

The HPT'er Political Survival Guide

When you have to swim with sharks....

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Can't tell the players with a program.
- Who's power is it any way.
- Unlocking secrets of survival in a political environment.

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Politics and Human Performance Improvement

You are in the middle of a challenging HPT project...you think things are going well...when suddenly you find out that your entire project has been scrapped. Buy why?

You are probably the latest victim of political shark attack. Many times political sharks are well meaning members of an organization who fear change because, in their eyes, it threatens their position or power base (Stolovitch, 1999).

Just what is/are politics? Well, there are numerous definitions but I like this one: "Competition for power and leadership between competing interests or groups. May be characterized by artful and sometimes dishonest practices" (Project Auditors) .

This newsletter is an attempt to



Political shark attack victim

provide you with basic knowledge of politics and how it could and can affect your HPT project "When you have to swim with sharks..."

Are You A Player?

No....I am not talking about dating....I want to know your status in an organization when it is undergoing change.

According to Stolovitch and Keeps (1999, p. 129-130), players fall into three categories:

- Go-Getters

These individuals see a change as bene-

ficial to the organization or to themselves. They are cooperative and helpful. They promote the change plan and display a positive attitude and work toward implementing change.

Are You A Player, Continued?



What type of player are you?

- Opponents

Those who fear the change initiative may feel threaten or fear that their position is at risk. They typically discourage other from participating in the change process, hinder its implementation and at time exhibit negative attitudes toward change and those who support it. They are the ones I have labeled “Political Sharks.”

Sharks.”

- Fence-Sitters

These individuals adopt a wait-and-see approach. They neither intentional undermine or actively encourage the effort. They generally do not lend their support until it appears to benefit them or the organi-

*Politics:
“Competition for power and leadership between competing interests or groups. May be characterized by artful and sometimes dishonest practices.”*

Who’s Got The Power?

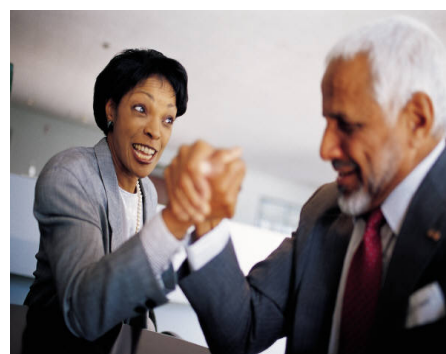
Do HPT’er have power? Schein (as cited by Stolovitch and Keeps, 1999, p. 124-125) lists the power bases from HPT’er can operate from:

- *Expertise* is the knowledge, education, skill and prior on-the-job experience that the consultant is perceived as possessing.
- *Informational power* comes from having access to functional groups and from maintaining contact with sources of information about the organization.
- *Staff support* depends

on the consultant’s own work group and is the trust that the consultant’s colleagues have in his or her leadership, as well as their resulting willingness to contribute to shared responsibilities. It is also evident in the consultant’s ability to develop liaisons with peers in other groups, thereby increasing the amount of knowledge— and thus power— flowing into the consultant’s own unit.

- *Tradition* is involved in longtime service to and affiliation with an or-

ganization, whereby the consultant acquires unique organizational knowledge and use it to influence others.



There are numerous types of power.

Who's Got The Power Continued

- *Credibility (or mobility)* is derived from ties outside the organizational unit or outside the organization as a whole.
- *Assured stature* comes from organization member's positive feelings about the consultant's bases of expertise. It reflects the total degree of respect the consultant enjoys because

of all his or her other power bases and includes perceptions about the consultant's compassion for the understanding of others.



Nearly all men can withstand adversity; If you want to test a man's character, give him power.

Abraham Lincoln

Sharks have been swimming the oceans unchallenged for thousands of years; chances are, the species that roams corporate waters will prove just as hardy.

Shark Repellant (unlocking the survival secrets)

How are we as HPT practitioners to survive a politically charge environment, do our job and maintain ethical standards. Stolovitch and Keeps (Stolovitch and Keeps, 1999, p.133-134) have given us a ten point list of keys to survival.....shark repellent if you will:

1. *Make the most of power.* Become aware of the power bases in the target organization.
2. *Present an unthreatening image.* Use your power quietly; on one wants to work with a

consultant who is seen as pushy or political. The HP consultant should present the change in increments, always focusing on the client's needs.

3. *Defuse opposition.* In a change initiative, HP consultants bring out conflict as the hold legitimate and open discussion. To defuse opposition, they need to acknowledge the pain of the change, answer



objections clearly and boldly, allay fear with facts, and keep innovation within parameters that are as safe and familiar as possible.

4. *Align with a powerful other.* Operating or line managers directly affected by the change make the most effective allies. They can help HP consultants maneuver around the mines.

Eric Gelman

Shark Repellant

(unlocking the survival secrets)

5. **Make trade-offs.** The HP consultant can build up credit by attending to projects that the client perceives as having high priority. This credit can then be used to start projects which the HP consultant has a particular interest.

6. **Strike while the iron is hot.** Upon successful implementation of a change initiative, the HP consultant should follow up immediately with a somewhat less popular or less understood program.



Unlock the secrets of surviving a political environment

7. **Conduct research.** This strategy is especially useful in emotionally charged areas. Data can help defuse the power of someone who resists by creating an awareness of the need to change.

8. **Use a neutral cover.** Pilot programs are usually unthreatening and neutral. The client feels in control of both the intervention and the decision to continue. Be careful, however, because pilot programs are also easy targets for opponents; those who feel threatened will sometimes try to sabotage a pilot.

9. **Inch along.** By focusing on a client's immediate needs, and, professional standards, serving those needs well, the HP consultant can allay management's fears. Growing acceptance eases the introduction of larger changes.

10. **Nurture the key players in a change.** The HP consultant must be constantly aware of how the key people feel and must share information with them regularly (Schein, 1985)

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HPT'er Political Survival Kit or when you have to swim with sharks.....

