <sup>8</sup> on the line for you, so you want them to see you only in your best light. So no revealing any doubts you may still have about yourself, or talking about any challenges you are having with teams or managers.

# BUILDING A SAVVY TEAM



- ❑ Learn how to scrutinize cross-functional business relationships in order to influence and work together more collaboratively and effectively.
  - Avoid turf wars
- ❑ Human *resources* don't hoard knowledge – they share it
- ❑ Don't just act respectful – Feel respect
- ❑ Make certain you/your people are coached, mentored and trained
- ❑ Understand who you're working with
  - Appreciate the different work, communication, and problem solving styles on your team
- ❑ Trust one another and work together to build competence

# CONCLUSION

- ❖ Organizational politics helps to form the foundation for how work gets done.
- ❖ True political power is based on valued contributions.
- ❖ The foundation of political/organizational savvy is integrity, i.e., considering what is best for the organization and the ethical way to respond.
- ❖ Political savvy starts with knowing who you are and where you want to go.





## MY “POWER PLAN”

---

Use the following pages to put together your plan for developing or refining your political savvy



# NEXT STEPS FOR BUILDING MY AWARENESS STRATEGIES

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.

# NEXT STEPS FOR BUILDING MY PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.

# NEXT STEPS FOR BUILDING MY PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.

**ON BEHALF OF THE  
NORTHEAST REGIONAL  
CHAPTERS OF NAAAHR,  
THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION!**



**national association  
of african americans in human resources**

[www.naaahr.org](http://www.naaahr.org)