

Career Tactics



Personal report for:

Sally Sample

Introduction

About this report

Career Tactics is a questionnaire designed to help you think more systematically about the specific strategies you have utilised in your career.

Although your management capabilities and professional and technical expertise are clearly major factors underpinning your role effectiveness and future progression; in themselves they may not be sufficient. Career success and failure is not simply an outcome of talent. Critical to success and failure is the deployment of your personal time and effort in responding to the realities of human nature and organisational life.

Career Tactics highlights this dimension:

Which tactics have you made most and least use of in the personal advancement of your career?

What are the gains for deploying these tactics in future; what are the potential risks?

In reviewing the findings in this report:

- remember that the results are based on your own self assessment. The accuracy of the data depends therefore on your own self-insight in recognising which factors have helped or hindered you in your career to date. You may want to review and discuss this report with individuals who know you well and whose opinions you value.
- focus on the key themes and the relative highs and lows profiled in the report. Don't over-interpret the results by dwelling on specific scores. It will be the overall balance of your career tactics which will be more informative; not individual scores.
- use your judgement to determine what seems significant and likely to have a real impact on your current and future roles. Identify those areas you think will have most bearing on your career fortunes.

Making sense of the report



Building a Reputation

- Projecting a Confident Image
- Gravitating Towards Success



Managing Complex Relationships

- Balancing Stakeholder Groups
- Building Broad Based Commitment



Optimising Personal Energy

- Focus on Priorities
- Controlled Delegation



Recognising Organisational Realities

- Managing Corporate Politics
- Mastering the Art of Timing



Strategic Self Management

- Playing to Strengths
- Managing Ego Emotions



Maximising Learning Potential

- Flexible Curiosity
- Using New Challenges to Speed Development

Detailed Analysis

A detailed assessment of twelve different tactics grouped within six overall themes, highlighting the specific tactics which you have deployed most and least often

Overview Profile

A review of the twelve themes, indicating the balance of your tactical approach

Career Pressure Points

The specific opportunities and risks you may face at different points in your career development



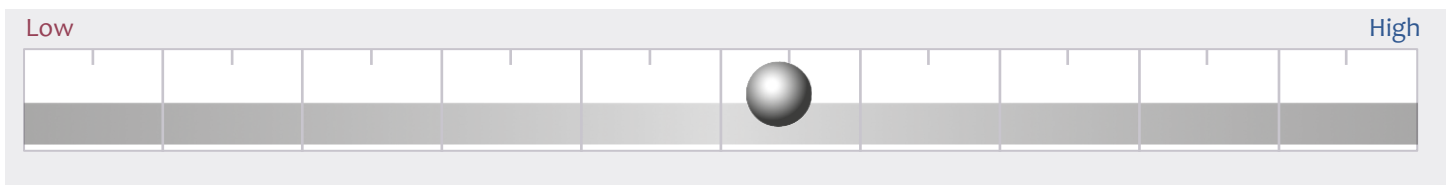
Detailed Analysis

The breakdown across the twelve Career Tactics, indicating the potential opportunities and risks.



Projecting a Confident Image

Your Score



Low

- a perceived lack of confidence makes others feel uncomfortable and doubtful of your competence
- colleagues take your hesitation at face value and are reluctant to trust you with additional responsibilities
- failing to make an impact, be noticed and gain the attention of senior management

At Best

- engendering confidence from others that you have the capability to take on more demanding responsibilities
- conveying an aura of self belief which gains the interest of others and a desire to get involved in your activities
- conveying conviction which others find difficult to challenge and question

“The world more often rewards the appearances of merit than merit itself”

Duc de la Rochefoucauld

Risk of Over-Development

- tackling assignments and responsibilities in line with your confidence but beyond your expertise and competence leaves you exposed
- gaining a reputation for arrogance which creates hostility and future career enemies



Projecting a Confident Image

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Confidence inspires greater confidence. Others take you at face value. If you display self belief, you must be capable and credible. If you fail to project confidence - no matter your underlying talents and skills - others will question your effectiveness and contribution.

Possible Factors if Low

- a reserved interpersonal manner which lacks assertiveness
- low levels of verbal fluency and conversational skill
- limited experience of public speaking and presentation
- excessive concern for others and their responses to you

Prompts for Development

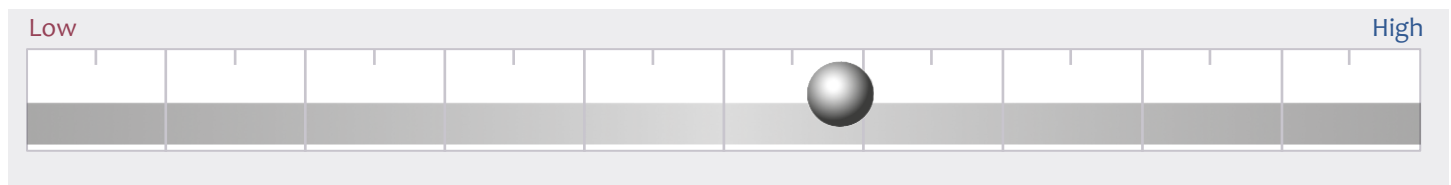
- slow down your speech and movements. Successful people with self belief don't run around or panic. Taking your time suggests you are in control
- even if painful, have yourself videotaped. Have a trusted colleague point out how your body language and vocal expression is helping or hindering you in making an impact
- in conversation, don't rush to fill in the pauses. Use questions to assert your agenda and establish control
- in meetings, ensure you make at least one contribution. Build on others' suggestions. Summarise the discussion
- prepare mentally for public events and social interactions. Visualise the situation in advance. If necessary, prepare a 'script'. Who will be there; what questions might you ask? what topics might you introduce into conversation?
- check your wardrobe. How does your physical appearance and dress sense enhance or diminish your self presentation?

Notes



Gravitating Towards Success

Your Score



Low

- spending time on those troublesome organisational activities which no one can solve and can only result in bad feeling and unpopularity
- association with failing projects creates the perception that you are responsible
- working with individuals involved in failure reduces your motivation and enthusiasm to take on new challenges

At Best

- involvement in success creates a virtuous circle in which you are assigned to more glamorous projects with more opportunity to learn and develop
- finding it easier to argue for the greater allocation of resources for future assignments
- involvement in corporate "wins" provides an opportunity to communicate good news to senior management

"Nothing succeeds like the appearance of success"

Christopher Lasch

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming the target of envy and jealousy from peers
- being criticised as an individual who has never had to turn around problems or make tough decisions



Gravitating Towards Success

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

The power of association is significant. Failure can be awkward and embarrassing for organisations and individuals to discuss and address. Success is appreciated and valued; it reassures others that you have a credible track record and can be expected to achieve more in future. Having a reputation for success will help you command greater organisational attention.

Possible Factors if Low

- a dislike of the conflict which comes from saying “no” to those assignments which you know might fail
- a genuine helpfulness and willingness to support colleagues in difficulty
- the need to test and prove yourself by taking on difficult challenges
- a lack of business insight in assessing the likely outcomes of different projects
- a mistrust of success and of “successful” role models you may have previously encountered

Prompts for Development

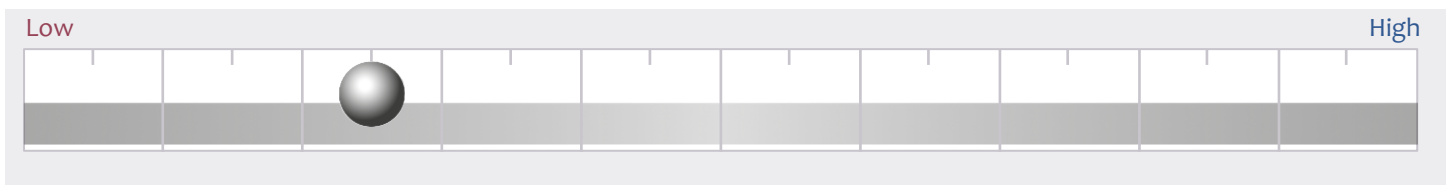
- apply a SWOT style analysis to projects/assignments/job moves. What is the balance of success versus failure?
- identify those individuals you recognise as having the potential to progress and make an impact. Get to know them and work alongside them on projects
- don’t “suffer in silence”. If an assignment is going off the rails, say so. Be prepared to say no to the impossible or futile
- be tough in refusing to allow colleagues to off-load their problems on to you
- don’t always aim for the obvious “big hits”. Accept that success can arise from unexpected sources. Focus not on the project but more on who you will be working with

Notes



Balancing Stakeholder Groups

Your Score



Low

- being known as a difficult and unmanageable individual who no one wants to work with
- losing motivation as a result of coping with the stresses and strains of a difficult boss
- coming into direct conflict with those individuals who have a major impact on your career fortunes
- avoiding open disagreement and conflict and failing to achieve a reconciliation with key individuals

At Best

- resolving the problems of your boss to gain a reputation for achieving results and getting things done
- negotiating objectives to clarify priorities and manage organisational expectations of delivery
- managing conflict constructively to break down initial differences of views and establish agreement

“It is important to build alliances and networks of friendship by getting along. People who are able to develop great power often seem to have the knack of changing their behaviour according to the needs of the occasion”

J Pfeffer

Risk of Over-Development

- receiving criticism from your peers that you are too close to your boss and his/her agenda
- “placing your career bets” on a boss who the organisation no longer respects or values
- being perceived as a “networker” concerned only with personal advancement rather than genuine friendship
- being the target of criticism from your team that you are too accommodating to the demands of other functional groups and not sufficiently assertive in defending the interests of your work area



Balancing Stakeholder Groups

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

You operate within a complex network of interpersonal relationships and need to manage the expectations of different work groups. In your immediate work area the competing priorities of your manager, your peers and staff need to be resolved. More widely you need to assist and support colleagues in other departments and functions; you also need to be prepared to assert your interests and resolve any disagreements. Failing to manage these different expectations will constrain your effectiveness and lessen your impact.

Possible Factors if Low

- failing to understand the full complexity of your role and the requirements to manage up, down and across
- a competitive and aggressive approach which "bulldozes" through interpersonal situations
- a lack of interpersonal sensitivity in identifying potential friends and allies or opponents and enemies
- a preoccupation with own priorities which lacks awareness of the agenda of others

Prompts for Development

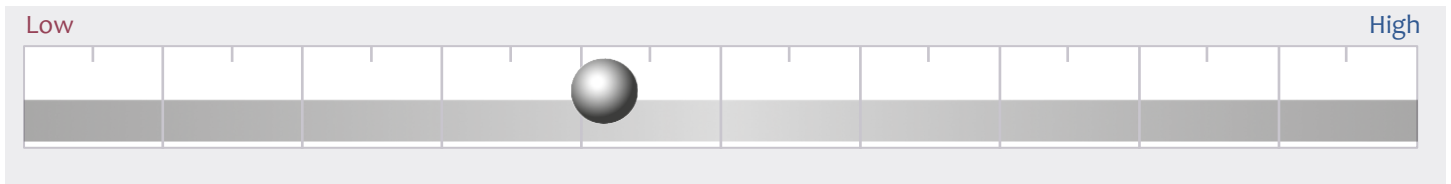
- take time to talk to your boss about the problems they regard as critically important to them. Clarify the implications for your role. Which interfaces with other work units are critical to him/her?
- map out the full network of your organisational contacts and assess the strength of your relationships. What could you to develop and build more positive working relationships?
- check: are you avoiding conflict with any particular work group? Does this need to be raised and resolved before you can establish a positive working pattern?
- be prepared to "give ground", accepting that some battles will be lost, but it is the war which is important
- arrange to meet key individuals in a different social context. Discuss openly your perceptions and be prepared to listen to their views

Notes



Building Broad Based Commitment

Your Score



Low

- failing to win the support and commitment for your ideas and proposals from the people most affected by them
- being reliant on a small group of like minded peers in your immediate work areas to advance your interests
- being outside the flow of informal communication and becoming isolated from key organisational events

At Best

- building relationships with a broad cross-section of organisational groups who can promote your interests
- creating good will from people at all levels and work areas ensures that your proposals are well received and accepted
- having a range of information sources keeps you well informed of what the organisation's intentions and plans are

“A prince can never secure himself against a disaffected people, their number being too great”

Niccolo Machiavelli

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming too closely associated with the organisational “rumour mill” and gossip and speculation
- wide spread popularity makes it difficult for you to make tough decisions
- attracting the attention of senior management who mistrust your close relationships with junior staff and doubt your commitment to the corporate line



Building Broad Based Commitment

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Advancing your agenda will be easier if you are in tune with the informal communication flow of the organisation and connected to different networks. This will keep you in touch with those developments likely to impact on your position. Positive relationships – across different levels and functions – also provides the opportunity to gain the loyalty of those whose career paths you may encounter in future.

Possible Factors if Low

- an introverted approach which prefers the company of a small number of familiar friends and is hesitant in building new relationships
- a reliance on formal hierarchy, status and defined reporting relationships
- an inflexible communication style which fails to adapt to different groups and situations
- a lack of empathy in identifying with the concerns and problems of people very different to yourself

Prompts for Development

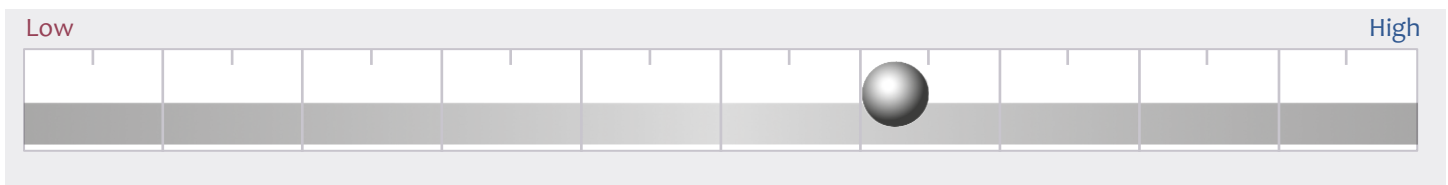
- keep well informed of the activities of other departments; if you don't know much about other functions, arrange to go out and informally meet their staff
- spend time in locations utilised by managers from different locations, departments and levels e.g. coffee areas, staff restaurant, gym
- make eye contact with everyone – no matter how busy you feel you are. Acknowledge others and smile
- attend any social events organised by the company. Don't stick to your own work colleagues. Start conversations with people you don't know
- ensure you are giving and receiving information. But keep confidences. Don't spread rumours or gossip. Building trust takes a long time; breaking it is quickly done

Notes



Focus on Priorities

Your Score



Low

- getting bogged down in low importance activities which fail to make an organisational impact
- spreading yourself “too thin” by attempting to tackle many different and competing priorities and achieving little overall
- embarking on a series of initiatives which are not completed creates the reputation of non-delivery
- a reliance on “fire-fighting” to keep on top of immediate work pressures which constrains long-term planning and innovation
- a reputation for poor time management and personal organisation creates the impression that you are not in control

At Best

- concentrating energies on those activities which have maximum leverage
- identifying and tackling those problems which will have most corporate “pay-back” in raising your profile
- addressing those organisational issues which only you can tackle enhances the reputation of indispensability
- the application of basic disciplines to manage work-load creates additional time to reflect, think and plan future goals and tactics
- balancing work priorities with other life demands maintains a freshness of approach and sustains energy levels

“Beware of dissipating your powers; strive constantly to concentrate”

Goethe

Risk of Over-Development

- failing to identify quickly those activities which are currently not important but are rapidly gaining in organisational priority
- neglecting “maintenance duties” which will undermine your future effectiveness
- a reliance on structure and systems which fails to respond flexibly to the unexpected
- losing sight of intended outcomes through an obsession with set routines and schedules



Focus on Priorities

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Not everything can be achieved at once. The 80/20 law applies: 80% of your outcomes will be attained by 20% of your efforts. Being ruthless in directing your time and energy towards a few key issues will have much more impact than attempting to take on the full range of potential challenges within your role.

Possible Factors if Low

- limited awareness of overall corporate aims and the drivers which will determine success or failure and the implications for your personal goals
- being helpful; attempting to placate and please too many different stakeholders by taking on too many conflicting demands
- the "heroic" in which you feel you must rise to the challenge of every possible demand to meet others expectations of you

Prompts for Development

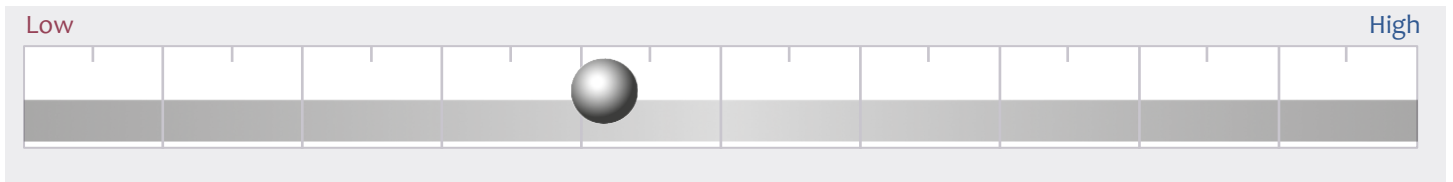
- take time to talk to your boss about their expectations of your role
- review your current accountabilities and responsibilities; differentiate what you like doing from what you should be doing
- write down your goals, for the next week, month, year. Review progress regularly and be frank in your appraisal of outcomes. Where is time and effort being misdirected?
- when given new responsibilities or assignments, clarify expectations. How have priorities shifted?
- manage your diary and schedule ruthlessly. Keep asking "why?" Why am I spending time on this; how is it helping me achieve my objectives?
- keep asking: "what is the one thing?" What one achievement would have most impact?

Notes



Controlled Delegation

Your Score



Low

- tackling hold ups and delays in major projects due to confusion over accountabilities and responsibilities
- finding others are taking credit for the initiatives you have introduced and implemented
- spending time on unnecessary chores by having to sort out the problems of colleagues and subordinates

At Best

- ensuring that the organisation recognises your contribution and that others don't receive praise for your efforts
- utilising delegation to develop new talent who represent key players for the future
- creating time for you to embark on new initiatives which will have most impact on your career progression

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what they want done, and self restraint enough to keep from meddling while they do it.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming the target of criticism from your team that you are burdening it with an unreasonable work load
- colleagues complaining that you are assigning them administrative chores and failing to involve them in more attractive projects



Controlled Delegation

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Your contribution ultimately depends not on your individual efforts but your effectiveness in coordinating work activity with others. Knowing which issues require your personal attention and which should be passed on to others is a critical activity in maximising your value to the organisation. Effective delegation not only frees up your time for the key decisions, it enables your work colleagues to develop greater skills to take on additional responsibility and improve your productivity."

Possible Factors if Low

- a confusion over your management role, its accountabilities and the level you should be operating at
- a perfectionism which believes you are the only person who can do things right
- a disorganised approach: allocating work to those who "happen to be around"; delegating the same work to several different individuals; lacking a management system for follow up and review
- holding on to familiar tasks which play to your expertise (and ego) or which you enjoy

Prompts for Development

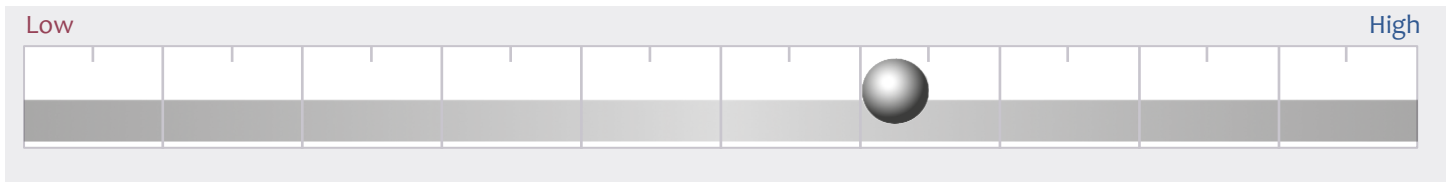
- conduct a fundamental review of work activity with colleagues. Discuss objectives, work loads and skill sets. Which tasks could be re-allocated and delegated? Now; which in future?
- make a commitment to regular coaching and training with your staff. Diarise and stick to it
- establish a process for recognising and celebrating achievements publicly within the work area
- meet up with colleagues from other functions to push any problems and errors back to those who originated them
- use the performance management system productively. Prepare well for review meetings, commit quality time to individual appraisals, and document conclusions and actions. Ensure your "stars" are praised and rewarded; take the tough decisions with the "problems"

Notes



Managing Corporate Politics

Your Score



Low

- committing time to those activities which are becoming side-lined due to a shift in the political dynamic
- failing to recognise and manage the realities of corporate power which determine the scope of your authority and decision making
- being criticised by your team for lacking influence and failing to win the corporate battles on their behalf
- misreading the interpersonal dynamic and failing to recognise the real agenda for discussion

At Best

- identifying which functional areas are becoming more or less politically important and will have most impact on your future priorities
- using the flow of information and allocation of resources to determine how the corporate decision making process can be managed in your interests
- gauging the political mood in deciding how best to position and present your proposals
- applying insight in identifying what and who really matters within the senior management team
- using interpersonal skill and psychological shrewdness to get to know the real concerns and worries of top management

“Power, the basic energy to initiate action translating intention into reality, the quality without which leaders cannot lead.”

Bennis & Nanus

Risk of Over-Development

- gaining a reputation as a “political animal” who is more interested in personal advancement than business performance
- becoming embroiled in major power-plays which cannot be won and can only result in hostility and resentment
- being viewed as a manipulative and Machiavellian operator who relies on psychological negotiation rather than well constructed business arguments
- becoming too closely associated with the personal concerns and needs of senior players rather than working to a business agenda



Managing Corporate Politics

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

The realities of organisational life are based on the dynamics of power and the battle for corporate resource. Within this perspective, talent, effectiveness and contribution can be less significant in career advancement than one's positioning within the political network. An insight into the political process and the knowledge when to engage and when to disengage opens up options to strengthen your position.

Possible Factors if Low

- seeing the organisational world in "black and white"; a belief that rational analysis is all that matters in organisational decision making; a naiveté in recognising that corporate decisions are based on a mix of compromise and consensus
- difficulty in coming to terms with authority; a desire to "rebel"
- a lack of commitment to the organisation which prefers to stand back and observe from the "side lines"
- a clumsy interpersonal style which misreads situations and antagonises others

Prompts for Development

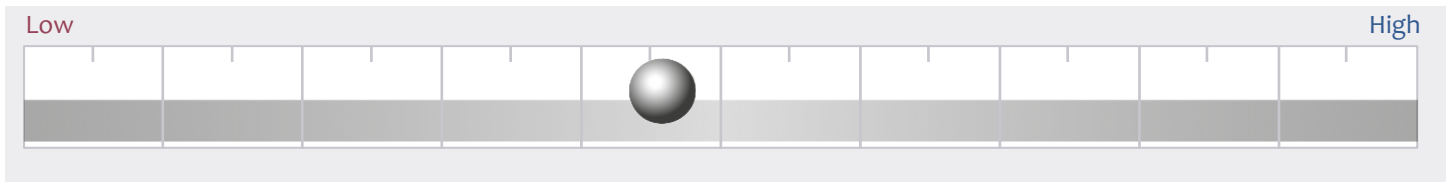
- ask yourself: do you want to be "right" or do you want to see your plans executed and implemented?
- assess the extent of political gamesmanship with your organisation. Is it excessive or typical of any organisation? How willing/unwilling are you to respond to the political dynamics?
- map out the different functions within your organisation. Where does the power really lie? Why? What are the implications for you?
- prepare well for meetings; arrange to get together with key players to sound out views and opinions in advance of any major decisions

Notes



Mastering the Art of Timing

Your Score



Low

- misjudging the timing of your plans and proposals and creating adverse reactions
- embarking on initiatives without thinking through the longer-term implications and finding it difficult to manage the consequences
- forcing the resolution to a long-standing problem too quickly and raising deep-seated political and emotional tensions

At Best

- identifying the appropriate timing and pace in the introduction and implementation of organisational change
- knowing when to be patient and when to move quickly to seize emerging possibilities which will have an impact on career advancement
- sensing the organisational mood in judging when to push hard for greater reward and recognition and when to hold back

“I am aware that success is more than a good idea. It is timing too.”

Anita Roddick

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming preoccupied with the process of organisational change and losing sight of the substance of what has to be achieved
- gaining a reputation for opportunism and expediency



Mastering the Art of Timing

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

There are moments when you should “push forward” and advance your ideas and plans. There are also times to hold back and await developments before committing yourself to a course of action. Knowing when to move quickly and when to delay is critical in managing the “art of the possible” within the realities of organisational life.

Possible Factors if Low

- an impulsiveness which wants the gains of immediate success
- a procrastination which holds up implementation by requests for additional analysis
- failing to read the organisational mood and identify others’ real motives and agenda
- a lack of strategic thinking which fails to see the longer-term consequences of immediate actions

Prompts for Development

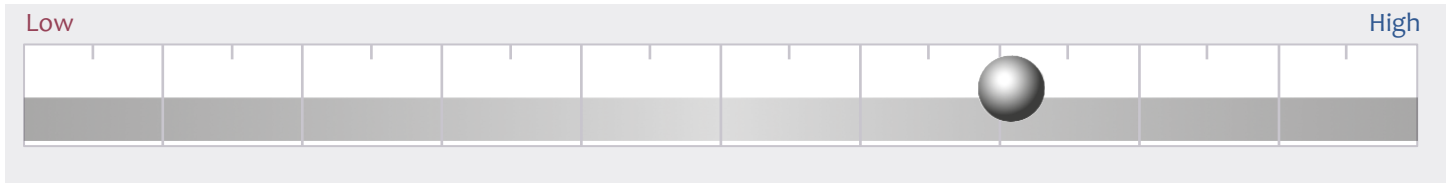
- take time to consider: where is the organisation currently focusing its efforts and prioritising activities? what are the implications for your proposals? what issues will surface in the next 6 – 12 months?
- discuss your ideas at an early stage with key players before you make an emotional investment to evaluate their viability
- ask advice from a trusted colleague who understands the culture of the organisation and how things get done
- don’t “box” yourself in by limiting yourself to one course of action; develop alternative strategies and contingency plans
- equip yourself with project management methodologies to help identify potential barriers to your plans

Notes



Playing to Strengths

Your Score



Low

- finding it difficult to identify your personal strengths and how to deploy them effectively
- over-estimating your capability to take on unfamiliar challenges and lacking the required skills and expertise
- operating within roles which give little opportunity to utilise strengths and expose limitations

At Best

- conducting a frank and honest evaluation of your fundamental personal assets and liabilities to establish career opportunities and risks
- prioritising work activity and outcomes based on your specific expertise and skills
- developing effective working relationships with individuals who can complement your personal skills and compensate for limitations

“Focus on each person’s strengths and manage around weaknesses. Don’t try to fix the weaknesses. Don’t try to perfect the person”

Buckingham & Coffman

Risk of Over-Development

- focusing on skill areas which are becoming of less relevance to future organisational priorities
- overlooking those limitations which represent “fatal flaws” and will result in future derailment
- being constrained in future progression through the accusation of lacking generalist skills



Playing to Strengths

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Your fundamental talents will allow you to acquire new skills, demonstrate specific competencies and with experience, excel and make a substantial organisational impact. Whilst major flaws need to be acknowledged and overcome, working on your limitations will never make the gains that exploiting your strengths will.

Possible Factors if Low

- low self awareness which lacks insight into your personal strengths and how you might exploit them
- a positive self image which believes that you can excel in every management skill
- avoiding critical self examination and being reluctant to accept that a talent you thought you had is no longer a personal strength
- operating in roles which have lacked clarity and an opportunity to “reality check” your real talents

Prompts for Development

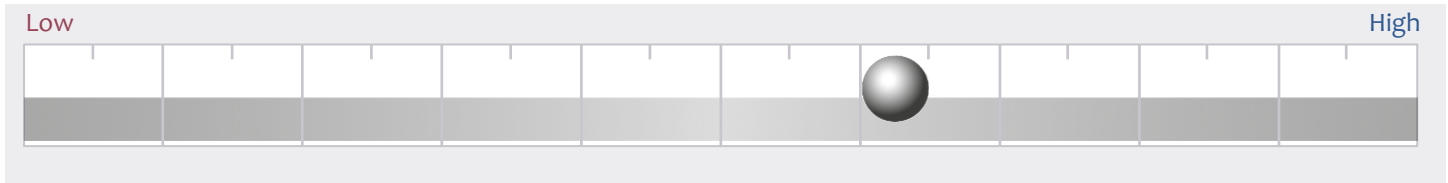
- request informal feedback with trusted colleagues/friends or participate in a 360° multi-rater feedback process
- develop a dialogue with a coach to highlight strengths and focus on how they can be developed
- ask: what do you find easiest to learn? what do you most enjoy doing? These are likely to revolve around your natural strengths
- agree with your boss how best to redefine your role to allow you to focus on your strengths
- think about future resourcing. Who could you recruit into your team who might compensate for any shortcomings and complement your strengths

Notes



Managing Ego Emotions

Your Score



Low

- becoming affected by the stresses and strains of working and giving the impression of not being in control of events
- allowing others to take advantage of your emotional honesty and interpersonal frankness
- being viewed by others as impulsive and volatile and not a "safe pair of hands"

At Best

- putting personal feelings to one side to control the agenda in interpersonally charged and pressurised situations
- keeping a psychological distance from others which avoids over-familiarity and maintains respect
- defusing criticism or hostile reactions through your complete composure and calmness

"The person who gets angry at the right things and with the right people and in the right way and at the right time and for the right length of time is commended"

Aristotle

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming isolated from the genuine concerns and worries of work colleagues and losing touch with the feelings of the work group
- being seen as cold and distant and making it difficult for others to approach you



Managing Ego Emotions

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Organisational life has its ups and downs, its trials and tribulations. When emotions run high, a cool head which keeps a sense of proportion and displays “grace under pressure” is a valued asset. Rising above petty rivalries or dealing with crises in a mature manner reassures others that you can be trusted to rise to a challenge and take on greater responsibility.

Possible Factors if Low

- a temperamental disposition which experiences and expresses strong levels of feelings and emotions
- a “fragile” ego which is sensitive to any suggestion of slight or provocation
- becoming too emotionally involved in the personal stresses and strains of others
- excessive levels of commitment and involvement which finds it difficult to stand back and remain detached
- a high need for affiliation which wants to build strong attachments to others

Prompts for Development

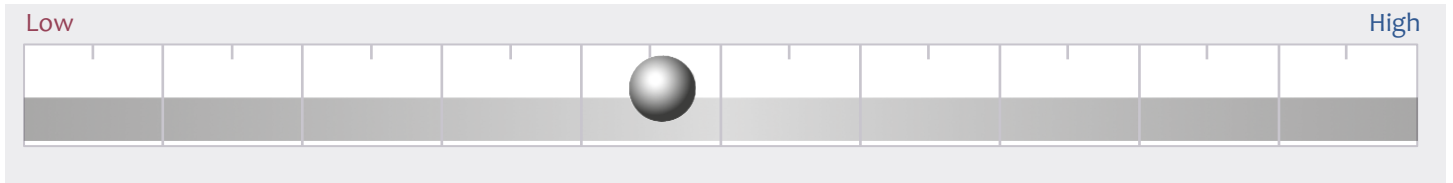
- establish ground rules and disciplines within your schedule to give you “breathing space”
- hold yourself back from responding immediately when annoyed or angry. Check that you have the facts and that you’re not jumping to the wrong conclusion
- keep a sense of proportion. Ask yourself “is it really worth losing sleep over?” Next year, will this issue really matter
- Understand the power of silence and when to keep quiet

Notes



Flexible Curiosity

Your Score



Low

- finding that your base of knowledge and expertise is becoming out-dated and less relevant to organisational requirements
- being exposed through a lack of awareness of emerging trends and developments which will have a major impact on your role
- a narrowness of perspective which finds it difficult to converse knowledgeably with senior people

At Best

- keeping well informed of broader trends which will have an impact on your career fortunes
- an alertness which picks up information quickly and sees the implications for current or future roles
- a confidence of approach which interacts in an educated way with people from different walks of life

“Go around asking a lot of damfool questions and taking chances. Only through curiosity can we discover opportunities and only by gambling can we take advantage of them”

Clarence Birdseye

Risk of Over-Development

- a broad spread of interests which becomes superficial and lacks substance in any specific areas
- committing too much time to activities outside your immediate area of responsibility and losing control of issues of pressing importance



Flexible Curiosity

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Business life evolves and moves on. Current skill sets may become out-dated and redundant during major shifts in technology, working practices, etc. An alertness to emerging trends and developments will keep you aware of your “employability” and “marketability”. It will also create a broader and more varied set of life experiences to draw upon in establishing yourself as a credible player.

Possible Factors if Low

- an introspection which stays within own “comfort zone” and focuses on familiar tasks
- a fundamental conservatism which believes there is nothing “new under the sun”
- an intellectual “laziness” which lacks the motivation to explore new ideas and their implications
- a lack of interpersonal competition from others to act as a stimulus in questioning and challenging your own approach
- little opportunity for social contact with people from different walks of life and with different interests

Prompts for Development

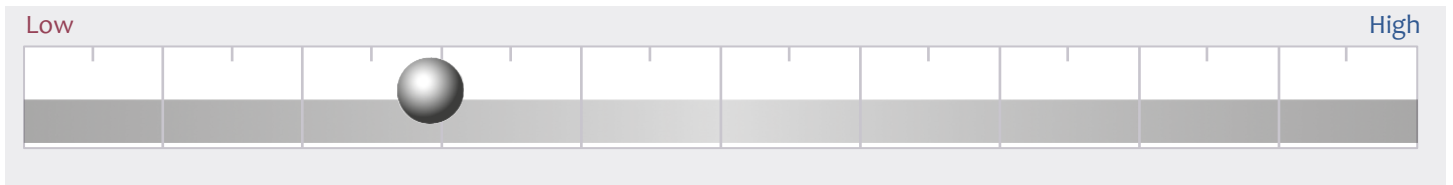
- take time to go and talk to managers across the enterprise. What do they see as the key trends facing the industry?
- read a quality newspaper. Give yourself time each week to review key political/economic/social trends
- pursue an activity/hobby completely different to your current interests. Use it as an opportunity to meet people you wouldn't normally come into contact with
- subscribe to an “abstracts” service to provide summaries of trends across different management, professional and scientific disciplines

Notes



Using New Challenges to Speed Development

Your Score



Low

- finding it difficult to adapt to the unusual or unexpected and a reluctance to move out of familiar working practices and routines
- a fear of failure which avoids risky assignments makes it difficult to learn from mistakes
- suffering from "information overload" in taking on new assignments which makes it difficult to identify clearly the key issues

At Best

- utilising new challenges to force you to take time out to learn the essentials of disciplines outside your current area of expertise
- acquiring new knowledge and expertise quickly through taking on unusual and unfamiliar problems which force you to come up with fresh solutions
- planning systematically what you need to know in order to make an impact on new projects and tasks

"Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out"

Bruce Levin

Risk of Over-Development

- becoming over-whelmed by attempting to learn too much too quickly and finding it difficult to identify clear priorities
- being prepared to take on those new assignments which do not have sufficient organisational support to be tackled successfully



Using New Challenges to Speed Development

WHY THIS TACTIC MATTERS

Life is unpredictable and throws up unexpected problems. For some, these represent risks to be avoided; for others, these are opportunities to be exploited. Although these challenges can be uncomfortable, with the potential to expose any shortcomings, they do provide momentum to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Possible Factors if Low

- a fear of failure and an unwillingness to step outside your current "comfort zone"
- being overwhelmed by the speed, intensity, and volume of change and finding it difficult to make sense of new experiences
- pessimism and a tendency to anticipate and expect the worst
- lack of self reflection to translate experience into learning lessons and principles

Prompts for Development

- take stock of your career strengths and limitations; where are the obvious gaps which will constrain your future advancement?
- see beyond the superficial description of new assignments to identify the nature of the development experience. What is similar/different to your previous experience?
- put in place a support infrastructure and resource – mentoring, coaching, etc - to help manage the transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar
- keep a diary or journal to track your achievements and skills development

Notes



Overview Profile

A review of the twelve themes,
indicating the balance of your tactical
approach

Career Tactics: Overall Profile

A detailed assessment of twelve different tactics grouped within six overall themes, highlighting the specific tactics which you have deployed most and least often.



Building a Reputation

Projecting a Confident Image

engendering confidence from others that you have the capability to take on more demanding responsibilities; conveying an aura of self belief which gains the interest of others and a desire to get involved in your activities

Gravitating Towards Success

involvement in success creates a virtuous circle in which you are assigned to more glamorous projects with more opportunity to learn and develop; finding it easier to argue for the greater allocation of resources for future assignments



Managing Complex Relationships

Balancing Stakeholder Groups

resolving the problems of your boss to gain a reputation for achieving results and getting things done; negotiating objectives to clarify priorities and manage organisational expectations of delivery; managing conflict constructively to break down initial differences of views and establish agreement

Building Broad Based Commitment

building relationships with a broad cross-section of organisational groups who can promote your interests; creating good will from people at all levels and work areas ensures that your proposals are well received and accepted



Optimising Personal Energy

Focus on Priorities

concentrating energies on those activities which have maximum leverage; identifying and tackling those problems which will have most corporate "pay-back" in raising your profile; the application of basic disciplines to manage work-load creates additional time to reflect, think and plan future goals and tactics

Controlled Delegation

ensuring that the organisation recognises your contribution and that others don't receive praise for your efforts; utilising delegation to develop new talent who represent key players for the future



Recognising Organisational Realities

Managing Corporate Politics

identifying which functional areas are becoming more or less politically important and will have most impact on your future priorities; using the flow of information and allocation of resources to determine how the corporate decision making process can be managed in your interests; gauging the political mood in deciding how best to position and present your proposals

Mastering the Art of Timing

identifying the appropriate timing and pace in the introduction and implementation of organisational change; knowing when to be patient and when to move quickly to seize emerging possibilities which will have an impact on career advancement; sensing the organisational mood in judging when to push hard for greater reward and recognition and when to hold back



Strategic Self Management

Playing to Strengths

conducting a frank and honest evaluation of your fundamental personal assets and liabilities to establish career opportunities and risks; prioritising work activity and outcomes based on your specific expertise and skills

Managing Ego Emotions

putting personal feelings to one side to control the agenda in interpersonally charged and pressurised situations; keeping a psychological distance from others which avoids over-familiarity and maintains respect; defusing criticism or hostile reactions through your complete composure and calmness



Maximising Learning Potential

Flexible Curiosity

keeping well informed of broader trends which will have an impact on your career fortunes; an alertness which picks up information quickly and sees the implications for current or future roles; a confidence of approach which interacts in an educated way with people from different walks of life

Using New Challenges to Speed Development

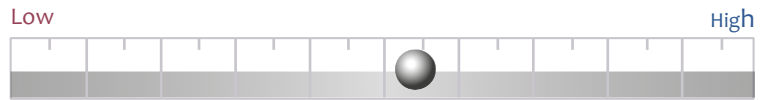
utilising new challenges to force you to take time out to learn the essentials of disciplines outside your current area of expertise; acquiring new knowledge and expertise quickly through taking on unusual and unfamiliar problems which force you to come up with fresh solutions

Career Tactics: Overall Profile



Building a Reputation

Projecting a Confident Image



Gravitating Towards Success



Managing Complex Relationships

Balancing Stakeholder Groups



Building Broad Based Commitment



Optimising Personal Energy

Focus on Priorities



Controlled Delegation



Recognising Organisational Realities

Managing Corporate Politics



Mastering the Art of Timing



Strategic Self Management

Playing to Strengths



Managing Ego Emotions



Maximising Learning Potential

Flexible Curiosity



Using New Challenges to Speed Development



Low

High

Key themes

Risks

a potential reluctance to respond to the demanding expectations of different stakeholder groups that becomes seen as overly cautious and resistant to change

looking to stay within your current comfort zone and running the risk that your colleagues will move to a different agenda

Opportunities

Reviewing the balance of your scores, how would you summarise your:

“Winning” tactic(s):

- tactical strengths which can be deployed for greater success?
- how can this tactic(s) be deployed to greater effect?
- what personal skills would you need to develop further to maximise the gains of this/these tactic(s)?

“Constraining” tactic(s):

- a difficulty in deployment which will hold you back?
- what impact might this have now? In future?
- is this a tactic which can be ignored? compensated for? developed?
- how easy or difficult would it be for you to develop this tactic?
- what specific actions can you take now?

“Downfall” tactic(s):

- the over-deployment of a tactic which runs the risk of derailment?
- what is the likelihood of this tactic being over-deployed?
- what do you think you can do to minimise the risks?



Career Pressure Points

The specific opportunities and risks you may face at different points in your career development

Pressure Points

What does your profile suggest about the specific risks and opportunities you might face at different moments in your career development? Eight different “pressure points” are outlined. For each, relevant observations and guidelines are displayed to reflect those tactics which are high and low.

Note that this section does not represent a series of prescriptive recommendations. They are prompts to stimulate your thinking. Use your common sense and wisdom to determine which may be especially relevant to you.

Pressure Points

- 1 Choosing the right job in the right organisation
- 2 Managing your first team
- 3 Managing your boss
- 4 Attending meetings
- 5 Dealing with conflict
- 6 Countering “Dirty Tricks”
- 7 Introducing and implementing change
- 8 Being side-lined or missing out on promotion

Choosing the right job in the right organisation

Making the right move to the right organisation at the right time boosts careers. And careers stall by taking on an impossible role within an organisation in decline. Evaluating your career options to identify that role in that organisation which will advance your long-term goals is therefore critical.

“Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life”

Confucius

Managing Low Tactics

If you move into this role/organisation how will it affect your current working relationships with your manager and peers? What are the chances that you will alienate them? Or will they provide you with their full support? Does it matter?

Before accepting the role, assess the interpersonal dynamics. Is the manager an individual you can work with positively? Are your new peers likely to assist and help you? Or will you be operating in an environment of conflict and low trust? What steps will you need to take in the early days to build constructive working relationships?

Review your career resume to reposition yourself as a change agent who is proactive in setting an agenda for improvement and making things happen.

Is the role a “sink or swim” position, one in which you will be expected to get up to speed immediately and exposed if you don’t make an instant impact? Or will there be structured training and development and management support to help you in the early days. Check what genuine and practical support will be available.

Managing High Tactics

Keep aware of the career market place to assess the value of your career portfolio. Is your skill set in demand or is there over-supply? How can you reinvent your strengths to create a stronger career proposition?

Roles don’t exist in an organisational vacuum. They can shift and flex. Negotiate to shape the role around your distinctive talents to allow you to do what you do best and minimise the impact of any shortcomings.

Managing your first team

Your first management role represents a new set of challenges, challenges requiring a shift in your operating outlook and work priorities. It is a test of your ability to get things done with and through others rather than simply as a result of your own individual efforts. As an important “first rung”, the organisation will look at the impact you have in this management role to evaluate if you can be trusted to progress further through the management ranks.

“The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or concluded that you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership”

Colin Powell (Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff)

Managing Low Tactics

Make it a priority to check your boss’s expectations of what is and isn’t required from the team. Don’t assume; ask the questions to clarify what really matters.

Go out to meet your peers to evaluate their perceptions of your team and where it needs to focus its’ efforts. Your peers no doubt have their own agenda; nonetheless their opinions will provide a “reality check” for your team. Use their feedback to convince any doubters within the team of the need for change.

Don’t assume that your team members will immediately follow you in taking on new projects and assignments outside its “comfort zone”. Take your team with you. You can’t do it all yourself.

Impress on your team the need to adapt to changing circumstances and to be prepared to abandon those established practises which won’t be relevant to the future. Be alert to resistance from those reluctant to change their approach.

Managing High Tactics

Review the business pressures facing the work group. Check that you don’t move the team away from organisational priorities to what suits you personally best. Although convenient in the short term it may hurt you in the medium term.

Be careful that you don’t direct work activity only around your personal preferences and capabilities and leave individual team members isolated to deal only with the most difficult and demanding tasks. Team morale will fall.

Managing your boss

Your boss is the second most important person in your organisation with the potential to help or hurt your career. Bosses come in all shapes and sizes, “good, bad and ugly”. All bosses need to be managed proactively to keep them on side and ensure they are supporting you in your current role as well as future progression.

“So much of what we call management consists in making it difficult for people to work”

Peter Drucker

Managing Low Tactics

Diarise time to meet your boss to review their expectations of you and what they see as important within your role. Summarise their views. Clarify any throw away comments to ensure you see the world through your boss's eyes.

Use your relationship with your boss to keep well informed of developments in other work areas which have implications for you personally. Is your work area in decline or is it viewed positively by the organisation? Do you need to refocus your priorities and efforts with your peers in other work areas?

Does your boss view you as the team cynic, quick to point out the drawbacks of new ideas? Point out the specific constraints constructively but ensure you convey enthusiasm for your boss's initiatives.

Keep up to date with your boss's plans for change. Establish yourself as a valuable sounding board to look at the risks and opportunities of new approaches.

Managing High Tactics

Outline to your boss your talents to ensure they understand how and where you can maximise your contribution. Make sure you are active in shaping your boss's plans and priorities.

Work out your boss's strengths and shortcomings. Relative to your own, are they very different? Use this to develop a constructive working agenda. If they are very similar, be careful you don't clash through your boss's tendency to meddle in your work activities or for you to criticise your boss's efforts.

Attending meetings

Meetings can be highly stimulating and engaging, providing a forum for problem solving and creative thinking. They can also be dull and frustrating and a drain on your time and productivity. But every meeting is an event that gives you a better insight into the organisation, its culture and way of doing things. Meetings also provide a snapshot of social dynamics to gauge power plays and alliances, to identify who may be for and who is against you.

“Eighty percent of success is showing up”

Woody Allen

Managing Low Tactics

Are you being excluded from key meetings? Ask why? Have you offended or alienated any of your peers? Talk privately to those stakeholders with whom you have the strongest relationship. Ask: what is going on? Check that there isn't a plot to marginalise you.

Don't focus your management meetings only on your team. Review the full list of your key stakeholders, sideways and upwards. Who else should you be contacting to arrange to meet?

If you think the meeting is going to address issues outside of your expertise, prepare well. Contact others in advance to elicit their ideas. Don't make naive comments which indicate you might be operating "out of your depth".

Don't let your scepticism be branded as negative. If you think the meeting is heading in a direction you don't like, outline the positives of the idea before listing the negatives. Your overall contribution will have more credibility.

Managing High Tactics

Set an agenda and meeting format that displays you at your best. Put yourself in the "driver's seat" by running the meeting in a way that allows you to be yourself.

Be careful that your meetings don't become one-dimensional. Vary your approach to incorporate a degree of surprise and unpredictability so that others don't know quite what to expect at your meetings.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict is inevitable. If everyone agreed about everything there would be a uniformity of view which would stifle creativity and innovation. Conflict, positively managed, is a catalyst for change and improvement. Badly managed however it possesses the potential to damage interpersonal dynamics and trust and to hurt you personally.

“The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend”

Abraham Lincoln

Managing Low Tactics

Are you “on your own” in this conflict situation and lacking the backing of your manager and peers? Do you need to back off and regroup to build greater support before you escalate the conflict?

Is the conflict emerging out of mismanaged expectations? Schedule meetings with your manager, peers and staff to review the issues. You may be surprised how refreshing it is to have a frank discussion of the reasons for the disagreement.

Be careful that others don’t take advantage of you when operating in a new role. Don’t respond to immediate demands. Don’t agree or disagree. Get to grips with the complexities of the issues before you commit yourself. But manage impressions to ensure you don’t get labelled as indecisive.

Be alert to the conflict situation that escalates and takes you into uncharted territory and requires you to tackle unfamiliar problems. Stand back. Do you have the skills yourself to progress or will you need to involve others to strengthen your position?

Managing High Tactics

Reframe the issues of disagreement to ensure the problem is defined in a way that suits you and plays to your strengths. Don’t allow the agenda to shift to your weaknesses.

See conflict as an opportunity to conduct a “reality check” on your skills and effectiveness. Review outcomes to assess what you did well/not so well and how to fine-tune your strengths. You will lose in some negotiations. Work out what you have learned about yourself when you are defeated.

Countering “dirty tricks”

Competition is an inevitable feature of the career landscape. Your success may be someone else’s failure, and your gain, their loss. Your peers and colleagues may not play fair. Dirty Tricks is that repertoire of stratagems, from the annoying and frustrating to the downright unethical, all with the potential to weaken your position. Many Dirty Tricks you should ignore, refusing to be drawn into petty gamesmanship which can only drag you down. But ignoring other dubious tactics will only create personal stress, diverting your energies from more productive activities. And other tactics will jeopardise your long-term career well being.

“If you get the dirty end of the stick, sharpen it and turn it into a useful tool”

Colin Powell

Managing Low Tactics

Difficult bosses come in all shapes and sizes. Look out for the boss who views you as a career adversary and uses their position to undermine your standing. Accept that you may have to change roles to move away from that boss who will sabotage your career.

Wise up quickly to the boss or peer who uses inconsistency to conceal their real intentions. They ask you to do one thing but then change their minds and expect something different. Clarify and summarise their expectations. If necessary, document and circulate the specific actions which have been agreed. Ask for any changes in requirement to be put in writing.

Ambitious colleagues may outmanoeuvre you in agreeing quickly to take on new projects and you become labelled as unresponsive or, even worse, lazy. Make positive noises but outline the pressures of current work priorities and commitments and why you don’t want to run the risk of over-extending yourself.

Don’t give the impression of not knowing what you are doing in the early days of a new assignment. Ask for support and assistance but in an assertive way to indicate that you are on top of the situation.

Don’t be deflected by that member of staff who gives advice (misguided) in the early days of a new assignment. Don’t believe everything you are told when you are new to a role. But remember you said what and who attempted to take advantage of your naivete.

Managing High Tactics

Your greatest strength may be your “achilles heel”. Be alert to flattery which praises you for a specific talent. You may find yourself being stereotyped and losing the flexibility to draw on other skills when you need to move roles.

Watch out for that career adversary who decides to take you head on, attacking you on the capability you see as your greatest asset. Lose that battle and you will lose your credibility for good. Check that you do indeed know your fundamental talents and keep the associated skills and expertise well protected.

Introducing and implementing change

Organisational change has its career risks and opportunities. Your involvement in successful implementation which delivers clear business benefits has the potential to raise your profile and identify you as an individual with initiative, innovation and independence. But the uncertainties of change contain inherent hazards. There is the risk of failure in implementation and criticism that you are personally responsible. Change also has the potential to create career adversaries, those who will lose out as a result of the changes with which you are associated.

“Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts”

Arnold Bennett

Managing Low Tactics

Are you embarking on a programme of change without the backing of key stakeholders? Check the expectations of your manager, peers and other senior colleagues to ensure your plans are aligned with their priorities. If you don't you will be exposed when the inevitable problems occur.

Outline how your specific plans for change fit within the bigger picture. Make the connections to ensure that what you intend to do supports other current and emerging initiatives within the organisation. Don't go out « on a limb » without checking who is backing you.

Don't hold back from making the changes which will make a difference to your work area. It is better to initiate and plan change than allow events to control you. Look for ongoing incremental improvements and then every six months conduct a major review to introduce more radical change.

Ensure that your own skill set allows you to coordinate change initiatives. Are you in danger of staying within a comfort zone which may become less comfortable as life moves on?

Managing High Tactics

Assess the implications of any planned change for you personally. At which points in the project plan are your talents most likely to make a difference? Where might your shortcomings be exposed? Plan your schedule to maximise your leverage and pinpoint where you can make most impact, organisationally and for you personally.

Will this project really enhance your key capabilities? Or is it simply “more of the same” under a new wrapping? Look at the detail of your role within the project plan. Can you shift the focus to allow you to test and stretch your existing expertise to the limit?

Being side-lined or missing out on promotion

Career progression is not always a smooth and easy path onwards and upwards through the organisational hierarchy. There will be setbacks and disappointments, moments where you may feel your career is stalling. Although personally difficult in the short term this may be a time to re-evaluate your career position, rethink options and plan out a shift in tactics.

“Most great people have attained their greatest success just one step beyond their greatest failure”

Napoleon Hill

Managing Low Tactics

Have you alienated key work colleagues at senior levels? What impact has this had? Irreversible and you now need to move on to explore new career options? Or can you recover the situation through greater interpersonal sensitivity and organisational insight?

Is your operating style too individualistic and you are seen as lacking concern for the organisational constraints and pressures facing your boss and senior colleagues?

Are you being sidelined due to your reluctance to shift your agenda and accept a different operating culture? Are you seen as resistant to change and no longer relevant to the organisation's future plans?

Is there a question mark about your ability to get up to speed quickly within an unfamiliar role? Work with an experienced colleague to review the first one hundred days to gain an insight into how best to maximise your impact when moving into a new position.

Managing High Tactics

Has the organisation shifted strategy and what you saw as unique career assets are no longer relevant? Is this specific to your current organisation or have you allowed your skill set to become out-of-date?

Look beneath your career resume to locate your deep-seated talents to rethink how you can deploy them in new ways. Be imaginative in reviewing your fundamental career proposition to consider wider career possibilities where your natural skills can be applied and made more marketable.