



The Secret Handshake: Mastering the Politics of the Business Inner Circle

Kathleen Kelley Reardon

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In *The Secret Handshake*, top corporate consultant and USC management professor Kathleen Reardon explores and reveals the hidden rules on the ins and outs of corporate politics that you won't find outlined in any employee handbook.

Based on hundreds of candid interviews with executives at Fortune 500 companies who have achieved their goals and joined the inner circle, *The Secret Handshake* lays bare the unstated conventions that govern and shape corporate hierarchies. Taking readers inside boardrooms to learn firsthand how the top decision-makers view and assess the employees under them, it offers invaluable advice on such career-building tactics and skills as getting noticed, networking, persuading others, knowing which battles to fight, and mastering the art of the quid pro quo. For all those who aspire to be part of the decision-making body of their organization, *The Secret Handshake* is the ultimate intelligence report on whom to trust and whom to watch out for, how to manage the inevitable conflicts that will arise, and how to read between the corporate lines.

The Secret Handshake: Mastering the Politics of the Business Inner Circle Details

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Vsy says

Excellent book, very practical, does not have the touchy-feely, politically correct, "let's love each other" approach that others books on the same theme have. A must-read for the politically savvy wannabees

Joseph Santiago says

I found this book somewhat revealing for some of the organizational cultures I have encountered. Had some good ideas for these competitive times but it did get dry in places. It is worth the read as I have never encountered another book like it.

Lawrence Carrington says

You don't have to like office politics... but you must be aware of them if you want to (a) keep your job and (b) thrive in your career.

This book will help you understand the style of your organization, and how your personality will fit in (or not, and what you can do about it). A must read.

Heng says

This book is extremely useful to me because I have shied away from politics previously.

I feel this book is a realistic application of emotional intelligence. A lot of it is how to read people and assess the situations before reacting to them. It is useful that the author provided questionnaires to assess the reader's own leadership and negotiation styles. The analytical side of these is very appealing to me.

Another aspect I appreciate about this book is the empirical approach to the subject. It is all meant to be an experiment that involves making a hypothesis and testing it. The constant action, observation, and feedback are what makes a master. It is liberating to learn that I don't need to be a master to participate in the game.

There are many examples in the book. They are analyzed so that the readers can look for signs in similar situations. Also in places, several different potential responses are given and analyzed so that the readers can think more about their own answers and expand their repertoire to be more flexible.

Highly recommend to a novice in politics. There are some actionable items, but not too many. Most of the book explains the situations from different perspectives that are new to me. For the political savvy ones, this book might be shallow. But I would not know that.

Thomas Burky says

If, like me, you have never seriously studied office politics, then you need to read this book. Built like a textbook, this meaty subject is broken down into digestible bits with plenty of practical examples and explain the how and why of office politics. Politics is here defined as "how things get done" and it's true. This is a critical read for your career.

Bob Nichols says

The book is *The Prince*, modernized. The author is aware of the parallels. In Chapter 13, titled "Channeling Machiavelli," she writes that "I even began to feel a kind of uneasy sympathy for Machiavelli." But she reassures herself. She knows that, realistically, it's an illusion to get into the upper echelons of success ("the secret handshake") on "technical competence" or on "brain power alone." "In a way," she concludes, "That's what Machiavelli was trying to explain when he wrote *The Prince*." But, in a way, Machiavelli's "ends justify the means" advice was, ostensibly, also about promoting the public's interest, not about personal advancement or private profit.

This book is all about those essential dos and don'ts that go beyond competence and brainpower. It's about the art of self presentation. It's about "impression management,"* the subtle and not-so-subtle submission and dominance rituals, about "developing your favor bank,"** and about meeting the right people by "strategic chance." It's de Waal's apes, in suits.

Reardon describes well, extremely well, the realities of organizational politics. Give her credit for that. A book like this should force a serious self-examination about the meaning of success and integrity and whether it's possible to walk that fine line between selling oneself (competence, honesty, conscientiousness) and selling one's soul. The author devised a procedure called "PURRR" to tell her clients how to "read between the lines." Cats, she adds, don't "just dart outside before checking the terrain." Cats read the room so to say, but that's about all they have in common with what the author is putting forward.

Reardon endorses what she describes. It's hard to imagine having a conversation with her. And it's hard not to read this book without thinking that it too is about self-marketing (it's subtle; it's smooth) at the highest level.

*"Impression management is a personal power tactic. An organized office and consistent punctuality can convey the impression that a person has an organized mind. Good grooming and tasteful clothing suggest confidence and pride. Walking briskly and looking busy but not harried, especially in times of stress, can convey capability. Humor under such conditions indicates charm and composure.

"It's even important to notice what the heavy hitters are wearing, how their voices sound, when they speak and for how long, with what amount of humor, and the many other ways they go about impressing people.

**"One of the most common errors in the back-and-forth of favors is insufficient gratitude. For large favors, gratitude for a lifetime might be in order. When that person calls on you for assistance, you provide it. This doesn't mean you lose all integrity and reciprocate in whatever fashion desired by the favor donor. Hopefully, he or she won't expect that of you."

Esraa says

As a person new to office politics , I find this book very helpful and easy to understand. I like the many convoluted situations mentioned in the book and their solutions.

E says

Informed guide on how to use politics to get ahead

In 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, the classic work on how to acquire and maintain power through the ruthless use of insidious politics. Machiavelli argued that when it comes to politics, morality is passé, and hypocrisy and deceit can be eminently useful. Nearly 500 years later, management expert Kathleen Kelley Reardon introduces her own book on the subject of politics and how to use political techniques to get ahead. She details the indispensable political skills that ambitious individuals need to move up inside any modern organization, and explains how to use them effectively and ethically. `getAbstract` appreciates Reardon's comprehensive understanding, savvy and wisdom concerning the business world's most nuanced and little understood subject: personal politics. Many dislike politics and find its practice unseemly. However, as Reardon writes, without it, nothing gets done and no one gets ahead. Once you accept this fact, learning how to use politics morally and advantageously makes perfect sense.

Jill says

Interesting exploration of workplace politics and how to negotiate one's way within various settings. Although not a major focus of the book, this excerpt has stayed with me for weeks: "While both men and women need to be competent to be promoted, there's a greater tendency to promote men on potential and women on their track record."

Brandon says

Had some food for thought and some good ideas but still a rather cynical view of career development

Lori Grant says

A should-read book on office politics which will happen to you and around you whether you participate in politics or not.

Cheryl says

Interesting book. I read it for my politics class and it gave me insight into how to read people and build better working relationships with them. Though, I will say there are some things I don't agree with but that could just be me.

Wanda says

I wish I had known years ago what I am learning from reading this book!

Marcus says

Decent discussion of corporate politics and how to avoid being sidelined. Encourages one to understand the politics of their organization and embrace politics as a tool to getting ahead. Good examples of how to diffuse conflicts and manage conversations. Prefer the Career Warfare books by D'Alessandro

Arne says

Its very old-school, complete with magazine-esque scoring sheets to figure out what kind of political person you are. Reardon actually talks about the Handshake less as a metahpor and more like it really exists along with secret decoder rings and matching lycra power suits (imagine a boardroom full of power rangers wearing ties). What I'm most amazed by is that it was only published in 2002 and not in 1985.

I did find her definition of politics as "going outside the normal processes to get things done" as thought provoking for the rest you can skip it
