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**INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS:  
BETTER LEARN TO LOVE IT!**

“If I just didn’t have to  
deal with the politics!”

*But, institutional politics can  
take half your time...*

## I. Analyzing the political situation...

## The nature of universities...

- More like small cities than organizations
- Faculty lifecycle
  1. Living a subject matter
  2. Before tenure, and after
  3. Commit to field, or institution
  4. Engage the positives

## Historical moments create political issues...

- Leadership cycles
- Plateaus
- Periods of complaints
- Building booms
- Financial stress
- Academic quality growth
- Athletics building; rebuilding; body and mind; vitality

## Dealing with leadership styles...

- Academic leaders...
  1. autocrat ... try to help in planning
  2. participatory... suggest processes
  3. collegial ... help analyze situations
  4. insecure... show ways to resolve issues
- A chair or a manager?
  1. chair of faculty... offer solutions
  2. manager... come with a plan

## Dealing with CEO styles...

- Visionary ... show how to make it real
- Academic elite... show respect; look for other influential managers
- Corporate ... provide business plans
- Consensus ... suggest processes
- Relationship builder ... suggest processes
- Church leader ... same as academic elite

## Challenging attitudes...

- "Build it and they will come"
- "We can't just give them what they want"
- "Marketing is too commercial"
- "I know better what my area needs"
- "I was hired to lead my program/school and I don't need interference from central administration"

## Nonacademic department issues...

- Program heads can also take on silo attitudes
- Logos for everything!
- Failure to see potential explosive issues
- Use the same leadership style analysis as with academics

## How organizations change people!

- Unaccustomed to accountability ... defer decisions
- Become paranoid... "people must be talking about me"
- Friendships change... people have trouble seeing people differently when roles change
- Smoke screens... "I'll take care of it," and then don't"
- Talented people become threats

## Other political issues...

- Polarization ...create a problem-solving forum
- Left- and right- brain negotiations... set agenda on your side of the brain
- A seat at the table? Can use a third party
- Can't be a prophet in your own land ... press on...
- Insecure feelings... esp. when leadership changes ... offer to help lead change
- Following failures ... keep going...

## Some isolated situations...

- The president's chief of staff ... offer to help
- Getting bad news from the president ... ask for regular feedback
- When leader's spouse is a problem... gather the troupes !
- When stakeholders and trustees get involved ... take time to educate
- A powerful CFO ... make friends, consult colleagues

## II. The Political tools..

### “Grass roots” techniques..

- Activate supporters, educate neutrals, and ignore detractors
- Make deals
- Use third-party advocates

## The basic guide...

1. Clarify the situation... make notes
2. Identify the "type" person
  - a. Leadership style
  - b. Behavior characteristics
3. Clarify your objectives, then ask...
  - a. Can you educate?
  - b. Can you use a third party?
  - c. Can you make a deal?
  - d. Can you ignore?

## III. Becoming a learning organization... Peter Senge

....meeting agenda items, one-on-one interviews, internal presentations, departmental retreats, new employee orientation, events, etc

## Integrated Marketing

### 1. A way of thinking..

Product, Price, Place, Promotion

Positioning, competitive advantage

Differentiation

Connect where they are, but go beyond

Quality redefined

The role of leadership

### 2. Research and planning

- Surveys... needs and attitudes; preferences; satisfaction; pricing
- Strategic plans... trends; academic strengths; facilities; development; marketing
- Globalization... government roles; student migration; donor interests; competition

### 3. Brand identity...

- Strengths; character; values, location, culture
- Good to great; best in category; best in world
- Symbols; color; lines; logo
- Lead lines; tag lines
- Sub-brands... individual identity, but tie to brand
- Standards; but flexible

### 4. IMC processes

- Task force
- Action teams
- Editorial committee
- Everyone on the same page
- Word of mouth
- Brand identity in the environment

## 5. How communication changed...

- Direct and interactive
- Multi-platform
- Convergence impact
- Social and other media
- Issues and crises
- A new news media world
- Agency approach... account executives

## 6. Impact on advancement areas...

- Admissions... new media; sophistication
- Alumni relations... life long connection; virtual and actual
- Development... relationship building; donor loyalty

## 7. Working with creative staff and volunteers...

- Cannot micro-manage... freezes creativity
- Use meetings to clarify flexible expectations
- Clarify branding points
- Set flexible branding design standards
- Separate vanity pieces from “integrity” pieces
- Involve artists and writers early in planning
- Ask for heads-up on controversy

## Books and a Blog

- *Learning to Love the Politics*
- *Advancing Higher Education in Uncertain Times*
- *Competing for Students, Money and Reputation*

CASE Books

[www.larrydlauer.com](http://www.larrydlauer.com)