

The Battle for the Iron Throne . . . Coming to a Cubicle Near You!

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Cersei Lannister said it best: "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die." It may often feel much the same at work. Whether you want to play or not, it's called *office politics*. Some days are filled with conflict, alliances and intrigue: all in the row of cubicles you call *work home*. So how can you play without losing your head . . . so to speak?

Put the kingdom—er, organization—first

Yes, advancement is important, and you're in competition for limited opportunities. And you should talk about your accomplishments, but not at others' expense. A laser-focus on personal gain can undermine the team's objectives and hurt the big picture. You're all working toward creating a successful organization!

Observe

Be your organization's wise-one: observe, listen and learn how decisions and influence are managed. What are the organization's core values? Are short or long-term results more valued? Knowing these priorities will help match your skills to the organization needs.

Choose allies

While a strong central support can help you gain ground now, a better long-term strategy is to build allies across the organization. Be interested in what everyone does—it's a business, not just a department. Don't affiliate with one group only; a key individual's departure can change the organization map and wipe out that promotion you wanted.

Thwart enemies

Anyone can be a victim of character or accomplishment sabotage. Occasional complaining may earn you the label "problem child," but inaction can hurt your advancement. Stay calm, investigate, and talk about a resolution with your boss or Human Resources. There are peace treaties to be had with folks in your office.

In the words of King Robert: ". . . sitting on a throne is a thousand times harder than winning one." If office politics get too ruthless, you can always cross the sea to new lands. And who knows, you might come back with a dragon.