

*Publication: CPA
December 2016*

Office Politics: Diplomacy Always Wins

With the U.S. election now behind us, you probably think you can take a break from politics, but don't get too comfortable – office politics knows no season and no end date.

In an [Accountemps survey](#), 80 percent of U.S. office workers polled said workplace politics are alive and well, and 55 percent get involved in politicking. What's more, 76 percent of respondents say playing the game is necessary for professional advancement, compared to just 56 percent who felt the same way in 2012 when a previous [survey](#) was taken. It's clear that politics is playing a bigger role in the workplace these days.

Common office politicians

There are many ways to play office politics. Below is a list of common culprits:

- **Gossipmongers.** It's common to talk about others. Why? We gain social bonds from telling interesting stories about our friends and coworkers. The gossip hound, however, takes it one step further with speculations, unfounded theories and even blatant misinformation. Gossip becomes harmful when people share unprofessional or potentially damaging information, especially on [social media](#).
- **Flatterers.** There may be a few of these in your workplace. If you're in management, perhaps you've experienced it first-hand — employees who frequently praise your decisions and actions. If you're among the rank and file, this is the person who shamelessly butters up the boss with sweet but insincere words.
- **Credit hogs and credit thieves.** The hogs demand recognition for their own work, no matter how small or insignificant. At the same time, they downplay the contributions of others. Thieves are worse – they essentially lie about who did what and take credit for other people's hard work.
- **Finger-pointers.** The flip side of the credit thief is the finger-pointer. Whenever there's a mistake or something goes wrong, they're never to blame. Instead they point fingers.
- **Underminers.** The world of politics has opposition research — digging up dirt on the opponent and dropping bombshells at opportune times. This can happen in the workplace, where a few bad apples take down their rivals with whispers and accusations. These operatives are skilled in making others look bad.
- **Lobbyists.** In government, these professionals' sole job is to sway elected officials' opinions and consolidate support for their cause. In the financial workplace, these savvy

employees have a way with words and know how to persuade their team to go along with their plan.

How to deal with office politics

Some aspects of office politics can be positive. For instance, if you've done your research and feel strongly about the merits of moving to a [cloud-based financial solution](#), your lobbying efforts would benefit the company. But whether you choose to play the game or sit on the sidelines, every accounting and finance professional needs to know the basics of workplace politics. Here are some tips:

- 1. Radiate positivity.** Be that person in the office who doesn't badmouth others. Rather than going along with the tattler and adding fuel to the flame, say something nice or bow out of the conversation. Let fairness be part of your [personal brand](#).
- 2. Be ready to walk away.** When gossip becomes a problem, know when it's time to excuse yourself. Make some noise about how that quarterly report won't write itself or express you have a pressing deadline.
- 3. Keep good records.** Write down your ideas and accomplishments. That way, when credit thieves pass off your work as their own, you have documentation. If necessary, provide your manager with a paper trail – showing the idea was your brainchild, not someone else's.
- 4. Stand up for yourself.** When someone spreads nasty rumors about you, say something. Diplomatically confront bullies and let them know their behavior is unacceptable. If necessary, bring it up with your manager.

Office politics is bound to happen in the modern workplace. You may not enjoy the game, but you should at least understand the rules — and be ready to play if necessary.

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