# WORK POLITICS

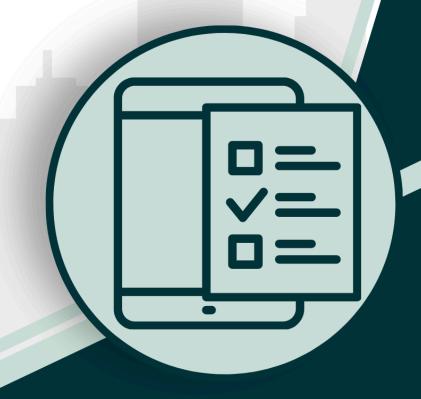
## **CULTURE ASSESSMENT FOR LEADERS**

#### **Includes:**

- Checklist
- Recognizing Political Operators
- Improving Behavior

Bette A. Ludwig, PhD

STRATEGIST || CONSULTANT WRITER



### **Output** Checklist for Leaders to Assess Political Culture

1.	Understanding the Organizational Landscape
	Are there clear communication channels within the organization?
	Is decision-making centralized or decentralized?
	Do employees feel comfortable voicing concerns or ideas?
2.	Power Dynamics and Influence
	Are there clear guidelines on how decisions are made and by whom?
	Are promotions and recognitions merit-based and transparent?
	Is there favoritism or evidence of cliques influencing decisions?
3.	Collaboration vs. Competition
	Do departments work collaboratively toward shared goals?
	Is competition between teams or individuals fostering productivity or tension?
	Are resources distributed fairly across teams?
4.	Ethics and Accountability
	Are ethical guidelines communicated and enforced consistently?
	Are leaders held accountable for their actions?
	Are employees encouraged to report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation?
5.	Cultural Health Check
	Do employees feel valued and respected regardless of rank or role?
	Is there a shared understanding of the organization's mission and values?
	Does the organization celebrate diversity and inclusion?

#### Identifying a Political Environment Using the Checklist

A political environment in an organization often involves power dynamics, favoritism, silos, and competition overshadowing collaboration, ethics, and transparency. Leaders can identify whether their organization has a political culture by systematically using the checklist provided. Here's how each section highlights the signs:

#### 1. Understanding the Organizational Landscape

- Clear communication channels: A lack of open and transparent communication can indicate hidden agendas and unclear expectations.
- **Decision-making processes**: Centralized decisions without input from others often suggest control by a few, typical in political environments.
- Comfort in voicing concerns: If employees are hesitant to speak up, it might indicate fear of retaliation or mistrust in leadership.

**Political Sign**: Limited transparency, controlled decision-making, and employees feeling unheard.

#### 2. Power Dynamics and Influence

- **Guidelines for decision-making**: Ambiguity around decision-making creates opportunities for informal power players to emerge.
- **Merit-based promotions**: If promotions seem arbitrary or based on favoritism, the organization may have cliques or power struggles.
- **Evidence of favoritism or cliques**: Visible alliances influencing decisions or resource allocation highlight a political culture.

**Political Sign**: Decision-making that is opaque, favoritism undermining meritocracy, and evident cliques.

#### 3. Collaboration vs. Competition

- Shared goals: When departments or teams prioritize their own interests over organizational objectives, silos develop.
- **Competition fostering tension**: Healthy competition improves performance, but excessive competition creates resentment.
- **Resource distribution**: Unfair allocation of resources can indicate power plays or favoritism.

**Political Sign**: Competition and silos preventing collaboration, and inequity in resources creating division.

#### 4. Ethics and Accountability

- **Ethical guideline enforcement**: Inconsistent enforcement suggests selective accountability, often used to protect those with influence.
- Leader accountability: Leaders who are not held accountable for unethical behavior foster mistrust and resentment.
- **Reporting unethical behavior**: If employees fear reporting issues, it reflects a culture where retaliation or inaction is common.

**Political Sign**: Ethical double standards, lack of accountability, and fear of raising concerns.

#### 5. Cultural Health Check

**Employee value and respect**: A culture where respect is tied to rank or role undermines inclusivity.

Shared mission and values: When employees lack alignment with the organization's mission, factions often form.

**Diversity and inclusion**: A lack of meaningful diversity or inclusion efforts can signal tokenism or systemic biases.

**Political Signs:** Disparity in respect, unclear organizational mission, and superficial diversity efforts. A high occurrence of political signs across the checklist (e.g., favoritism, fear of speaking up, silos, or inequitable practices) indicates a political culture.

#### **Recognizing Toxic Behaviors**

#### → Pay Attention to Communication

- ◆ Notice passive-aggressive remarks, gossip, or public criticism.
- ◆ Identify patterns where team members interrupt or dismiss others.

#### → Evaluate Decision-Making Practices

- ◆ Look for secretive decision-making or exclusion of key stakeholders.
- ◆ Be aware of favoritism or uneven treatment among employees.

#### → Examine Team Interactions

- ◆ Identify instances where departments or individuals avoid collaboration.
- Observe if competition between colleagues creates tension or withholding of information.

#### → Check Employee Sentiment

- High turnover, frequent absenteeism, or visible stress may indicate deeper problems.
- ◆ Notice if employees seem disengaged or withdrawn.

#### → Assess Leadership Behavior

- ◆ Watch for leaders who micromanage, show favoritism, or avoid responsibility.
- ◆ Look for inconsistent application of policies or standards.

#### **Improving Workplace Behavior**

#### → Establish Clear Standards

- ◆ Communicate expectations for respectful and ethical behavior across all levels of the organization.
- ◆ Ensure these standards are easy to understand and accessible to everyone.

#### → Lead by Example

- ◆ Leaders should act with transparency, empathy, and fairness.
- Acknowledge mistakes openly and encourage accountability.

#### → Encourage Open Dialogue

- ◆ Provide channels for employees to share concerns safely, such as anonymous surveys or feedback sessions.
- Actively listen and address feedback thoughtfully.

#### → Provide Training Opportunities

- Offer workshops on topics like conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and creating inclusive environments.
- Equip managers with tools to address toxic behavior effectively.

#### → Address Problems Quickly

- ◆ Confront unproductive behavior with specific, private, and constructive feedback.
- Focus on solutions that guide the individual toward improvement.

#### → Promote Teamwork and Collaboration

- ◆ Encourage projects that involve multiple departments to create connections and mutual respect.
- ◆ Celebrate shared achievements to reinforce cooperation.

#### → Ensure Accountability at All Levels

- ◆ Apply policies consistently to everyone, including leadership.
- ◆ Develop a process for addressing repeated harmful behaviors, with consequences if necessary.

#### → Highlight Positive Contributions

- Recognize and celebrate actions that align with the organization's values.
- Acknowledge teamwork, ethical decision-making, and professional milestones in a meaningful way.