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Enhancing organizational goal congruence: A solution to organizational politics



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Enhancing Organizational Goal Congruence: A Solution to Organizational Politics

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Results of moderated multiple regression analyses on data collected from 979 workers in 5 organizations confirmed the hypothesis that supervisor–subordinate goal congruence would moderate the relationship between organizational politics and organizational commitment. Similar analyses on data collected from 366 workers in 2 of those organizations provided partial support for the second hypothesis that goal congruence would also moderate the relationship between organizational politics and job performance. Perceptions of politics were more strongly related to expressions of commitment and supervisor-rated performance among individuals who did not share the priorities of their supervisors than among those whose goal priorities were consistent with those of their supervisors. Results suggest that supervisors and managers can help their employees cope with politics by making efforts to ensure that they share their goal priorities.

Workers have long recognized that the pervasiveness of workplace politics constitutes a threat to individual and organizational goals. Surprisingly, researchers paid little attention to workplace politics as a target problem for organizational assessment and intervention until the late 1970s (e.g., Mayes & Allen, 1977). Conceptual and empirical work has focused on politics at the level of the organization (e.g., Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). However, the potential for success in addressing problems associated with workplace politics may be greater when focused at the level of the first-line supervisor than at the level of the organization. The purpose of this study was to test the assertion that the efforts of first-line supervisors to enhance agreement on organizational goal priorities among their employees would decrease the impact of organizational politics on outcomes for those employees (Witt, 1995).

Organizational Politics

Mintzberg (1983, 1985) viewed organizational politics as reflecting actions beyond the parameters of accepted

organizational behavior that are designed to promote self-interest. These actions are taken without regard to or at the expense of organizational goals. The career-enhancing practice of “saving the baby” is an example of politics. Managers may deliberately permit failure in areas within their span of control or withhold assistance to other areas (i.e., let the baby fall into the water). Then, just as executive attention is focused on the critical situation, the manager jumps in to fix the problem with fanfare (i.e., saving the baby from drowning). In such cases, the manager gains credit and visibility for fixing the problem at the expense of avoidable disruptions to business operations.

Theorists (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Gandz & Murray, 1980) have argued that politics is best conceptualized as a subjective state. Subsequently, researchers have focused on *perceptions* of politics and their adverse effects on workers (for literature reviews, see Cropanzano, Kacmar, & Bozeman, 1995, and Ferris & Judge, 1991). The negative impact of politics stems from its impact on the “social contract” (Keeley, 1988) between the employer and employee (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997). This contract is a mixture of economic and social exchanges (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). For example, management awards pay increases and employability-enhancing training opportunities. Coworkers provide social relationships. Politics affects both the economic and social aspects of the employer–employee exchange. For example, cliques formed on the basis of self-interest characteristic of high levels of politics compromise the quality of personnel decisions. Similarly, organizationwide norms of saving the baby and other forms of strategic self-presentation are antagonistic to developing social relationships.

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Politics and Organizational Commitment

Researchers have conceptualized organizational commitment as reflecting emotional attachment and involvement—the strength of the social exchange (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979)—and as a function of the economic investment in the organization and the cost of leaving it (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981). Ferris et al. (1989) suggested that employees are unlikely to feel committed to organizations they see as political. Similarly, Cropanzano et al. (1997) argued that the lack of predictable support at work makes the investment of long-term organizational membership somewhat risky. Employees are likely to seek exit strategies when the investment is not paying off; alternatively, they may elect to remain when it is. Empirical evidence has indicated that perceptions of politics are inversely related to expressions of organizational commitment and self-reported turnover intentions (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Nye & Witt, 1993; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1994). To replicate previous findings, I proposed the following:

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of organizational politics are negatively related to expressions of organizational commitment.

Politics and Job Performance

Randall et al. (1994) suggested that high levels of politics reduce individual performance. This may occur in two ways. First, politics may have a demotivating effect on workers. As noted by Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, and Anthony (in press), at least two theoretical perspectives support this assertion. Expectancy theory suggests that work motivation is dependent on the performance–reward link. However, reward distribution in political environments is based on factors extraneous to performance (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Thus, perceptions of politics weaken the link between performance and valued outcomes. Similarly, equity theory does not advise distributing rewards on the basis of “going along to get ahead” or membership in a clique to promote self-interests. Doing so creates feelings of unfairness, which affect the discretionary aspects of performance (Moorman, 1991). Second, political environments may reduce the levels of cooperation from others, as cooperation may not only be against the norm but also risky. Moreover, individuals in political situations immerse themselves in their work (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) and thus are unlikely to make themselves available to help coworkers. Low levels of cooperation compromise goal achievement and degrade efficiency.

Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of organizational politics are negatively related to job performance.

Reducing the Impact of Organizational Politics

Ferris et al. (1989) proposed that workers will be less affected by politics when they have (a) an understanding of events at work and (b) feelings of control. Understanding is the knowledge of why events at work take place (Sutton & Kahn, 1986). At least three studies have shown that understanding—operationalized by Ferris et al. (1996) by the three-item Tetrick and LaRocco (1987) Understanding of Organizational Events scale, by Ferris, Frink, Gilmore, and Kacmar (1994) as tenure, and by Kacmar et al. (in press) as three items assessing inclusion in supervisory decision-making processes—reduced the impact of politics on job anxiety, job affect, and self-reported performance. Ferris et al. (1996) also found that politics had less impact on outcomes among workers reporting greater control over their work environment.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is common for employees to complain that they do not understand management’s priorities. This lack of understanding may adversely affect performance, as workers may act on low-priority goals. It may also affect commitment, as workers may have difficulty in assessing long-term person–organization fit without knowledge of company values and priorities (Kristof, 1996; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Thus, low levels of understanding are likely to compound the problems inherent in political environments. Therefore, increasing understanding and decreasing politics may increase commitment and performance.

However, attempts to reduce organization-level political norms are unlikely to succeed (see Witt, 1995). In contrast, first-line supervisors are well-positioned to counter the negative impact of organizationwide political norms by increasing understanding among their subordinates. They can explain relevant issues, set direction, directly address resistance to their efforts, act quickly, and take follow-up action.

Consistent with the logic of Ferris et al.’s (1989) model, it is likely that when subordinates understand and share their supervisor’s priorities, they will be less affected by politics. By providing for a more straightforward assessment of person–organization fit as well as feelings of control, an understanding of organizational priorities reduces the salience of the experience of politics on development of organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of politics are more strongly related to commitment among individuals who do not share the priorities of their supervisors than among those whose goal priorities are consistent with those of their supervisor.

Knowing the priorities may abate the impact of politics on performance not only by supplying appropriate strategic or tactical direction but also by providing a sense of security when levels of politics are high. This sense of

security may take two forms. One is a feeling that effort directed toward pursuit of those objectives will be rewarded. The other involves a reduced risk of being visible in the pursuit of objectives, including cooperating openly with others.

Hypothesis 4: Perceptions of politics are more strongly related to performance among individuals who do not share the priorities of their supervisors.

Method

Participants and Procedure

I collected data from five organizations, with logistical help from on-site human resources staff. Employees were asked to complete the surveys at work on company time and were assured that participation was confidential. I asked the first-line supervisors to provide their goal priorities and assured them that their responses would be treated confidentially. In Samples 4 and 5, I also asked the first-line supervisors to provide performance ratings on their direct reports and assured them that these responses would be treated confidentially.

Sample 1. Questionnaires were distributed and returned via the internal mail system to all 502 employees of an organization providing telephone-based financial collection services. Because of a concern about anonymity, only one demographic item was included in the survey, which asked whether the employees had worked less than (57% of the respondents) or more than 12 months (43%) in the organization. Of the 502 employees, 391 (78%) participated, but complete data (including supervisor goal ratings) were collected for only 301 (60%).

Sample 2. All 300 employees of an industrial organization were asked to participate in the study; although 241 (80%) participated in two large group meetings, complete data were collected for only 175 (58%), of whom 116 (66%) were men and 59 (34%) women. Their self-reported organizational tenure were (a) less than 1 year, 1% of the respondents; (b) 1 to 3 years, 27%; (c) 4 to 10 years, 46%; (d) 11 to 15 years, 10%; (e) 16 to 20 years, 8%; and (f) 20 or more years, 8%.

Sample 3. Questionnaires were distributed and returned via the internal mail system to 267 employees of a production organization. Although 240 (90%) participated, complete data were collected for only 137 (51%), of whom 14 (10%) were men, 123 (90%) women, and 93 (68%) minorities. Their self-reported tenure in the organization were (a) less than 1 year, 15% of the respondents; (b) 1 to 4 years, 42%; (c) 5 to 10 years, 29%; (d) 11 to 15 years, 9%; and (e) 16 or more years, 7%.

Sample 4. All 410 workers in a telemarketing organization were asked to participate in the study; 378 volunteered (88%) and completed surveys in small group meetings. However, complete data (including supervisor-rated performance scores) were collected for only 240 (59%) employees, of whom 72 (70%) were men, 168 (70%) women, and 117 (49%) minorities. The data collection was not done anonymously. Tenure in the organization, age, sex, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) race codes (recoded into two categories: minority and nonminority) were procured from organization archives. These demographic variables were included in the analyses be-

cause of their potential to account for variance in the variables of interest (e.g., employees with longer tenure might have greater access to information and thus perhaps greater goal congruence). Moreover, also included in the analyses were self-reported years of education and each participant's score on the short form of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA; Watson & Glaser, 1994), a g-factor measure selected on the basis of job analysis results indicating that analytic thinking was critical to job success. The validity of the WGCTA has been well-documented (e.g., Wood & Stewart, 1987), and it was administered with the other instruments. These variables were included because employees with more educational experience or greater cognitive ability might be more capable of "catching on" to supervisory communications about goal priorities and thus account for some of the variance.

Sample 5. All 310 workers in a distribution services organization were asked to participate in the study; 254 (82%) volunteered and completed surveys in small group meetings. However, complete data were collected for only 126 (41%) employees, of whom 27 (22%) were men, 99 (79%) women, and 69 (55%) minorities. The data collection was not done anonymously. As in Sample 4, organizational tenure, age, sex, and EEOC race codes (recoded into two categories: minority and nonminority) were procured from organization archives. Also included in the analyses were self-reported years of education and each participant's score on the Wonderlic Personnel Test, Form 5 (WPT; Wonderlic Personnel Test, Inc., 1992), a commonly used g-factor measure selected on the basis of job analysis results. The WPT was administered with the other instruments.

Goals Measured

I asked the senior management team in each organization to provide five to eight nonoperational goals (March & Simon, 1958) that reflect value priorities rather than unit-specific tactical objectives. The goals for each sample are presented in the Appendix.

Job Attitude Measures

Organizational politics. I used the four-item Going Along to Get Ahead subscale of the Kacmar and Ferris (1991) Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) to assess perceptions of organizational politics. The reliability (α) estimates were .70, .72, .75, .71, and .71 for Samples 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Given that Nye and Witt (1993) found the POPS to be unidimensional, assessment of politics by this subscale of the POPS should yield information similar to that provided by the full scale. High scores reflect perceptions of higher levels of politics.

Organizational commitment. I used the Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) four-item scale to assess organizational commitment. It assesses the propensity to leave as a function of alternative inducements. The reliability (α) estimates for this scale in Samples 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were .78, .74, .75, .76, and .75, respectively. High scores reflect greater commitment.

Supervisor Ratings of Performance

Criterion items mirrored results of job analyses from both samples. In Sample 4, the supervisors rated the employee's

performance using 10 items ($\alpha = .94$; e.g., “[employee name] cheerfully follows rules, policies and procedures”). The supervisors in Sample 5 rated four items ($\alpha = .85$; e.g., “[employee name] makes an extra effort during periods of peak demand”). Items were presented on a 5-point scale (1 = *weak, or bottom 10%*, 2 = *fair, or next 20%*, 3 = *good, or mid 40%*, 4 = *very good, or next 20%*, and 5 = *best, or top 10%*). High scores reflect higher levels of job performance.

Goal Congruence Analyses

Hypotheses 3 and 4 focus on the moderating effect of the goal congruence between the employee and first-line supervisor. Therefore, I calculated the agreement along goal priorities between the individual employee and his or her first-line supervisor. As pointed out by Vancouver, Milsap, and Peters (1994), other forms of congruence are important when the individuals have similar interests and perceptions of climates (Johnston, 1976; Payne & Mansfield, 1973). A question might be whether employee–boss goal congruence is actually reflecting some other, perhaps more salient, form of congruence. Therefore, to more rigorously test Hypotheses 3 and 4, I also assessed employee–peer congruence. This was operationalized as the agreement between an employee and the average goal-importance ranking of his or her peers in the work unit (i.e., individuals reporting to the same supervisor).

Following Hudson and Campion (1992) and Vancouver and Schmitt (1991), I used the *D* statistic profile score (Cronbach & Gleser, 1953) as the indicator of congruence. The *D* statistic is the square root of the sum of the squared differences between each goal ranking of the individual and the ranking of the other constituency, either the average ranking of peers in the work unit or the ranking of the immediate supervisor. Appropriately, researchers have followed Cronbach (1958) in pointing out several limitations in the use of the *D* statistic and other profile analysis measures (Edwards, 1993, 1994; Edwards & Parry, 1993; Johns, 1981). One concern has been that the *D* statistic does not take into account the direction of the difference. As implied by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991), however, the issue with regard to goal congruence is not whether the goal is of higher or lower priority, per se. Rather, the issue is that across the key goals of the organization, disagreement—whether explicitly recognized or not and in either direction—may lead individuals to adopt and follow day-to-day priorities that are inconsistent with those of their peers and managers. Another concern has been that difference scores are conceptually similar to their component variables. However, this notion has not been universally accepted (e.g., Tisak & Smith, 1994). Indeed, in the case of the present study, the employee’s rank of an organizational goal is conceptually distinct from the comparison of the employee’s rank with the supervisor’s rank.

A promising alternative to the *D* statistic is the polynomial regression technique advocated by Edwards (1993, 1994). This mathematical-modeling approach to a set of data maximizes the variance accounted for by determining all possible linear, interactive, and polynomial effects. It performs very well in illustrating the relationship between ratings and criteria in terms of multidimensional response surfaces (Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Parry, 1993; Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 1996). How-

ever, I used the more parsimonious *D* statistic, because my focus was on the moderating effect of differences in rankings rather than the main or interactive effects of individual constituency goal ratings on a criterion. I evaluated a specific, theory-based hypothesis and did not attempt to develop a general response surface model.

Results

The scale means, standard deviations, and intercorrelation matrix are presented in Table 1. As shown there, the results confirmed Hypotheses 1 and 2. Perceptions of organizational politics were inversely related to self-reported expressions of organizational commitment in all five samples; the correlations ranged from $-.25$ to $-.56$ ($p < .01$). Perceptions of politics were inversely related to the performance ratings (Sample 4: $r = -.18$, $p < .01$; Sample 5: $r = -.32$, $p < .01$).

I used hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) to test Hypotheses 3 and 4. In this approach, the incremental variance (ΔR^2) accounted for by the addition of the cross-product term to the equation reflects the effect size of the interaction. Table 2 presents results from two sets of regression analyses. The first features results with the five predictor variables common to each sample—politics, goal congruence with the boss, goal congruence with peers, the politics–boss congruence cross-product, and tenure. The second also features the results of the regression analyses, including all of the control variables available in each sample. As shown in Table 2, the cross-product terms of the politics and employee–boss goal-congruence scores added significant amounts of variance in the explanation of commitment, over and above the linear effects of the predictors. The cross-product terms added significant variance to the explanation of performance in Sample 4 ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$) but not in Sample 5 ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, *ns*).

To graphically depict the interaction, I followed a procedure advocated by Stone and Hollenbeck (1989), plotting slopes at three levels of goal congruence: at the mean and at one standard deviation above and below the mean. Figure 1 provides an example of the five plots of politics and goal congruence predicting commitment scores, presenting the plot of the regression equation from Sample 5. Figure 2 presents the plot of politics and goal congruence predicting performance scores in Sample 4. Confirming Hypotheses 3 and 4, these figures show that perceptions of politics were more strongly related to commitment (Figure 1) and performance (Figure 2) among individuals who did not share the priorities of their supervisors than among those whose goal priorities were consistent with those of their supervisor.

The ΔR^2 s presented in Table 2, ranging from .01 to .03, reflect very small amounts of additional variance con-

Table 1
Intercorrelation Matrix for all Samples

Variable/sample	M	SD	β -C	β -P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Politics															
Sample															
1	2.41	0.97	-0.88	—	—										
2	3.13	0.90	-0.42	—	—										
3	2.66	0.95	-0.49	—	—										
4	2.79	0.60	-0.26	-1.57	—										
5	3.02	0.86	0.48	-7.95	—										
2. Congruence w/boss															
Sample															
1	8.07	2.25	-0.09	—	-.01	—									
2	5.58	0.75	0.04	—	.18	—									
3	7.90	2.31	-0.13	—	.08	—									
4	8.59	1.85	-0.01	-0.68	.12	—									
5	8.79	2.21	0.26	-1.17	.09	—									
3. Congruence w/peers															
Sample															
1	6.20	1.25	-0.09	—	.10	.44*	—								
2	2.20	0.89	-0.04	—	.18	-.47*	—								
3	5.64	1.55	-0.06	—	.04	-.02	—								
4	6.59	1.74	0.04	-0.59	.18*	.27*	—								
5	6.99	0.93	0.11	-0.97	.10	.11	—								
4. Tenure															
Sample															
1	1.45	0.56	0.23	—	.02	-.22*	-.12	—							
2	3.20	1.19	0.05	—	.11	.06	.07	—							
3	2.51	1.06	0.13	—	-.20*	-.08	.03	—							
4	2.68	3.57	0.00	-0.07	.12	-.06	-.03	—							
5	4.13	4.73	0.03	-0.42	.12	-.02	-.03	—							
5. Cross-product term															
Sample															
1	.01	19.52	9.86	—	.82*	.98*	.52*	-.09*	—						
2	-.17	1.42	-0.10	—	-.22*	.29	-.14	-.05	—						
3	.08	1.00	-0.14	—	-.02	-.01	-.02	.02	—						
4	.12	3.57	-0.10	-1.23	-.04	.06	.05	.01	—						
5	26.6	10.40	-0.09	0.57	.75*	.70*	.12	.11	—						
6. Commitment															
Sample															
1	3.05	1.26	—	—	-.32*	.03	-.12	.09	-.22*	—					
2	3.47	0.47	—	—	-.42*	.10	-.12	.03	-.05	—					
3	3.28	0.98	—	—	-.56*	-.18	-.07	.25*	-.13	—					
4	2.87	0.82	—	—	-.26*	-.04	-.01	.06	-.15	—					
5	3.24	0.92	—	—	-.25*	-.16	.09	.27*	-.30*	—					
7. Gender															
Sample															
2	1.32	0.47	0.14	—	.14	-.02	.01	.15	.03	.01	—				
3	1.90	0.30	0.16	—	-.08	.02	-.00	.12	.02	.10	—				
4	1.70	0.46	0.08	-0.44	.03	-.04	-.02	.16	-.05	.10	—				
5	1.79	0.41	-0.05	-2.89	.00	.09	-.06	.07	.03	.06	—				
8. Minority status															
Sample															
3	1.70	0.46	0.04	—	-.20	.01	-.07	.11	-.04	.14	-.06	—			
4	1.49	0.50	-0.34	1.34	-.02	.13	.13	-.06	.04	-.21*	-.02	—			
5	1.55	0.50	-0.09	-1.63	-.06	.11	.04	-.11	.03	-.23	-.17	—			
9. g factor															
Sample															
4	24.19	5.72	-0.02	0.12	-.18	-.30*	-.23*	.02	.04	-.05	-.19	-.20*	—		
5	18.16	6.57	0.01	-0.00	.07	-.12	-.11	.06	-.02	.14	-.22	-.41*	—		
10. Education															
Sample															
4	13.88	1.56	-0.04	-0.39	-.10	-.17	-.09	-.11	.14	-.09	-.22*	-.03	.32*	—	
5	13.31	1.39	-0.08	-0.41	-.03	-.06	-.04	-.03	-.06	-.11	-.19	.22	.17	—	
11. Age															
Sample															
4	29.93	9.79	0.01	-0.03	.04	-.07	.01	.40*	.05	.19*	.07	-.19	.07	.13	—
5	31.06	10.10	0.03	-0.03	.09	-.08	.07	.51*	.02	.41*	.10	-.21	.20	.09	—
12. Performance															
Sample															
4	49.92	10.10	—	—	-.18*	-.10	-.11	-.06	-.14	.10	-.02	.05	.10	-.02	-.07
5	50.17	10.30	—	—	-.32*	.07	-.08	-.24	-.17	.13	-.13	-.04	.07	-.05	-.20

Note. β -P = β in the equation predicting performance; β -C = β in the equation predicting commitment.
* $p < .01$.

Table 2
Regression Analyses

Sample	Criterion	Step 1			Step 2			ΔR^2	F	p<
		Adjusted R^2	F	p<	Adjusted R^2	F	p<			
Common predictors										
1. Collectors	Commitment	.10	9.6	.01	.11	8.7	.01	.01	4.5	.05
2. Industrial workers	Commitment	.16	9.5	.01	.18	8.6	.01	.02	4.3	.05
3. Production workers	Commitment	.35	17.9	.01	.37	15.7	.01	.02	4.4	.05
4. Telemarketers	Commitment	.08	5.0	.01	.11	5.5	.01	.02	7.0	.01
4. Telemarketers	Performance	.03	2.2	.06	.04	2.67	.02	.02	4.3	.05
5. Distribution employees	Commitment	.17	7.3	.01	.20	7.0	.01	.03	5.0	.05
5. Distribution employees	Performance	.11	4.6	.01	.12	3.9	.01	.01	1.2	ns
All control variables										
2. Industrial workers	Commitment	.17	7.7	.01	.19	7.4	.01	.02	4.6	.05
3. Production workers	Commitment	.31	11.1	.01	.33	10.4	.01	.02	4.2	.05
4. Telemarketers	Commitment	.15	5.1	.01	.17	5.3	.01	.02	5.8	.05
4. Telemarketers	Performance	.01	1.2	ns	.03	1.4	ns	.02	3.6	.05
5. Distribution employees	Commitment	.25	5.6	.01	.28	5.7	.01	.03	4.9	.05
5. Distribution employees	Performance	.09	2.2	.03	.10	2.0	.03	.01	.95	ns

Note. Step 1 included all the variables except the cross-product term. Step 2 consisted of the forced entry of the cross-product term. The common predictors were politics, goal congruence with the boss, goal congruence with peers, the politics-boss congruence cross-product, and tenure.

tributed by the interaction terms. At first, these might not appear to be compelling increments. However, these effect sizes (ΔR^2) are within the typical range of .01 to .03 for moderator effects in field studies (Champoux & Peters, 1987; Chaplin, 1991). A limitation of using the ΔR^2 as

the sole estimate of the effect size of the interaction is that it provides a conservative estimate, because it represents the *average* effect of the moderator across the *entire range of values* of the predictor. Another approach to assessing effect size better illustrates the practical significance of the interaction in the present study: quantifying

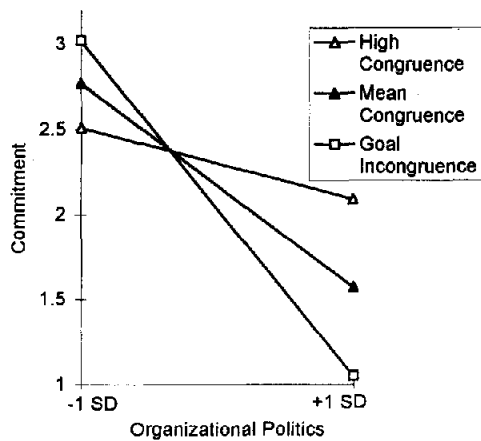


Figure 1. Organizational commitment scores regressed on organizational politics scores from Sample 5: low (incongruence), average, and high goal congruence scores of distribution employees. $Y = (.547 - .102f)X + (.248f + 1.05)$. High congruence = 1 standard deviation below the mean; goal incongruence = 1 standard deviation above the mean. Standard deviation of commitment = .92. f = 1 standard deviation above the mean of the moderator, at the mean, or below the mean.

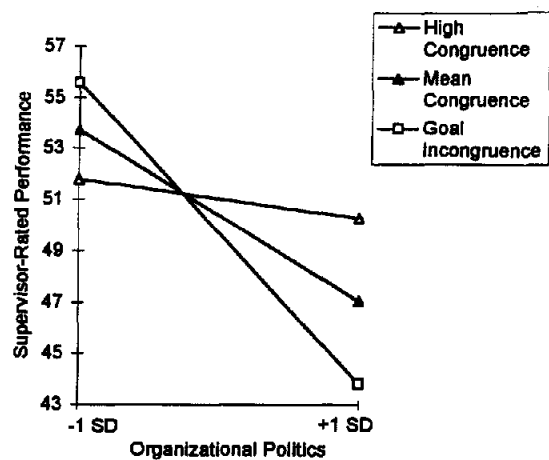


Figure 2. Supervisor-rated performance scores regressed on organizational politics scores from Sample 4: low (incongruence), average, and high goal congruence scores of telemarketers. $Y = (-1.67 - 1.29f)X + (-.64f + 50.38)$. High congruence = 1 standard deviation below the mean; goal incongruence = 1 standard deviation above the mean. Standard deviation of supervisor-rated performance = 10.05.

the size of the effect of goal congruence on commitment and performance at high levels of politics.

The differences (at one standard deviation above the mean of goal congruence compared with one standard deviation below the mean of goal congruence) in predicted values of commitment divided by the standard deviation of commitment (i.e., standardized group differences) indicate that among individuals with scores at one standard deviation above the mean of politics, goal congruence yielded a difference of .61 standard units of commitment in Sample 1, .34 standard units in Sample 2, .88 standard units in Sample 3, .59 standard units in Sample 4, and .51 standard units in Sample 5 (Figure 1). Also at high levels of politics, goal congruence yielded a difference of .64 standard units of performance in Sample 4 (Figure 2) and .67 standard units of performance in Sample 5 (the statistically insignificant equation). Considering Cohen's (1988) categories of effect sizes—.20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large—the effects of goal congruence at high levels of politics on commitment were small in Sample 2; medium in Samples 1, 4, and 5; and large in Sample 3; and on performance were medium in Samples 4 and 5.

Discussion

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting an inverse relationship between politics and commitment (e.g., Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Extending the literature, this study empirically supports the notion that individual-level performance may be an outcome of organizational politics. Building on Ferris et al.'s (1989) suggestion that understanding and control reduce the impact of politics, these results also extend the literature by demonstrating that perceptions of politics and actual employee–boss goal congruence have interactive effects on organizational commitment and job performance. For individuals holding priorities different from those of their boss, politics may have had some impact on commitment and performance. For those holding priorities similar to those of the boss, politics had comparatively little impact. The similarity of the findings across the five organizations suggest that models of organizational politics be revised when appropriate to consider the moderating effects of employees sharing goal priorities with their bosses.

These results also suggest at least four possible directions for future research. First, as the reported relationships between politics and commitment may reflect common method variance, a longitudinal study measuring subsequent commitment or actual turnover would provide a more rigorous test of Hypotheses 1 and 3. Second, future efforts might take a cross-level approach to look for the interactive effects of politics and goal congruence on performance at the level of the business unit or organization.

Third, the use of general response surface models (e.g., Edwards, 1994) might provide a greater understanding of the nature of the boss–subordinate goal congruence and its impact on subsequent outcomes. Finally, research measuring additional aspects of both organizational politics and job performance may have utility. For example, future work may uncover different patterns of relationships between various dimensions of political environments and job performance, perhaps similar to the different relationships found between political behaviors and performance in different organizational contexts (Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992).

The moderating effect of goal congruence was most relevant at higher levels of perceived politics, which supports the assertion that one way to address the negative impact of organizational politics is for the boss to ensure that his or her subordinates hold the appropriate goal priorities. By doing so, the subordinate will have a greater sense of control over and understanding of the workplace and thus be less affected by the experience of organizational politics.

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Appendix

Goals Measured

Sample 1

The collectors ranked from 1 (*most important*) to 8 (*least important*) these eight goals: (a) "achieve career growth through self-development," (b) "develop win-win solutions to delinquency problems," (c) "accurately document work," (d) "ensure personal productivity," (e) "maintain professional interactions with customers," (f) "get facts during initial customer contact," (g) "prevention loss through delinquency control," and (h) "assist less experienced workers."

Sample 2

The industrial workers ranked from 1 (*most important*) to 5 (*least important*) these five goals: (a) "satisfy the customer," (b) "get the job done fast," (c) "get the job done right," (d) "maintain safe practices," and (e) "help develop new work procedures."

Sample 3

The production workers ranked from 1 (*most important*) to 8 (*least important*) these eight goals: (a) "upgrade physical work environments," (b) "be a company that most people would really want to work for," (c) "develop new sources of income," (d) "be a leader in providing equal opportunity for all employees," (e) "reduce unit operational costs," (f) "be a production leader," (g) "be a leader in exploiting

technology for competitive advantage," and (h) "achieve superior client satisfaction."

Sample 4

The telemarketers ranked from 1 (*most important*) to 8 (*least important*) these eight goals: (a) "deliver products and services in a cost-effective and efficient manner," (b) "maximize sales results and income opportunities for [company name]," (c) "improve customer retention," (d) "be an organization that people would want to work for," (e) "solve customer problems," (f) "deepen customer relationships," (g) "foster a climate that emphasizes teamwork and personal growth while rewarding superior performance," and (h) "provide the highest quality of customer service."

Sample 5

The distribution workers ranked from 1 (*most important*) to 8 (*least important*): (a) make the [distribution facility] a place where people want to work; (b) work as quickly as possible; (c) produce error-free work; (d) be seen by our customers as being the best at what we do; (e) use supplies (e.g., paper, pencils, paper clips, staples) wisely; (f) work as a team to get the job done; (g) provide training and career advancement opportunities for all employees; and (h) introduce new procedures to improve work efficiency.

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