

Can you really avoid politics when you have your own business?

Continuing her series on self-employment, Michelle Lucas, Executive Coach of greenfields looks at the common misconception that when people leave corporate life behind to start up their own business they can leave “politics” behind.

As a career coach many clients identify that a key reason for leaving is the internal politics that grind them down over time. However, it's important to identify what “politics” really is – because although it may look slightly different in the world of small business, make no mistake, it is still there.

The most common complaint about “politics” in an organisation is when decisions are made which don't make rational sense. Somebody somewhere has a different agenda and is sufficiently powerful to sway a decision for their own benefit. When you are in an organisation, you have a fair chance of identifying who those people are and what their agenda might be. At least you can watch how other people achieve success or failure and learn from them. However, whilst you might not have any politics in your own organisation – you probably rely on other companies for business. How good are your chances of understanding the dynamics of another organisation from outside? Unless your contact is right at the top of the organisation and has the power to decide things independently – you may still find yourself on the end of a failed bid that you felt certain you would win. This underlines the importance of targeting the genuine decision makers with your business development activities as well as getting to know as many people as you can in a company. The latter will give you a broader outlook on situations that could ultimately influence your destiny.

Another complaint in large companies is favouritism – i.e. It's not “what you know, it's who you know”. In your own business, you could choose to work only with those people that are on your side – however, the reality is that this is rarely enough to develop a sustainable pipeline. As a “newbie” in the small business fraternity you are likely to want to go to networking groups to build your contact database. Networking groups often have a “1 from each business type” clause and if it's already taken – how will you know when it becomes available again? You will need someone on the inside to give you the heads up. Even when you're “in” you will find there are existing loyalties that you have to try to understand, and many business owners who are “long in the tooth” will be sceptical about how long “the newbie” will last – you'll need to be patient in building these relationships before you see any business coming your way.

Occasionally there are times in an organisation where for some reason your “face doesn't fit” – once your reputation is tarnished in a Company it can be difficult to turn this around and so often people decide to leave and try again. Whilst it might be frustrating to have to do this, once you have found a new company to work for, you at least start with a “clean slate”. However, if this happens when you are a small business operating in the locality – it's much harder to “start again” unless you change geographies. The small business community is usually a tight knit one – and if you upset someone you can expect the grapevine to work against you. Remember there are often personal connections amongst the business networks that you don't know about – so just like working in a company, be professional with everyone “just in case”. Bad news travels faster than good!

Interestingly, your dislike of politics could be a great differentiator for your business. If you can be transparent in your dealings with people including your employees, you have the potential to set yourself apart from others and develop a reputation for being easy to do business with. Of course this will be particularly appealing to other business people who have the same dislike of politics as you do. Accept that politics does exist in the small business world you need to understand it even if you don't want to play it ! Stick to your values and you will build a business to be proud of!

Focusing you for success !

Contact : Michelle@coachU4success.co.uk

www.coachU4success.co.uk

Contact Michelle : 07717 122950

If you are thinking of setting up your own business and would like to know more about what support greenfields can offer, visit www.coachU4success.co.uk and look at the Business Start Up Coaching page or contact Michelle direct on 07717 122950.

Focusing you for success !

Contact : Michelle@coachU4success.co.uk