

Political Savvy

Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization; perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

H Gosset, Steve, "Avoiding PR Disasters", Harvard Management Communication Letter, May 2001. HMCL 0105D

Companies that try to figure out how to respond to a media relations crisis after it's occurred will find themselves playing catch-up long after everyone stops caring. With some careful planning and preparation, it doesn't have to be that way. Don't let crises take you by surprise--prepare your company by having a crisis plan in place.

H Mitroff, Ian I. and Anagnos, Gus, Managing Crises Before They Happen (Book Summary), Harvard Business Review, February 1, 2001. HBR SV2305

The author states that with the right crisis management tools--and attitudes--in place, a company can ensure that it can either anticipate crises or effectively manage them once they occur. The

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authors present a crisis management framework that includes five components: types or risk categories of crises, mechanisms, systems, stakeholders, and scenarios. They also offer straightforward advice on crisis management.

H Pfeffer, Jeffrey, Managing With Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations, Harvard Business School Press, February 1994.

An in-depth look at the role of power and influence in organizations. The author shows the necessity of power in mobilizing political support and resources to get things done in any organization, and he looks at the personal attributes and structural factors that help managers advance organizational goals and achieve individual success.

H Reardon, Kathleen Kelly Ph.D, The Secret Handshake: Mastering the Politics of the Business Inner Circle, December, 2000.

Topics covered by the author include knowing your political style and when to change it, forming relationships the politically savvy way, the art of conversational politics, creating positional power, and managing conflict and cultivating influence.

Activities

H Volunteer for temporary duty positions or assignments at TSA Headquarters to learn about Headquarters' organizations, people and processes.

H Minimize the politics in specific situations. Try to de-politicize issues rather than add to the existing politics. Set the standard in your organization for working through difficult issues in as straight-forward manner as possible. Invite stakeholders into the decision-making process. Clarify criteria and decision rules. Don't throw your weight around.

H Identify those people who are key to your success and develop strategies that are designed to enlist their support. Don't wait until you need buy-in on a project to build relationships with key stakeholders. Work to build agreement with these people at the conceptual phase of a project. They'll appreciate the heads up and will be more inclined to assist you during the scope of the project.

H Make a list of people who depend on information you generate on a daily basis (e.g., other teams, functional areas, organizations and customers). Informally survey key stakeholders to identify whether the content and timeliness of the information is up to their expectations. If not, revise the format and establish a process to ensure that critical information gets out to them on a more timely basis.

H Conduct a stakeholder analysis of both internal and external stakeholders. Identify who the stakeholders are and analyze what their key interests, concerns and goods are. For specific initiatives or projects, anticipate what their reactions will be and what their "hot buttons" are. Identify who you need to involve or communicate with on specific issues.

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Coaching Suggestions for Managers

H Have staff conduct stakeholder analyses for their own organizations to make sure they are covering their political bases effectively. Review their analysis with them and ask questions or provide feedback to expand their thinking about who their stakeholders are and what's important to them.