

Take your next step to connect to us. Email us if you have an interesting story to share related to career.

facebook.com/  
thedaily.nextstep  
Email: nextstep@thedaily.net

Download the  
PDF version  
from our  
website.

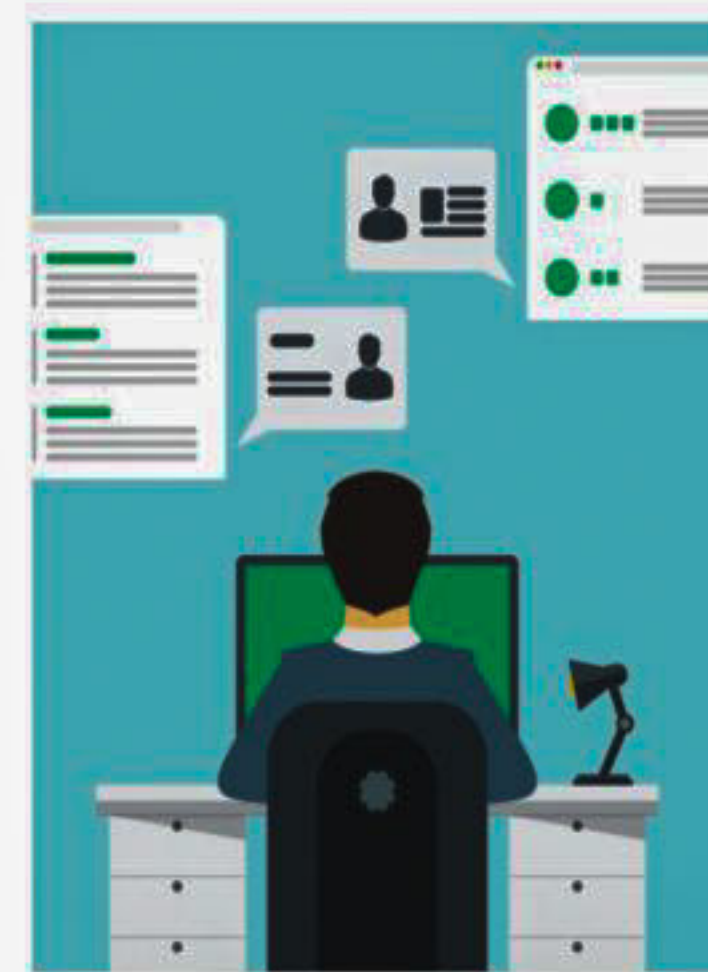
The Daily Star  
DHAKA, FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2015  
e-mail: nextstep@thedaily.net

# NEXT STEP

## Weathering the corporate storm



*When people say office politics does not exist in their workplace, they are fatally wrong. According to Marie G. McIntyre, a career coach and an organisational psychologist, office politics is "being smart about how you manage the relationships at work."*



### WATER COOLER CHRONICLES



#### 1. SHOW RESPECT AND TOLERANCE

There are two possible slides to this – keep mum or start a fight. Needless to say, both are undesirable. By being tolerant and showing respect, one can earn points even if one is disliked. You will be reciprocated appropriately. Who knows, maybe your co-worker may even bat for you in front of the boss. Don't escalate a situation – if you think someone is not being nice to you, go talk to them directly, start a conversation, try to find out the clues behind their not being nice to you, try to settle the differences amicably. If that's not working then you can up the ante by going to the boss or taking help from other colleagues.

Indeed, politics is everywhere. When managers have to fight for limited resources and use influence to optimise resource usage and get the job done in time, politics is of paramount importance.

That being said, it's safe to say that success in career and playing the office politics effectively are intricately linked. But then again, as noted earlier, there exists a rational thought process among us. This may be tampered with. Employees may collude with each other to eliminate any threat from other parties. An influential colleague may

orchestrate a performance that potentially costs someone their job. You may get stabbed in the back when you're least expecting it. The alpha male or female who now exists in almost every office will call the shots unperturbed by the consequences of their decisions. In such cases the dark side of office politics comes to the fore. Such practices will occur now and then, but they should not serve as a basis to judge office politics. To be on the safe side, as well as to be a stellar player, keep the following tips in mind.

#### 2. CREATE GOOD CONTACTS

Ehsan Chowdhury, Assistant Vice President at HSBC Bank Bangladesh, believes it is important to know the people who can help one navigate through the avenues of corporate life. He says- "The most important thing is to get to know the right persons who can help you get things moving." He also adds, "Another thing is to maintain good rapport with your seniors."

When was the last time you used Internet Explorer? Sure it crashed and burned and froze your computer and caused you pain that left you a sad lonely miserable cynic with trust issues. In the meantime, Microsoft fixed its browser, crashing is no longer frequent and from what I hear, the interface looks really cool. But the impression that has been formed of IE in my head is fixed now and unless this was a post-apocalyptic world where Chrome and Firefox no longer exist, I would not dream of clicking the little blue icon of disaster.

What I am trying to say is first impressions matter. And that does not mean the first time you meet a person – the initial phase of them getting to know you will stick in their mind. So if you managed to show up late to your job for the first week (it's been year since you went to school, of course you were a little late), your boss already thinks of you as unreliable and it will take a lot of convincing to get them to change that.

Impressions stick like cheap éclairs to your gums. So words of the wise – do not do something that will come back to haunt you. You exude confidence when you walk, and in a bid to impress your future bosses and colleagues, you come off as arrogant. No matter how good you are at your job, it is beyond a doubt that everyone now thinks of you as full of hot air. The way you interact with your colleagues will determine how they treat you throughout – if you come off as annoying or arrogant, those peer evaluations will not be flattering.

All this can go the other way too. First month of your job and you practically bury your social life to impress your superiors. You stay in late, finish the work even before it is assigned to you, if this was the Olympics, you would be Usain Bolt. And then after a month, you realise everyone else is getting away by doing a lot less. Your pace slows down. But your boss now thinks you are slacking off – if you could do it then, why can't you now? In the meantime that colleague that you absolutely loathe is away vacationing in the Bahamas.

And needless to say, if you work in the corporate world, what you wear matters. You might not have to wear suits every day, but it is never ever ok to show up at work wearing a neon green shirt and crocs. Even outside the corporate world, it is important to know what clothing is acceptable and what is not. It might be perfectly alright in a startup to walk in wearing shorts and a t-shirt. So if on the first day you walk in looking like someone straight out of Mad Men, you might just be labelled as the square.

It is a shallow world, and you will be judged by everything that you do. First impressions are the basis on which people will form an opinion of you. Stay on the safe side and don't be a douche or a pushover at the start. And remember, opinions and impressions, no matter how strong they are, can be changed. Just that the effort of doing so will leave you regretting every single mistake that you ever made.

MOYUKH MAHTAB

#### 3. DON'T LET DISAGREEMENTS GET PERSONAL

Follow up with a word of praise or apology following any disagreement. This is obviously better than saying nothing or starting a bitter quarrel that could signal the complete end of your work relationship.



#### 4. MAKE SURE THE BOSS KNOWS YOU ARE ADDING VALUE

Mr. Saajid, a product specialist at a renowned multinational telecom operator, suggests you bat for yourself. He says "Try to highlight the good things one has done, through numbers like key performance indicators (KPI)." It's hard to argue against that if you don't communicate your achievements or your team's to the senior management, chances are really low that they will get to know about those achievements. In times of cost cutting, the mistake may come back to haunt you as you may get fired even when you did something worthy. But then again, keep a check on how frequently you flaunt your achievements.



#### 5. BEWARE OF VITAL CUES

Is your team unhappy with you? Is your boss unhappy with you? Are other departments objecting to what you are doing? What are your co-workers thinking? It is important to get wind of the answers to such questions, they will tell you a lot about the current status quo of the office as well as the existing perception regarding you.



#### 6. PROJECT YOURSELF AS A PROBLEM SOLVER

The boss is likely to be impressed. He or she may as well recommend you for that promotion or send you to represent your department at seminars or conferences.



Office politics is, therefore, a double-edged sword, which if used wisely can help you win the so-called rat race in the professional world. What we need is a fresh dose of confidence and that has to come from the upper management of the companies. They need to instill confidence in their employees, that the bogyemen of the corporate world will not be able to thrive through the means of dirty play, nepotism or favoritism. Although, companies talk of dynamic cultures in the ads, it's time for them to iron out the unscrupulous employees who give office politics a bad name.

TAHMID SADMAN

### NEWS

## Hero without a uniform

It is always the risk-takers that get rewarded with success. But success is not only limited to the risk-takers. When we speak of making a difference to the society, we need to think differently first. We need to step out of our comfort zone and go ahead to say it, or do it, till the message is received. We can be anyone, the act can be anything.

*If you think you're not one of us, think again.*

What does the word difference mean to you? We define it as something that causes a stir, pushes the limit, and pulls the trigger. It can be as small as providing a beggar with a meal, or taking an injured animal to the vet. It can be teaching the alphabets to the elderly maid of your house, it can be helping someone cross a street, it can be anything that gives a deserving person a much needed smile that day. *Have you made any such changes that you would like to share a story of?* Rahimafrooz Solar and Rahimafrooz Globatt have taken the initiative to bring these difference-makers all under one roof and share their stories of success. What started as an internal campaign for Rahimafrooz where the management shared their personal stories of success to motivate and engage the employees, has now grown to become a fully crowd-sourced platform for stories, images and videos of those stories that make a difference to society. The campaign "Are You Making a Difference" invites people from all walks of life to come together and share their stories of how they made a difference to their surroundings. Share your stories at <http://make-a-difference.rahimafrooz.com/>, #MakeADifference, and with Facebook pages of Rahimafrooz Solar and Globatt. Contribute and watch it grow into a powerful building made of blocks of each of our dreams.

## Spring clean your career

While the traditional idea of "spring cleaning" may not seem like your style, it's a great time to go through your life and your career to figure out what you'd like to do differently as you enter the next part of the year.

#### 1. Get your finances figured out

Easy-to-use budget app, Mint has been consistently rated one of the top personal finance apps. The app is super easy to budget and track expenses and it even takes care of your credit cards.

#### 2. Ever dreamed of Inbox Zero?

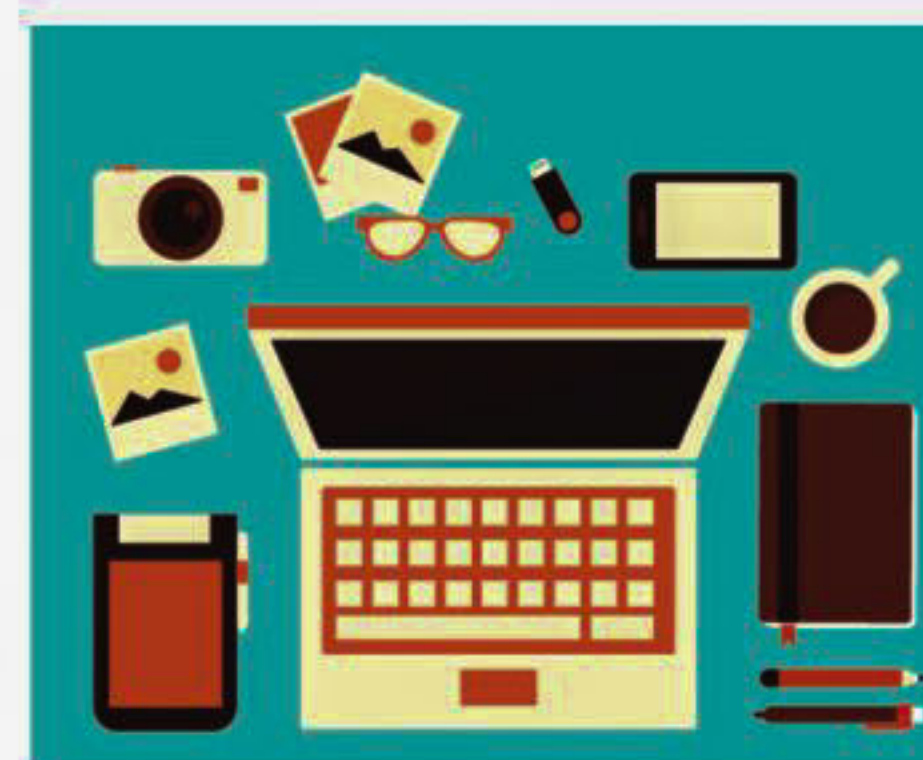
Clear thousands of emails out of your inbox ASAP with Unroll.me which takes care of all those unnecessary subscriptions. And turn deleting emails into a fun exercise complete with points and tasks with The Email Game.

#### 3. Get your resumes up to speed

If you're looking for a job this spring, consider updating your resume. Try out a new template and definitely take out all those bits left lying around since high school. A couple of small edits to your LinkedIn profile and you'll be ready to network with anyone.

#### 4. Make it a goal to finish your to-do lists

Don't overthink to-do lists, just change your



approach. Divide up work into tiny 5-minute chunks. Reward yourself and most importantly, get pumped up about whatever it is you're planning to work on. If you're not excited about, consider if it's important or not; if it's not, eliminate it from your list all together.

#### 5. Put your weekends to use

Spend a weekend learning a job-boosting skill or two. Learn the basics of a new language or volunteer for a local cause. Try out the free Core-K course of the week (linked below) and revitalise your workplace persona.

OLT  
ONLINE  
LEARNING  
TOOLS

Energize your career  
with e-learning

Your free e-learning course  
this week:

How to work with  
manipulative people

Please visit: <http://www.oltstore.com/nextstep/>

#### Course overview

Have you ever dealt with someone at work who tried to get you to agree to something you really didn't want to do, even when it wasn't best for the team or organisation? During your career, it is likely that you'll come across coworkers who use manipulation to get what they want, and it may be difficult to avoid them. To ensure you don't get caught up in their games, you need to be able to recognize when you're being manipulated and to have the necessary skills to deal with the manipulative behavior. This course provides discusses effective strategies for dealing with it, such as setting healthy boundaries, documenting your interactions, and confronting the manipulative person.