

# Thomas Green

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## Power, Office Politics, and a Career in Crisis

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Business Administration 305: Behavior in Organizations

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10/18/2014

## Power, Office Politics, and a Career in Crisis

The case study of young Thomas Green, and the supporting textbook material in Chapter 13 provide a look into how the use and miss-use of power, and the engagement in politicking, can drastically affect an organization, and one's own career. Playing politics can be a dirty thing, but used legally and ethically, it can bring success to not only an individual's career, but also the organization as well. Our motivations to help ourselves inevitably help others, but when we use others in a hurtful or egregious way, we tarnish our reputation.

In this study, we meet Thomas Green. Mr. Green is a young professional with a few years of industry experience under his belt. As a graduate of the University of Georgia with a baccalaureate degree in Economics, Green is personable and has the skills to cut deals and make sales. His first real world experience was with a company in his home state of Georgia known as National Business Solutions. At National, Green was an account executive in the Banking Division, selling ATMs to various financial institutions in the southeastern United States. After six presumably successful years, Green was recruited to Dynamic Displays of Boston, MA, as an account executive in the Travel and Hospitality division, where he sold Airline and other travel related automated kiosks to various travel and hospitality business clients. Immediately, Green garnered success with his new company, and knew that he had to in order to manage his impression with the company executives.

Within four months, Green was at a training event at the corporate headquarters. He was sought out by Shannon McDonald, the Travel and Hospitality Division Vice President, and Mary

Jacobs, national sales director, at the event and received more face time with senior management than most new employees would. By the end of the week, our Georgia native got himself a promotion to Senior Market Specialist, and a seat at the corporate headquarters. A new position, a new salary, and a new place to live, however, would not come without its new challenges. During the first week, V.P. McDonald warned Green about potential difficulties with his supervisor, Frank Davis, as McDonald promoted Green to this position without Davis' knowledge or input. During Green's first few months on Davis' team, it was apparent there was a personality conflict between the two. Davis, a 17-year veteran of the company, felt the need to have everything Green was working on documented and wanted "prompt" communication with him. Davis also was aggravated that Green didn't make use of his Outlook calendar as to the updates of where he was traveling. In addition to this, Green also spoke against his supervisor's forecast at a meeting. When Davis confronted Green about the issues at hand, Green's response was that he has all the info "in his head" and that daily emails, Outlook calendar updates, and documented work updates were simply not his style, and just "politics". While Green was well liked by the clients, he continually lacked the ability to bring in market data into his presentations to try and convince companies of the expenditure on Dynamic's products and services. Again, this was "just not his style".

Personalities run the gambit. Management styles can be just as varied in an organization. Micro-managing may be efficient for a member of management, but the subordinates might feel uneasy and even be turned off by this approach. It is clear that Green is really put off by Davis' style of management and the less than desirable communication between the two of them. It seems that the troubles started right from the get-go when McDonald warned Green about the

possibility of conflicts. Either Green perceived this would be inevitable, and helped to create these conflicts from the start, or perhaps Davis really was upset that some newbie account exec got the promotion and that Davis didn't even get a say in it. Davis' intense attitude and sense of urgency was a contrast to Green's laid back approach. The case concludes with Green wondering what will become of his career.

Right off the bat, I can identify issues with this case. Green holds a Bachelor's degree, and hasn't had any work experience that would lead him to a specialized position. He excelled as an account exec, but lacks the self-discipline and commitment to detail that a specialist would need. Green spent too much managing his impression with execs that, perhaps too quickly, gave him a jump into a position to which he wasn't suited for at the time. Green's other mistake was to spend his first week in Boston without meeting with Davis. At any new position, especially being relatively new to the company, Green should have dedicated time to meeting Davis, getting a feel for his management style and the expectations Davis would have. Green's next big mistake was speaking out against his supervisor's forecasts at a meeting. While Green may have been correct in his thinking, a conversation between the two gentlemen should have occurred outside of the meeting if Green had any questions about the forecasts. It is often better to let your boss be found to be in the wrong than try to correct them publicly.

Davis, however, is taking his seniority a little bit overboard. It is clear that he is upset about not choosing his replacement for the specialist position he once occupied, and that after Green publicly questioned his forecasts, he had seemingly made up his mind about this subordinate. Davis is definitely using his power to entrap Green into situations where he will be

considered for termination, which, by the end of the case, is exactly where Green is heading. Identifying McDonald's two mistakes is not without noting. Although her position to Davis was superior, she should have brought Green in for a formal interview with Davis to decide if he was right for the position. Secondly, I believe McDonald let Green's charm and skill for selling himself be the reason she promoted him, rather than a more careful analysis of his qualifications.

To attempt and solve this situation at Dynamic, first, McDonald needs to know her place. As a Vice President of the company, she should be well aware of the hierarchy system of management that is in place in her organization, and know that, while she is able to make decisions like filling positions, it is best to let the supervisor in that area participate in the process. Secondly, Davis needs to relax a bit. His micro-managing, intense style of leadership may not just be affecting Green, but other members of his team. I also would place responsibility on Davis for allowing Green to begin work on projects for over a week before a one-on-one meeting. This may have inadvertently made Green feel that his boss was going to be absent in most of the work, and that Green would be able to work more independently. Finally, Green needs to step up his game and be ready for the job. Green needs to follow the directions of his supervisor, whether he personally feels that is office politics or "not his style". Green has to prove himself again in a new position, and the best thing for him to do is learn from his new supervisor and follow the rules before trying something different, or be as daring as to prove his supervisor wrong. Green will also need to document his work, and make market data available instead of just reciting numbers.

To rectify the situation, McDonald and Davis should meet with Green in person instead of emailing each other. McDonald and Davis need to formally set the expectations for Green's position, and monitor his performance with a 3 month, 6 month, and 1 year review. Green needs to also be aware that he needs to "get with program". He is working for different people now, and isn't in Georgia anymore. He will have to respond to emails and calls promptly, update his Outlook calendar, and be able to provide market data to his superiors and clients alike. Green should not be terminated unless, after one of the reviews described above, he has not satisfactorily met the expectations of his superiors.

## References

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