

## **The Politics of Sports Field Management**

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- “Managing a sports field is easy, people make it complicated”.
- The politics of sports field management is not about manipulating others to serve our own ends. Politics is a means of recognizing and, ultimately, reconciling competing interests within the organization.
- We compete with others within our organization for resources, recognition, and approvals. Nothing comes easy. To survive and for peace of mind, we need to get along with our customers.
- Within each organization, some stakeholder’s agendas have more legitimacy than others, including yours and mine.
- At many levels, the players seem to be the easiest customers to satisfy.
- Coaches exist to develop their players and guide the teams to victories. At times the coaches seem to be at odds with the sports field managers, considering the ways their practices and drills use or abuse their fields.
- Athletic Directors have a very large sphere of influence. They also hear everything from everybody. An Athletic Director on your side is an important ally.
- The owners are the people who give you money. Or withhold it. The chain of command is important and must be respected. Know where you stand. Respect the food chain.
- There are usually support people within this hierarchy. These include administrative assistants, accounting specialists, and others who are the wheels of the organization. Be careful you don’t get caught under the wheels.
- Parents can be tough critics but they can also be staunch supporters. How they are treated usually makes the difference.
- The public and the press have a perception of you or your field that can be accurate or inaccurate. Like it or not, these external customers can influence your internal customers.
- Vendors, suppliers and contractors can help make you look good or let you wither on the vine. So can your coworkers and other sports field managers. Treat your network right.
- It’s great when our customers are happy and it’s miserable when they’re not.
- A problem is the difference between what somebody has and what they want. Our job is to solve problems; big and small.
- We get requests all of the time. Occasionally we get some real doozies! Sometimes it seems the more arcane the request, the higher on the food chain the requestor is. If you are asked to do something like this, DO IT, DO IT CHEERFULLY and DO IT ON TIME no matter how peculiar the requests may appear to you. You are going to have to do it anyway.
- When you make a commitment or promise to do something... do it. Do it as promised. Do it when promised. Always keep your promises, so be careful what you promise. People remember what you say.
- Even if you did all the big things right, mishandling the small details will probably cost you.
- "A good excuse is not the same thing as a good job."
- Good Human Relations skills begin with Respect. That is, respect for ourselves and respect for others.
- Image is important. Execution is important.

- › To earn respect of peers, subordinates and others you must have an element of humanity otherwise the forces of an organization will work against you.
- › Loyalty is important. Always look out for your people.
- › You must remember that you need not like everyone that you work with, work for or who works for you. But you do need to work with them.
- › Everyone's time is important. Always respect other people's time.
- › The culture usually gets the latest version of its personality from its Leadership.
- › Cultural change usually happens slowly (think of glacial movement). It is often influenced by the Leadership, but can also be shaped by powerful internal or external forces.
- › You either manage change or fall behind.
- › When you try to inflict change upon your customers, they will probably resist it. Consider how hard it is to change yourself and you'll understand what little chance you have of trying to change others.
- › Know what you have to accept and what you have to change. The skill is in knowing what is no longer acceptable, what and how to change and when. But remember, when the winds of change blow hard enough, the most trivial of things can become deadly projectiles.
- › We all want to be in control. If not to control everything around us, at least to not let external forces control us.
- › Power helps you get things done.
- › By knowing the limits of your power, you don't have to waste what power you do have on things that you have no power over.
- › Avoid bossing people around. It is easier and more efficient to pull than to push.
- › Rewards come in many forms. A simple "Thank You" - that is sincere - is always a welcomed reward.
- › If you don't give credit where credit is due, you will find it difficult to solicit that successful support again. Plus - it is amazing how the organization knows who really did the work anyway and you wind up the real loser in the eyes of others
- › Personal relationships grease the wheels.
- › Beware of emails. Sometimes a phone call works best.
- › Keep people in the loop.
- › Mind your own business.
- › Always keep your emotions under control when interfacing with others in your organization.
- › Just because you get invited to an argument doesn't mean you have to accept.
- › Pick your battles.
- › Is it better to be happy than to be right?
- › Grass is more forgiving than people.
- › Disagree without being disagreeable.
- › Timing is everything.
- › Have a vision, have a plan. Think before your act. Being organized helps both of these.