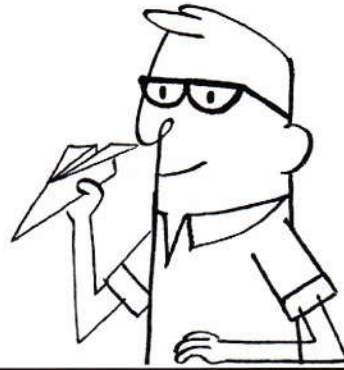


HOW TO START PLAYING POSITIVE POLITICS

Honest answers will reveal strengths and areas to focus on so you can build the alliances you need to successfully navigate your workplace. The goal: To be the coworker that everyone wants to collaborate with.



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1. HOW YOU OPERATE AT WORK

For each statement, circle the choice that most closely matches your work style. Then match your answers on the next page with how your coworkers may view you.

1. I tend to:

- A. see what's good in something.
- B. spot what can be improved.

2. Lunch is a time to:

- A. eat with others.
- B. catch up on email.

3. Bringing personal drama into the office:

- A. is okay as long as the boss is aware.
- B. depends on how urgent it is.

4. I tend to:

- A. avoid irritating coworkers.
- B. get to the bottom of my irritation with a coworker.

5. Collaborating with others:

- A. sometimes makes ideas better.
- B. is the best way to develop ideas.

6. I usually:

- A. work within normal business hours.
- B. am more productive outside of the 9-to-5 workday.

7. Working overtime:

- A. comes with the territory.
- B. should be avoided if possible.

8. Complaining about colleagues is:

- A. natural.
- B. appropriate in the context of helpful feedback.

9. My coworkers:

- A. are over-achievers.
- B. should bring more to the table.

10. When I get an emotional impulse at work:

- A. I act on it.
- B. I mull it over to make sure it's right before speaking up.

11. Suggesting ideas is:

- A. all part of a day's work.
- B. best done only when the idea is really good.

12. A big benefit of conversation is:

- A. coworkers learn about my projects.
- B. to stay up to date on other parts of the company.

See Page 2 to match your answers. 

2. WHERE ARE YOUR GAPS?

Based on your answers in #1, write one to three areas to focus on.

3. WHO CAN YOU LEARN FROM?

- A. With your focus areas from #2 in mind, identify a coworker who excels at positive office politics. It doesn't matter if you have a relationship with that person. You can learn by noticing how s/he handles the areas you'd like to get better at.
- B. Consider asking him or her for coffee, with the purpose of learning how s/he became so good at navigating office relationships.
- C. If your s/he seems open to it, ask for some mentorship. (You might want to read our post on asking for and receiving feedback beforehand: www.unstuck.com/tell-me.)

HOW YOUR COWORKERS MAY SEE YOU

Match your answers from page 1, then go to step #2.

- 1A. I tend to see what's good in something.** You're supportive and optimistic — attractive qualities. But if you're too agreeable, people may suspect you lack the chops for deeper thinking. Challenging an idea, in the spirit of collaboration, can strengthen respect.
- 1B. I tend to spot what can be improved.** Someone who can find the flaws offers an invaluable trait. But if it all you do is see what's wrong, your input may not be welcome.
- 2A. Lunch is a time to eat with others.** You're approachable, which is mandatory for office relationships. But if you socialize more than most, or if your chatter is gossipy, you won't be approached for conversations that really matter.
- 2B. Lunch is a time to catch up on email.** Being industrious is impressive — so long as you don't make your colleagues feel like slackers. It breeds resentment. Spending 30 minutes to go for coffee with a coworker shows you're human and builds relationships.
- 3A. Bringing personal drama into the office is okay as long as the boss is aware.** Keeping your supervisor in the loop when you know you'll be distracted builds empathy. But check the frequency; more than every six months will raise eyebrows on how well you can manage.
- 3B. Bringing personal drama into the office depends on how urgent it is.** Discretion in your personal life shows trustworthiness. Just don't be so discreet that colleagues don't know you well enough to bring you into their work circles.
- 4A. I tend to avoid irritating coworkers.** Many of your colleagues feel the same. But you also create an us-vs.-them dynamic that could trip you up if, in the future, you need the irritating person's cooperation.
- 4B. I tend to get to the bottom of my irritation with a coworker.** Yes, direct communication goes a long way, and builds respect. Before you schedule a meeting, think through what you hope to achieve. If you just want the other person to stop bugging you, better to say nothing at all. If you're ready to empathize, go for it.
- 5A. Collaborating with others sometimes makes ideas better.** A balance of team and solo work is a sound formula. But if you prefer the solo work, be mindful of your interactions within a group setting. If you're mostly silent or critical, your reputation as someone people want to associate with will be diminished.
- 5B. Collaborating with others is the best way to develop ideas.** Everyone loves a team player, and that's you. Just don't forget that you need to take charge now and then to build your leadership skills.
- 6A. I usually work within normal business hours.** You're available to others, and that's half the battle. And if you're truly engaged in your work and with others, that's the other half.
- 6B. I usually am more productive outside of the 9-to-5 work day.** Not everyone operates on the same clock, and good bosses know that if the work gets done well, that's what matters. But the hours you keep may frustrate others, who see you as unavailable, or acting as if the rules don't apply to you.
- 7A. Working overtime comes with the territory.** It's good to take extra work hours in stride. But if you're always burning the midnight oil, some may resent it if you make a show of your extra hours.
- 7B. Working overtime should be avoided if possible.** If you've managed a healthy work-life balance, tell us your secret. Just don't watch the clock if you don't want people thinking you're phoning it in.
- 8A. Complaining about colleagues is natural. It's human nature to bond over shared distress.** But when that distress is another person, it's also natural to wonder who else you're talking about — and that compromises trust.
- 8B. Complaining about colleagues is appropriate in the context of helpful feedback.** Your intention to provide helpful feedback is admirable. Complaining, however, rarely is. It appears that your energy is focused on the problem rather than the solution. And feedback is best given directly, not behind someone's back.
- 9A. My coworkers are overachievers.** And if you're an overachiever, too, you fit right in. However, if your work style is more laid back, there may be a perception that you're on cruise control.
- 9B. My coworkers should bring more to the table.** Sounds like you're nursing a sense of superiority. If you don't think your colleagues aren't up to snuff — but you are — that attitude will be detected.
- 10A. When I get an emotional impulse at work I act on it.** At moments like this, your enthusiasm is contagious; people love to align with the next smart thing. Just be wary that a lot of impulses can jumble priorities, bringing your strategic prowess into question.
- 10B. When I get an emotional impulse at work I mull it over to make sure it's right before speaking up.** You're thorough and thoughtful, but you may not get the credit as a rainmaker. Trusting your instincts enough to speak up once in awhile could change that.
- 11A. Suggesting ideas is all part of a day's work.** People probably admire your generative nature because so many of us freeze at the thought of coming up with new ideas. That's why it's important to make sure your less-vocal coworkers get heard.
- 11B. Suggesting ideas is best done only when the idea is really good.** A well-considered idea is a thing of beauty. People will ooh and ahh both at your contribution. If you're loathe to speak up, however, coworkers may forget to include you. And if you don't give them the chance to build on your idea because you've already thought of all the angles, you lose the chance to build bonds.
- 12A. A big benefit of conversation is coworkers learn about my projects.** Yes. When others know what's going on with you, it opens the door for collaboration. Just make sure you find out what they're up to as well.
- 12B. A big benefit of conversation is to stay up-to-date on other parts of the company.** A fuller picture of what's up at work will make you a better employee — the purpose of positive politics. Return the favor by keeping your coworkers up-to-date on your projects.