

In today's world of work, everyone is being asked to do more with less. And that means, the less obstacles we have to slow us down, the better. Don't let office politics and gossip get in the way of getting the job done.

Everyone knows who the most important person in an office is, and it's not always the boss. Oftentimes, it's the boss's assistant or other administrative worker.

Administrators manage a variety of key tasks and make an office and the lives of the people in it run smoothly. They also have access to certain information, and not all of it is strictly business. Many times, administrators are the office hub, which means they are more exposed to office politics and cliques. This is a delicate position to be in, but there are several ways to navigate the social aspect of the job safely.

Be nice to everyone.

You may not love every person in the office, but it's important to be friendly to everyone. People should feel comfortable approaching you when it relates to your job, and if they think you play favorites or dislike them, it could affect your ability to do your job well. Treating everyone well is the easiest way to transcend office cliques.

Stay neutral.

Sometimes people just want to vent, but it's important to always stay neutral. Don't bash your boss or coworkers—you never know who is listening or even if the person venting will repeat what you said. If someone says something bad, counter it with something neutral or positive. For example, "I know that Bob can seem curt, but he is really just very busy and focused. I'm sure he didn't intentionally treat you that way."

Don't join in badmouthing or gossip.

Gossip can be juicy, but don't participate. If people start to gossip, find a way to gently redirect the conversation. Reroute the topic to a local news item of interest, the latest celebrity or entertainment tidbit, traffic or weather. Keeping up with the news is a great way to shield you from gossip without offending anyone.

Keep your cards close.

It's best to keep your personal life to yourself when in the office. If you are friends with coworkers, keep the bulk of personal interaction outside the work place. People may tell you everything, but you don't want to be the subject of their stories.

Watch for red flags.

Most of the time, gossip is just that—back-fence talk that doesn't contribute to the good of the team. However, sometimes it can tell you relevant things that will relate to office management or reveal crucial issues that need to be addressed. It could reveal morale issues or convey information that could be professionally relevant to you, your boss, or human resources. Tread lightly when it comes to gossip, but be ready to listen if it's relevant to your job.

If you make an effort to treat everyone well, keep your ears open for the right information and always stay neutral, you'll be able to avoid hairy politics and do your job well.

