

## **Ideas for Political Survival**

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There is an old saying “Too soon old – too late smart.” During my long career in a large organization, I somehow managed to do some pretty bonehead things politically. I will never be someone who is politically brilliant because I am far too outspoken. But I have learned some things and want to pass on an idea to others.

In some training sessions, we learn about how people have their own unique learning style. Some of us learn only by doing, some by hearing, some by visualizing, etc. I remember one class where we all had to reveal our most useful learning style. When it got to my turn, I said, “My style of learning is the rake.” Everyone in the class looked a little puzzled, so I explained. If I step on a rake and the handle comes up and thwapps me in the face, I have learned something that I will never forget. That is a pretty accurate description of how I learned my horse sense on political mistakes to avoid. It is not to say I have found all the potential rakes out there. I still get konked from time to time, but hopefully each new learning is from a rake I have not seen before.

I will share my own list below only as an example. It is more helpful if you make up your own list based on your personality and situation or the mistakes you have already made. Start with just one or two key things and build your list over time. It is a simple matter of keeping a computer file and remembering to add to it every time a rake handle hits you in the face.

### **Whipple’s 14 Rules for Political Survival (soon to be 15)**

1. Know who butters your bread – and act that way
2. Act consistent with your values and spiritual rightness
3. Make 20 positive remarks for every negative one
4. Don’t grandstand – practice humility – no cheap shots
5. Understand the intentions and motivation of others
6. Follow up on everything – be alert & reliable
7. Do the dirty work cheerfully – not too good for it
8. Agree to disagree – walk away with respect
9. Don’t beat dead horses – repetition is a rat hole
10. Be aggressive, but not a pest – it’s a fine line
11. Constantly read people’s intentions & desires

12. Administrative people have real power – cultivate it
13. Keep an active social life with work associates
14. Always, Always be considerate and gracious

I often wonder how long my list will be when I take my last breath in the nursing home. We tend to learn political lessons in all areas of our life, not just at work.

*The preceding information was adapted from the book **The TRUST Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals**, by Robert Whipple. It is available on [www.leadergrow.com](http://www.leadergrow.com).*

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