



"Tapping The Hidden Talent Pool"

Office Politics

Many aspects of office politics are socially determined and can present challenges for some neurodivergent employees. These factors can include the following:

- What is the chain of command for addressing work-related issues?
- Who do you "cc" on an email?
- Who gets rewarded and for what?

Every company has an official organisational chart, but many companies also have an unofficial or unwritten chain of command that reflects the actual structure of power and decision-making in each department. These so-called matrix structures can be a nightmare for Neurodivergent employees to navigate. Questions such as "Why do I have to do work for this team?", "Why is this work more important for this line manager than my own line manager?". These kinds of challenges in matrix structured organisations can prove to be bewildering for some Neurodivergent employees who will often cope better in structured, organised command chains. While most employees quickly learn who to approach for guidance, whose requests have priority, who to email about project updates, and who has the final say on a project, a Neurodivergent employee might find this confusing.

The style of management of some companies is less hierarchical and more matrix-structured and cooperative in nature. Employees from one department often work on projects managed by people from other departments, creating a chain of command that is confusing to many individuals on the spectrum. For example, an accountant working on an interdepartmental project may not know whether to report to their manager in the accounting department or the team leader.

Furthermore, understanding the office dynamic around why a rule may apply to a colleague but not to someone higher up can also be a challenge. The unwritten rules for who gets rewarded or

punished and for what type of behaviour may be frustrating for some Neurodivergent employees who takes great pride in their work and believe strongly in a meritocracy. Neurodivergent employees are motivated by doing a good job, and sometimes their perceived naivete around office politics results in assignment of more than their fair share of work or unfair treatment in other ways.

Our Advice

- Say what you mean in straightforward language, rather than using business jargon, idioms, or sarcasm.
- When you notice that an employee is missing subtle cues from another colleague, intervene with a direct explanation.
- Give more clarification if requested and understand that some Neurodivergent employees may need to hear an answer more than once to process its meaning.
- Specify the chain of command in your workplace.
- Have clear rules of engagement within the office, especially as it pertains to office politics and working as part of a team. If you have a matrix structure in your organisation. Introduce your Neurodivergent employee to all the key business functions and managers so that they can form a better understanding of how your organisation functions.