

Chiara Lamacchia

**IT'S
POLITICAL
—
SILOS
KILLING
BUSINESS**



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It's political - Silos killing business

Chiara Lamacchia
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Table of content

Introduction	4
1 – Politics & Silos	8
An organisation as a human body	10
Politics in the workplace	12
Start-ups & NGOs & politics	20
The company culture trap	24
2 – Silos in practices	30
Silos as a result of politics	31
Consequences of business silos	38
Case studies – silos in practices	42
3 – Leaders & Politics	52
4 – Overcoming challenges	56
Silosed situations potential solutions	60
5 – Actionable resources	68
A. To-do list: leaders facing silos	70
B. Blueprint: silos prevention	74
C. Step-by-step: collaborative silos	80
D. De-siloing framework	86
Next	91
Final gift	95

It's political - Silos killing business

Introduction

After ten years in the trenches, hustling through different gigs and even harder through the corporate maze, I've got to spill the beans—it's the darn silos and office politics that really grind my gears.

From one client circus to another company rodeo, these hurdles have been the constant buzzkill, sucking the life out of collaboration and cramping everyone's style.

This book? Well, it's basically my attempt at cracking the code, diving deep into the messy world of corporate shenanigans, and figuring out how we can finally kick these silos and politics to the curb.

Alright, buckle up because we're about to tackle the tangled mess of corporate shenanigans and silo chaos. In the wild world of modern workplaces,

silos and corporate politics often sneak in like unwanted guests, messing with efficiency, innovation, and the whole collaborative vibe. But hey, fear not! This book isn't here to just point fingers at the chaos: This is not a survival guide for frustrated souls who have to play office politics or fight their way out of silo hell. It's a guide to breaking down those silos, kicking politics to the curb, and creating a workplace that actually works. We should never adapt to a bad environment—we should do everything possible to change it onto a better place.

Let's dive into the nitty-gritty with real-life tales, practical challenges, and solutions you can actually use. Think of it as your roadmap—whether you're a bigwig leader, a middle manager, or just the average Joe trying to survive the office jungle. Let's kick things off with stories that spill the beans on the repercussions of siloed thinking, from communication blunders to the dreaded middle management silos. Trust me, you'll want to pay attention to these cautionary tales.

Leadership takes the stage in the next act, where we shine a spotlight on how leaders can either make or break the corporate culture. Spoiler alert: effective management is the secret sauce for seamless

collaboration, free-flowing information, and putting the company's interests front and centre.

But wait, there is more! I will not just be pointing out problems; I will try to hand solutions on a silver platter. From tackling supervision hurdles to fostering innovation and beating the information imbalance, consider this your blueprint for tearing down silos and creating a workplace that is actually worth waking up for.

Then we dive deep into the messy behaviours that make silos worse. Gridlock, grandstanding, corruption—oh my! This chapter is your go-to guide for fostering a healthy, collaborative vibe.

Now, here's the kicker: breaking down silos is not a one-off job; it's a journey. So, I've got a to-do list for leaders ready to face these challenges head-on. Power dynamics, workplace bullies, promoting fantastic managers—it covers it all.

But hey, let's not forget that prevention is better than cure. There is a whole section dedicated to creating a workplace that says 'no' to siloed thinking. Roles, transparency, and a culture that screams collaboration.

In the grand finale, I'm handing you a practical framework for *de-siloing*. From investigating silos to implementing solutions, consider this your step-by-step guide to breaking down barriers, fostering unity, and creating a workplace where collaboration is king.

So, here's the deal—let's not just talk about problems. Let's explore tools to smash those silos, nurture collaboration, and rocket your organisation to success and resilience. This journey? It's not just ours; it's yours too. Let's dive in and change the workplace game, one silo at a time.

1 – Politics & Silos

“It's political.”

How often have I heard this in business context?

Long before the chaos trickles down to the poor souls at the bottom of the corporate ladder, a burning question hangs in the air: why can't we just fix these issues? Well, welcome to the world of silos and corporate politics—those pesky problems that, despite being total productivity-kills, seem to be as unavoidable as Monday 9 am meetings. What's the secret sauce for dealing with it? It's all about shifting our viewpoint and taking a proactive stance, arming companies to dance through the competitive jungle with grace and a little swagger.

Let's talk about corporate politics and the silo mentality—two troublemakers that love to mess with formal roles and turn straightforward tasks into mind-bending puzzles. The real kicker? This transforms a walk in the park into an expedition up Mount Everest, complete with unnecessary layers of complexity that jack up the workload. And oh boy, does that hit the wallet hard. Here's the sneaky part: organisations don't pull a disappearing act on productivity; it's more like a slow erosion, like a countless nibble that makes finding the root cause feel like a game of corporate hide-and-seek.

Sure, there's a ton of articles and how-to guides floating around, helping individuals build their so-called political intelligence. But here's the kicker: that's like slapping a band-aid on a bullet wound. Sure, you might stay afloat, but it's not fixing the root issue. It's like trying to cure a bad flu with a pack of cough drops—temporary relief, not a long-term solution.

So, who's the unsung hero keeping the company ship from sinking? Let's unravel that mystery.

An organisation as a human body

An organisation is a collective of individuals creating a set of practices to pursue a specific purpose. Ideally, all components of an organisation should function in harmony, fostering collaboration among teams, enabling open and efficient communication, enhancing performance, and facilitating cooperative efforts towards a common goal.

Companies with a well-performing internal structure enable information to circulate among people, teams, and departments, thereby increasing their ability to identify red flags, address issues, uncover opportunities, and gain a competitive edge. Such companies tend to outperform those plagued by dysfunctions.

To gain a more tangible perspective, it's helpful to do a parallel with the human body.

The human body comprises living cells and extracellular materials, organised into tissues, organs, and systems. To ensure the vitality of the human body, all systems must constantly interact, interrelate, and interdepend. In other words, all organs and processes are interconnected and

function together to sustain life. If one organ, tissue, group of cells, or a system malfunctions, it inevitably impacts the entire body.

Similarly, within any organisation, if functions and processes are not well-connected, barriers emerge, hindering the flow of essential information required to harness the full potential and capabilities.

This results in various symptoms that inflict hardships on the company, including:

- Misallocation of resources
- High costs due to duplicated efforts, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies
- Ambiguity in authority, blurred roles, and diluted responsibilities
- Misalignment of corporate goals
- Defensive behaviours
- Strong incentives to maximise silo performance
- Lack of a shared understanding of values and priorities
- Inability to recognise business opportunities and impediments to success triggers

The remedy doesn't involve tearing down decentralisation or imposing rigid standards. In fact,

specialised centres of expertise are the backbone of addressing multiple business goals concurrently.

They facilitate detailed focus within broader objectives, foster swift information sharing, encourage cross-collaboration, and spark innovation.

So, the key isn't uniformity but strategic interconnectedness to let every part of the organisational machinery hum in harmony.

Politics in the workplace

Corporate politics, workplace politics, or office politics. At times, these can be beneficial, but more often than not, they are detrimental.

Yet, to effectively address these challenges, it's essential to discern between the manageable and the unmanageable. This requires drawing clear distinctions between office politics, corporate politics, and the pervasive issue of silos. Understanding these nuances is a critical step toward developing targeted strategies for fostering a healthier and more collaborative organisational culture.

A. Office politics

Office politics can be defined as the ways in which power is distributed within an organisation or workplace and how it's influenced by personal relationships among the people employed there. According to Collins Dictionary, it is the:

"activities, attitudes, or behaviours used to gain or maintain power or an advantage within a business or company."

In its bad meaning – In its negative connotation, it encompasses gossips, judgments, manipulation, envy, bullying, backstabbing, overbearing superiors, jealous colleagues, and power struggles. Let those who are without sin cast the first stone; we have all, at least once, engaged in these behaviours. These actions collectively contribute to heightened stress, cynicism, frustration, sadness, and a generally disruptive environment.

In this sense, these issues are not entirely manageable by leaders; it primarily hinges on the individual's level of professionalism.

Surely, when such behaviours are identified, addressing them is beneficial, but the responsibility largely rests with individual conduct.

In certain instances, these immature behaviours might become relevant or "actionable." When personal agendas, power-hungry ambitions, the pursuit of workplace advantages, personal goal achievement, prestige, and the quest for greater influence come into conflict with the organisation's interests, leaders must manage them, or more precisely, managers must take charge.

In this book, we won't dwell on the perennial complainers, who are always dissatisfied but never offer solutions, or the gossipmongers who infest workplaces with stories that are less than half-true. We won't address passive-aggressive colleagues who appear oblivious to the norms of societal behaviour, the indolent coworkers, or the self-promoters who claim credit for every idea in the room. We won't give attention to the bullies who are not even worth mentioning.

We won't place a significant emphasis on office politics; it falls under the ordinary traits of human nature. The onus is on us to refine and raise the bar of our professionalism and distinguish between personal and professional matters.

So, what is our primary focus? Corporate politics and silos.

B. Corporate politics

Corporate politics encompasses all the intricate human dynamics, processes, structures, practices, and behaviours that directly influence an organisation's functioning and its teams, departments, and divisions' actions toward specific goals.

In its bad meaning – In its negative guise, corporate politics encompasses all instances in which a given process, structure, practice, or behaviour proves detrimental to the business. These represent "hidden costs" for an organisation, often leading to counterproductive outcomes.

Here are some examples:

- "Leaders" pitting teams, departments, and divisions against each other in a competition for limited resources.
- The existence of isolated silos, fostering silent barriers that isolate work teams, departments, and divisions.
- Employees misusing their power to advance their personal agendas and interests, often running counter to the business objectives.
- Distorted internal processes and structures of responsibility and accountability that undermine business interests.
- Inconsistencies between what should be done and what is actually executed, thwarting individual and team efforts.
- Discrepancies between what's promoted and what's genuinely taking place, such as a proclaimed culture of innovation but with individual initiatives stifled.
- "Leaders," often the same as those mentioned previously, promoting unhealthy competition to the detriment of the business's overall goals.
- Resources retained for personal, team, or departmental gain at the expense of the company.

- Toxic company culture resulting in disengaged, demoralised, and demotivated employees, which leads to unproductivity, organisational stagnation, and decline.
- Disrupted information flow hindering the allocation of limited resources

An organisation involves people working together towards a shared business goal. As we know, human nature tends to seek more and more, inevitably giving rise to political dynamics.

In many cases, employees leverage their power to pursue personal interests and agendas, often at odds with the overarching business goals.

This is a common experience that most, if not all of us, have encountered in our professional lives. Every individual has personal ambitions, interests, and agendas.

When these individual agendas fail to align, competition for limited resources ensues, giving rise to the notorious "office politics"—self-interested behaviours that run counter to the organisational objectives.

Consequently, corporate politics is often explored in terms of its adverse effects on the work environment, employee morale, and overall organisational health. Employees become stressed, and burnout, a popular term these days, becomes a real concern.

A quick internet search reveals a plethora of advice for employees dealing with office politics, such as:

- "3 ways to survive office politics"
- "How to win at office politics"
- "Play office politics to win"
- "Office politics and how to deal with it"
- "Position yourself for the politics game"
- "Win at office politics at work"
- "Secret to win office politics"
- "Office politics to scale your career"

Poor corporate politics and the silo mentality are counterproductive on every level from a business perspective, hindering efficiency and productivity, contributing to a high employee turnover, delaying the achievement of business goals, and eroding profits.

In many corporations, this issue remains unchecked and unidentified, spiralling out of control.

When an organisation suffers, its employees suffer as well. The "employees dealing with it" model does not provide a cure but instead adds fuel to the fire, perpetuating a harmful internal corporate practice without attempting to modify it.

Quick fixes offer no strategic vision: it's a mere "deal-with-it" or "be-part-of-the-game" approach.

In its good meaning – On the brighter side, politics is not inherently good or bad; it can take on various dimensions.

The outcomes, whether positive or negative, depend largely on how leaders manage people and how individuals within the organisation perceive and utilise it.

Politics within an organisation is an inevitability, similarly to tools that can be harnessed either positively for an advantage or negatively to cause substantial damage to the business.

In the forthcoming chapters, we'll delve into how managers, leaders, processes, internal communication dynamics, profitability, professional growth, and awareness of dysfunction play integral

roles in shaping the impact of corporate politics within an organisation.

Before that, we need to address two specific cases: startup & nonprofit sector, to understand if the dimension or the scope of an organisation is relevant.

Start-ups & NGOs & politics

In the dynamic realm of organisational dynamics, it is imperative to comprehend the intricacies of corporate politics and silos, recognising that their impact may differ significantly across various sectors.

This exploration zeroes in on two distinct realms—the startup sector and the nonprofit sector—to unravel the nuanced interplay of politics and silos.

As we delve into these specific cases, we aim to ascertain whether the dimensions or scopes of an organisation hold relevance when dissecting the intricacies of internal dynamics.

Start-ups

Do start-ups truly have less corporate politic?

The casual dress code, napping areas, ping pong tables, horizontal organisational structures, the innovation mindset, and entrepreneurial environments often serve as the veneer that conceals politics.

The misconception here lies in associating politics solely with the bureaucratic, decentralised, and hierarchical structures of large corporations. However, the reality differs: it's neither bureaucracy nor hierarchy that inherently breeds bad politics.

It's the manner in which people perceive others and share information and resources in pursuit of a greater goal.

Each individual brings their unique character, aspirations, and agendas into the workplace, whether it's a large corporation or a start-up. The linchpin, as always, is leadership. Without strong leadership, individuals are inclined to place their personal interests ahead of those of the company.

The distinguishing factor is the level of control. In smaller companies, leaders gain a more comprehensive understanding of team dynamics, and team members might address conflicts more directly. Nonetheless, conflicts in a smaller setting often carry greater weight than in larger environments, where the organisational structure can absorb the blows of conflict.

Non-profits & NGOs

Non-profit organisations, associations, networks, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are far from immune to corporate politics.

In many cases, the situation is even more pronounced.

We're discussing organisations dedicated to advancing specific causes, interests, advocating or lobbying for common causes, sharing viewpoints, or driving change in specific sectors.

It's worth clarifying an important element: the concept of "profit" within non-profits. Some may believe that profit doesn't apply to non-profits, as there are stark differences separating non-

profits from traditional businesses, and competition may seem irrelevant in the non-profit sector.

The primary distinction lies in the destination of the profit. A non-profit organisation utilises its revenues to cover all costs, including salaries and benefits. Any surplus revenue is reinvested back into the mission and activities to further their cause. In contrast, a business uses its revenues to cover all expenses, including salaries and benefits, and any surplus revenues are distributed to shareholders or reinvested for business development.

Some examples of organisations include Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, the European Smoking Tobacco Association, the World Steel Association, the Confederation of European Forest Owners, Oxfam International, and The Ocean Cleanup.

When discussing "corporate politics" the context is irrelevant—it undeniably applies to non-profits and NGOs.

Just as in the for-profit sector, political dynamics, personal ambitions, and conflicting interests can influence decision-making and organisational behaviour within these institutions.

Corporate politics in non-profits can hinder their ability to effectively pursue their missions and achieve their philanthropic goals.

Leadership and management practices play a pivotal role in mitigating or exacerbating these political dynamics in non-profit organisations, just as they do in the business world.

The company culture trap

In recent years, there has been a growing fascination with the concept of company culture.

Many companies now place great emphasis on nurturing a positive workplace culture. However, – are we sure this is not making the overall dynamics even worse?

Company culture is essentially the system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that govern how individuals behave within an organisation.

In theory, there's no such thing as a "bad" culture. Instead, it's a matter of personal preference—whether you like a particular culture or not. The real issue arises when there's a discrepancy between

what is advocated and what truly transpires; this is the crux of company culture hypocrisy.

A more accurate perspective would be to view culture as the product of decisions made by the organisation, serving as a critical input for subsequent decisions.

In theory, corporate culture should act as a valuable tool, offering insights into a company's present state, its aspirations, and the route to reach those aspirations.

In practice, corporate culture risks to devolve into a patchwork of vague and self-congratulatory rhetoric, outlining how a company aspires to be, rather than an accurate reflection of its current reality.

Of course, many exceptions do exist, but they only underscore the general rule.

How is this relevant?

Corporate culture and corporate politics are inextricably linked, forming two sides of the same coin.

Corporate culture inherently originates from your leadership and evolves through your employees. Corporate politics ensures that the principles originating from leadership are effectively internalised and translated into actions by employees.

It acts as the bridge between leadership's aspirations and the actual behaviour and practices of the workforce.

However, the interplay between corporate culture and corporate politics is often complex. Leadership shapes culture, and culture, in turn, influences politics. The quality of leadership greatly impacts the alignment between culture and politics.

Effective leadership not only defines a culture that aligns with organisational values but also fosters a political environment that supports those values. In contrast, poor leadership can lead to a misalignment, where the stated culture and actual politics do not converge, creating confusion and inconsistency within the organisation.

All-in-all, recognising the interdependence of corporate culture and corporate politics is essential

for a comprehensive understanding of organisational dynamics.

A harmonious alignment between the two can drive positive change, while a disconnection between them can create internal discord and hinder progress.

In the subsequent chapters, we will delve deeper into how leaders can effectively navigate this dynamic to create an environment that thrives on authenticity, transparency, and shared values.

Key takeaways

- **Inevitable politics:** Politics is inherent in organisational and human interactions.
- **Detrimental silos:** Silo mentality hinders collaboration and organisational efficiency.
- **Organisational health analogy:** The analogy to a human body highlights the importance of harmonious functioning.
- **Negative corporate politics:** Negative politics leads to resource misallocation, high costs, and a toxic culture.
- **Distinguishing office and corporate politics:** Office politics involves personal power dynamics; corporate politics impacts broader organisational structures.
- **Leadership's role:** Effective leadership aligns culture and politics with organisational values.
- **Politics across sectors:** Startups and non-profits both face corporate politics, emphasising the role of leadership.

It's political - Silos killing business

2 – Silos in practices

Within the intricate tapestry of organisational dynamics, the formidable challenge of silos looms large, hindering collaboration and stifling innovation.

Let's explore the intricacies of silos in practices, unravelling their nature and dissecting real-life case studies that vividly illustrate the detrimental consequences of compartmentalised thinking.

From squandered opportunities to costly errors, these scenarios serve as cautionary tales, providing a comprehensive view of how corporate politics and siloed behaviours can cast a prolonged shadow over an organisation's productivity and reputation.

We delve into the pervasive challenges posed by silos in real-world scenarios, unravelling the complexities of corporate politics and the far-reaching consequences of siloed behaviours.

The narratives serve as insightful reflections, highlighting the imperative of fostering a workplace culture rooted in collaboration and open communication.

Silos as a result of politics

When we envision an organisation, we often picture it as an intricate network of interconnected components, pulsating and functioning through information exchange and relationship-building.

This internal system is ideally open and permeable, fostering seamless collaboration and knowledge sharing within and beyond the organisation's boundaries.

However, it's here that we encounter a notable challenge: the natural tendency of individual components to self-organise and become self-referential. This phenomenon is where silos originate—semi-autonomous entities with limited integration, communication, and knowledge sharing capabilities.

In its bad meaning - In its negative connotation, silos are, without a doubt, a manifestation of corporate politics at its most advanced and organised level.

Silos represent the pinnacle of corporate politics and warrant the same level of scrutiny and intervention.

Within a politicised environment, individuals tend to focus more on protecting their own job security rather than prioritising the best interests of the business. Over time, they may become desensitised, less aware, and less vigilant.

This erosion of their problem-solving abilities leads to a host of adverse consequences, including:

- blame-games and finger-pointing
- managers operating through pressure, rather than inspiration or support
- setting individuals up for failure
- suppression of honesty as a perceived threat
- withholding relevant information to maintain control
- evasion and dilution of responsibility
- avoiding the hiring or promotion of strong performers to safeguard one's own position
- spreading rumours to tarnish someone's reputation
- misrepresenting one's own accomplishments to enhance personal standing at the expense of others
- shifting responsibility and credit based on personal interests
- favouritism and nepotism

- making false promises to manipulate others into accepting responsibilities or roles
- engaging in backstabbing
- excessive micromanagement and control
- valuing obedience over loyalty
- gridlock and indecisiveness within the organisation
- overbearing bureaucracy that hampers progress
- grandstanding or insincere support for leaders' ideas
- the two-faced two-step: saying what people want to hear now
- passing the buck: avoiding responsibility and assigning blame elsewhere
- laziness, and a poor work ethic
- indirect communication, including complaining to supervisors instead of addressing issues directly
- pork-barrelling, which involves pushing through expensive projects that only benefit a small part of the company
- corruption and unethical behaviour, such as embezzlement, falsifying reports, and engaging in illegal activities
- sabotaging teams, resulting in divisions and delayed work when it can harm a rival team dependent on their output

And then, they appear: silos.

Silos, a term that has gained prominence in our boardrooms, become a topic of discussion that seemingly proliferates with each mention.

This business concept has circulated and been a topic of discussion in many boardrooms over the last 30 years.

Unlike several other trendy management terms, this issue has not faded into obscurity with the passage of time.

Executives acknowledge the presence of silos within their companies, and believe that these silos have a detrimental impact on their organisations.

The "silo mentality" can be defined as a mindset present when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same organisation.

This deeply ingrained phenomenon remains a poignant challenge that demands attention and strategic intervention.

How silos operate:

- foster an "us" versus "them" mentality
- source resources based on their unique knowledge and experience
- accumulate new information without sharing it with others
- segment resources to protect their domain
- centralise and immobilise resources for control, safeguarding against corruption
- maintain control over resources, their release, and decision-making
- optimise for processing their own resources for maximum efficiency

Silos can be found everywhere: siloed teams, siloed departments siloed data, siloed systems, siloed processes. Despite being considered a poor business practice, they are ubiquitous.

The guiding principle behind a silo is simple: the more control we exert over resources, the more value we can derive from them. Silos give us that level of control. We build silos in our everyday life: we accumulate resources, and release them when needed.

Business silos are not anomalies, they are just the application of our day-by-day principle. A company can accumulate valuable resources, create economies of scale, and release them only when they're most needed and we can exploit them most fully.

Silos are parts of a larger system, and the main issue they create lies in the inequality and incompatibility they generate between those who own and control resources and those who need them. They consistently give rise to frustration, wasted time, friction, ineffective communication, delayed decision-making, and unresponsiveness not only to customers but also, more broadly, to competitive pressures and changing market conditions.

The result is a loss of business.

Silos, by design, hinder business outcomes with redundant practices and poor collaboration, creating a landscape of unaligned, conflicting priorities across the organisation. This complexity makes it exceedingly difficult to maintain a competitive edge, and the organisation struggles to stay ahead of its competitors.

We've all experienced it: the organisation's struggle with change. We may achieve our annual goals, complete projects, and realise our vision, but only after expending countless days, weeks, and months navigating the labyrinth of resource inefficiency.

In its good meaning – However, in a positive context, silos can be a powerful and invaluable asset for an organisation. These specialised groups within the organisation possess unique knowledge, domain expertise, market insights, technological prowess, or other exceptional skills, making them authorities in a specific aspect of the business.

Silos play a pivotal role in enabling companies to explore new markets, nurture innovative product concepts, and ultimately propel the organisation towards uncharted territories.

So, why would your organisation even consider the idea of eliminating such a valuable resource? Silos should not be viewed as impediments to progress but rather as assets to be celebrated.

The challenge lies in finding a way to harness the uniqueness and innate power of silos while simultaneously establishing connections with individuals outside these specialised groups.

This approach holds the key to unlocking the full potential of silos while promoting a culture of collaboration, cross-functional knowledge sharing, and innovation that spans the entire organisation.

By embracing and integrating silos into the larger corporate landscape, organisations can tap into the collective wisdom and expertise that resides within these distinct groups, creating a synergy that propels the company to new heights and fosters adaptability in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

Consequences of business silos

In today's fast-evolving business environment, differentiating your company from the competition and achieving a competitive advantage has never been more challenging. The quest for innovative solutions and methods to stand out in the market is a never-ending one.

Every organisation needs to cope with a gap between its actual performance and its potential performance.

The potential to perform at a higher level is nearly always within reach. Smoother processes, enhanced

worker performance, and increased efficiency are goals that companies constantly strive to achieve.

Closing this performance gap is the key to bringing wealth and success to a company and its shareholders (or stakeholders, in the case of nonprofit organisations). It is something every organisation should prioritise.

However, political silos can significantly contribute to this performance gap.

How? They undermine trust, stifle innovation, drive turnover, distort communications, corrode joy and pride in work, and, most crucially, lead to poor decision-making. The connection between corporate politics and performance is often underestimated, and many companies may not act until they fully understand this relationship.

The consequences of business silos and corporate politics are far-reaching and detrimental. They hinder productivity, damage workplace culture, and hinder effective decision-making, ultimately impacting a company's bottom line and its ability to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

Then, the question would be: what are the costs of corporate politics and siloed practices?

- Duplication of cost and effort, working at cross purposes, lack of synergy, and limited knowledge transfer or economies of scale
- A loss of the collaborative advantage when organisations are over-managed and under-led, leading to disconnection, knowledge and power hoarding within silos, and an inability to collaborate effectively in the long term
- A significant problem: a lack of alignment with the overall company strategy
- Decreased performance and reduced profit
- Reduced trust, stifled innovation, increased employee turnover, distorted communications, diminished joy and pride in work, and, most importantly, poor decision-making

Silos and corporate politics also have the following detrimental effects:

- A decrease in overall productivity. Individuals who engage in office politics often focus more on undermining colleagues rather than their actual work, leading to missed targets and delayed tasks.

- An impact on concentration. Those involved in office politics are more likely to make mistakes, as their focus is diverted towards political games rather than their tasks.
- A negative work environment. Office politics often lead to a toxic atmosphere that ruins relationships among colleagues.
- Changes in employees' attitudes. In a politically charged organisation, hard work may go unnoticed, leading to a lack of interest and motivation among employees.
- Demotivated employees. Individuals who engage in politics can tarnish the hard work of their colleagues, demotivating them.
- Increased stress. Office politics can raise stress levels among employees, who fear their secrets will be exposed.
- Rising miscommunication within the organisation. Manipulation of information due to politics can mislead supervisors and leaders, resulting in an inaccurate picture of what's happening in the office.
- Impaired decision-making. Office politics hinder an organisation's ability to make consistent, profitable decisions over time.

Case studies – silos in practices

The interplay of corporate politics and siloed frameworks unfolds a tapestry of consequences, ranging from overlooked opportunities to substantial and costly errors that cast a shadow on an organisation's productivity and reputation.

Here are several real-life scenarios that highlight the dreadful mistakes that can occur due to corporate politics and siloed behaviours.

This exploration delves into real-case scenarios, providing vivid examples of the detrimental mistakes that emerge as products of corporate politics and departmental insularity.

These are poignant illustrations, underscoring the imperative need to dismantle silos and cultivate a collaborative culture.

Their collective narrative resounds with the critical significance of such efforts, highlighting their profound influence on an organisation's success and competitive positioning.

Scenario 1:

Opportunity: Sharing a unique and compelling story to attract a specific target audience.

Process:

- The Product Development Manager engages with the Product Manager to develop the story for the internal newsletter.
- The Assistant Brand Manager approaches the same Product Manager for details and quotes for a press release.
- The Social Media Manager intends to promote the story through social media and seeks insights from the Product Manager.

Situation: Three different individuals are working on the same story with different ideas, planning, and inputs. There is no alignment on strategy or timing.

Outcome: The message becomes diluted, internal resources are used inefficiently, and the power of the story is diminished.

The opportunity to effectively communicate with the target audience is lost.

Scenario 2:

Opportunity: Creating a new set of communication materials in multiple languages to boost retail sales.

Process:

- The French Trade Marketing Manager liaises with an agency to handle the entire project.
- The French Trade Marketing Manager collaborates with counterparts in Germany and Belgium.
- The German Marketing Manager decides to create the materials independently.
- The Belgian Trade Manager opts to develop different marketing collateral.

Situation: Three different departments in three different countries are working on various communication materials with the same subject.

Outcome: Brand consistency is lost, messaging about product features is fragmented, and marketing tools lack uniformity.

Scenario 3:

Opportunity: An employee pitches an idea for a side project focused on energy in Africa.

Process:

- The employee presents the idea to his manager.
- The manager disregards the idea as unimportant without seeking further feedback.

Situation: Lack of overall communication, coordination, and monitoring.

Outcome: The company loses opportunities for innovation, and the potential benefits of the side project remain untapped.

Scenario 4:

Opportunity: Identifying the emergence of a major middle management siloed approach.

Process:

- The HR department raises concerns about employee complaints regarding a lack of transparent communication between management and the workforce.
- Senior leaders ignore this issue.

Situation: The company operates with fully siloed departments, each competing for its own advantage, ahead of the company's interests.

Outcome: The organisation experiences reduced profits, an increasing employee turnover rate of over 30% annually, and missed market expansion opportunities, which are captured by competitors.

Scenario 5:

Opportunity: Increasing team collaboration and fostering company culture.

Process:

- The CEO decides that all employees must work from the office, with only occasional remote work.

Situation: The decision causes controversy and employee discontent, as it is perceived as pressure to either accept or quit.

Outcome: Low employee engagement, a lack of loyalty, a damaged employer branding reputation, and negative PR. Poor communication from top to bottom leads to ineffective messaging.

Scenario 6:

Opportunity: Enhance team morale, productivity, and employer branding.

Process:

- One of the values of the corporate culture is 'respect'.
- The CEO becomes aware of unprofessional behaviours exhibited by one of the Directors.
- Despite the unprofessional conduct, the behaviours are tolerated and go unaddressed.

Situation: The silence surrounding these dismissive behaviours fosters discontent among the team, leading to a loss of admiration for leadership.

Outcome: Subsequent effects include low employee engagement, diminished loyalty, increased turnover, and reduced productivity within the team.

These scenarios illustrate how corporate politics, silos, and a lack of coordination can lead to missed opportunities, reduced productivity, and significant repercussions for an organisation's reputation and success.

These real-life examples serve as cautionary tales, emphasising the importance of addressing political silos and fostering a collaborative and communicative workplace culture.

Key takeaways

- **Silo challenge:** Silos pose a significant challenge, hindering collaboration and innovation within organisations.
- **Nature of silos:** Silos, rooted in corporate politics, lead to adverse consequences like blame games, resource hoarding, and distorted communication.
- **Positive silos:** Silos, if harnessed positively, can be valuable assets, providing unique expertise; the challenge lies in integrating them for overall organisational benefit.
- **Consequences of silos:** Silos contribute to a performance gap, hindering trust, innovation, and decision-making, impacting an organisation's bottom line and competitiveness.

- **Costs of silos:** The costs of silos and corporate politics include duplication of efforts, decreased productivity, and a negative work environment, affecting overall organisational health.
- **Case studies:** Real-life scenarios showcase the detrimental effects of silos, such as diluted messages, inconsistent branding, missed opportunities, and damaged employee morale.
- **Collaborative culture imperative:** The narratives underscore the need to dismantle silos, emphasising the importance of fostering a collaborative and communicative workplace culture.

It's political - Silos killing business

3 – Leaders & Politics

In an ideal business environment, teams collaborate, managers disseminate critical information, individuals act in the organisation's best interests, and leadership is recognised and admired.

Unfortunately, the reality often falls short of this ideal, with personal agendas and corporate politics creating challenges, and silos emerging as departments vie for advantages by altering processes and competing against each other.

As said, people bring their personal traits and agendas into their professional dimension. This might start bad corporate politics dynamics, till the creation of more-than-tolerated and almost-officially-approved silos where departments are trying to gain an advantage by altering processes, blocking resources, and competing with senseless attempts to undermine the achievements of others.

If a “leader” doesn't manage these dynamics, there is no other way for the company to thrive one hundred percent.

In these occasions, when talking specifically about these topics, it would be better to opt for the word “manager” rather than “leader” to place the focus where it would be: the management.

Effective managers ensure that teams know how to compete healthily, critical information flows seamlessly, and individuals prioritise the organisation's best interests. Their leadership will follow.

Employees are expected to work collaboratively towards company goals in a thriving environment. However, political manoeuvres and silos often hinder this collaborative spirit. Managers, or those in leadership positions, sometimes fail to address these issues appropriately, leaving employees to navigate the complexities of office politics.

Effective management is the key to fostering an environment where teams collaborate, information flows freely, and individuals act in the company's best interests. However, human nature and unconscious biases often influence decision-making. Emotional creatures that we are, our actions are driven by needs and biases.

The dynamics within an organisation are a reflection of these internal dynamics.

The role of C-level Execs and top management becomes critical in shaping a healthy work environment.

While many CEOs are celebrated as leadership examples, internal company dynamics, political mismanagement, and silos are sometimes overlooked.

Teams may silently compete against each other, focusing on defending their territories rather than sharing information across departments. Established silos and bad corporate politics are more likely to be perpetuated by managers and senior executives than inhibited. A vicious circle is formed, where career advancement occurs in an environment where maintaining the status quo is rewarded. Employees, benefiting from the existing system, have no incentive to dismantle it.

Key takeaways

- **Leadership dynamics:** In an ideal business setting, effective managers navigate corporate politics, dismantle silos, and ensure healthy competition, fostering an environment where teams collaborate seamlessly.
- **Managerial influence:** Managers play a pivotal role in shaping a thriving work environment by addressing political manoeuvres, breaking down silos, and guiding teams towards prioritising the organisation's best interests.
- **Executive accountability:** While CEOs may be celebrated as leaders, the critical role of C-level Execs in shaping a healthy work environment is often overshadowed; managers and senior executives need to break the cycle of silos and bad corporate politics to truly promote a collaborative culture.

4 – Overcoming challenges

Silos and corporate politics pose significant challenges in organisational dynamics, and addressing these issues requires strategic and proactive efforts from leadership.

Here, we explore three major challenges and propose solutions for each:

Challenge 1: Supervision

Supervisors, team leaders, and top executives play a crucial role in influencing and inspiring the rest of the company. They must actively identify and investigate bad political behaviours and silos within the organisation. In larger companies, small malpractices can easily be hidden or absorbed, leading to the promotion of individuals skilled in navigating politics rather than addressing the issue. Managers, empowered by their roles, might inadvertently spread the silo mentality.

Overcoming this challenge requires a fundamental shift in leadership mindset. Transparency, open communication, and active dismantling of silos from the top down are not just suggested; they are imperative for a healthier organisational culture.

Challenge 2: Innovation

Innovation thrives in environments that strike the right balance between freedom and control. However, many organisations hinder innovative inputs due to inefficient feedback and evaluation processes. Middle managers, pressured to meet short-term goals, often lack the bandwidth to support long-term ideas. In such cases, employees may resort to non-productive tasks when innovation is stifled.

To foster innovation, organisations must not merely streamline feedback processes but instil a cultural shift that empowers employees at all levels. Creating an atmosphere that encourages creativity and forward-thinking is not a luxury; it is a necessity for companies aspiring to stay competitive and adaptable in rapidly evolving markets.

Challenge 3: Asymmetric information

Asymmetry of information, where one party possesses more or better information than the other, is a critical issue in dealing with silos and corporate politics.

CEOs, despite their high-ranking positions, often face low power and information gaps when tackling these challenges. They may be unaware of weak support from supervisors and could overestimate the support of top managers.

The key to overcoming this challenge lies in raising awareness and providing leaders with access to critical ground intelligence. Recognising the existence of silos is not merely the first step; it is the cornerstone for effective change.

Leadership teams must act decisively, implementing scalable, executable, and realistic solutions that reflect a commitment to transparency, communication, and a collaborative organisational culture.

Without awareness, understanding, and proactive measures, solutions risk becoming mere placeholders rather than catalysts for real transformation.

In less toxic environments, leaders effectively manage team tensions, contributing to improved team performance and, consequently, organisational effectiveness. Recognising the importance of effective management in navigating corporate politics and breaking down silos is crucial for creating a thriving and collaborative work environment.

Transformation is the journey from secretive, selfish, hypocritical, hierarchical, and incompetent leadership to embracing emotional intelligence, intuition competence, transparency, approachability, and altruism.

The shift is from pitting employees against each other to encourage effort, to focusing on outperforming common adversaries—the company's competitors—to inspire employees to strive harder.

Moving from articulating a meaningful mission—a vision that resonates and motivates people to achieve a collective goal—keeping the team focused on beating competitors rather than each other. The emphasis is on Actions!

Siloed situations potential solutions

There are some behavioural situations that can represent a greater challenge to leaders and their companies. Navigating the complex landscape of company dynamics often feels like exploring a maze in the dark. Let's illuminate some prevalent challenges and their potential remedies.

Situation: Gridlock

Your company is at a standstill because no one can agree on what to do.

Solution:

- Work towards a consensus on common goals.
- Enforce consensus guidelines during decision-making, allowing each person an opportunity to contribute.
- Encourage objective rationale, active listening, and finding common ground.
- Develop shorter-term plans to test multiple ideas, fostering progress.

Situation: Bureaucracy

People are entangled in paperwork, red tape, and stifling rules, impeding progress.

Solution:

- clarify decision-making autonomy, distinguishing decisions that require individual input from those needing broader consultation
- Formulate task teams to review and streamline processes and approval levels
- Encourage a shift from habitual processes to innovative solutions by fostering a culture open to change

Situation: Grandstanding (a.k.a. brown-nosing)

People pay lip service to leaders' ideas to flatter without real commitment to change.

Solution:

- Create a detailed action plan with defined roles and deadlines.
- Holding individuals accountable for progress reports to peers and managers ensures commitment.
- Clear accountability fosters a culture of genuine commitment to implementation.

Situation: The two-faced two-step

People say what they think others want to hear, lacking sincerity.

Solution:

- Leaders should cultivate an atmosphere where honesty is valued.
- Adopting the devil's advocate role encourages employees to share both positive and negative aspects.
- Embrace open, honest feedback, creating an environment where expressing opinions, even dissenting ones, is appreciated.

Situation: Passing the buck

No one takes responsibility; blame is quickly assigned elsewhere.

Solution:

- Combat finger-pointing by promoting a team-oriented culture.
- Encourage exposure to different parts of the business through job shadowing or orientation sessions.
- Facilitate cross-departmental sharing of goals and needs, fostering a sense of collective responsibility.

Situation: Laziness and poor work ethic

People exhibit a sense of entitlement and lack motivation.

Solution:

- Infuse workplaces with energy by understanding employees' interests, talents, and aspirations.
- Take a personal interest in their well-being, set realistic yet challenging goals, and provide ongoing feedback.
- Reward innovation and positive contributions to encourage proactive attitudes.

Situation: Indirect communication

Employees complain to supervisors instead of addressing colleagues directly.

Solution:

- Strive for transparency by encouraging open communication.
- Establish forums for questions and challenges, discouraging gossip and backbiting.
- Emphasise accessibility, making it clear that open dialogue is not just encouraged but expected.

Situation: Pork-barrelling

Influential employees push through projects benefiting only a small part of the company.

Solution:

- Leaders must prioritise communicating the overall vision and goals.
- Provide criteria for budget allocation based on contributions to the organisation's mission and values.
- Ensuring clarity on company objectives helps prevent projects that only serve specific interests.

Situation: Corruption

Unethical or illegal behaviour, including embezzlement and falsifying reports, is prevalent.

Solution:

- Uphold ethical standards by clearly articulating the organisation's ethical code.
- Hold individuals accountable with zero tolerance for violations.
- Leaders must model the desired behaviours and establish channels, such as a "whistle-blowers" forum, for reporting unethical conduct without fear of reprisals.

Addressing political silos requires a multifaceted approach, from fostering collaboration to promoting effective leadership and management practices. The emphasis on breaking down silos and creating a collaborative environment is crucial for sustained success.

Key takeaways

- **Leadership shift:** Overcoming silos requires leaders to shift mindset, prioritising transparency and dismantling silos from the top for a healthier organisational culture.
- **Innovation empowerment:** Fostering innovation demands a cultural shift empowering all levels, striking a balance between freedom and control for adaptability in dynamic markets.
- **Information transparency:** Addressing information gaps involves raising awareness, providing leaders ground intelligence, and implementing scalable solutions committed to transparency, driving real transformation.
- **Effective management key:** Recognising effective management's role is crucial for a collaborative work environment, requiring a shift from secretive to transparent leadership focused on collective goals.
-

- **Situational solutions:** Tailored solutions include fostering consensus, clarifying decision-making, promoting accountability, discouraging laziness, and emphasising transparency to combat specific challenges.
- **Preventing corruption:** Prioritise ethical standards, model desired behaviours, and establish reporting channels for a zero-tolerance approach to maintain organisational integrity.
- **Multifaceted approach:** Overcoming silos demands a multifaceted approach, fostering collaboration, promoting effective leadership, and breaking down silos for sustained organisational success.

It's political - Silos killing business

5 – Actionable resources

In recognition of the complexities surrounding the challenges of silos within organisational frameworks, we'd like to leave a practical tips for leaders seeking tangible solutions.

These resources include:

- a comprehensive to-do list specifically tailored for leaders facing silos
- detailed blueprint offering preventive measures against silos
- a smart step-by-step guide on fostering collaboration across silos,
- a to-the-point de-siloing framework aimed at guiding organisations through the process of dismantling silos and cultivating a collaborative culture.

These resources serve as practical tools to navigate and implement effective strategies for overcoming silo-related challenges.

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A. To-do list: leaders facing silos

It would be silly not to admit that breaking down silos is not easy. And often, we are looking at reducing them, not completely eradicating them. Looking at a more concrete list, we can identify some more specific situations and propose a solution for each.

Power dynamics

- Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely
- Leaders entrusted with power may exhibit threatening behaviours, berate team members, and resist collaboration
- Emphasise humility, accountability, and collaborative leadership to counteract the negative impact of power

"Us" vs. "them" mentality

- Avoid taking sides and keep the focus on larger, long-term goals
- Identifying instigators of dissension and addressing them prevents the spread of divisive mentalities
- Promote unity, identify, and eliminate sources of division, fostering a culture focused on shared objectives

Dealing with Machiavellians

- Confront rather than tolerate Machiavellian behaviours
- Expose their actions and issue firm warnings to prevent their negative influence from spreading
- Openly address manipulative behaviours, fostering a transparent and ethical work environment

Combating workplace bullies

- Psychopaths may use fear and intimidation to acquire power
- Leaders should promptly address harassment, abuse, and misuse of power
- Identify and remove toxic individuals to maintain a healthy work environment

Developing Middle Managers:

- Managers significantly impact team engagement and employee well-being
- Effective people management positively influences employee health and engagement
- Invest in developing managerial skills, and publicise great managers as a key employee benefit

Selecting and promoting managers:

- A rigorous process is essential for selecting managers with natural managerial talents
- Soft skills like relationship-building are critical for effective management
- Select and promote managers based on their natural talents, not just tenure or mastery of a previous role

Promoting great managers as a key benefit

- Great managers contribute to better employee health, engagement, and overall well-being
- Publicise great managers as a unique employee value proposition to attract talent
- Showcase great managers as a significant organisational benefit, differentiating your company from others

A powerful and encompassing piece of advice for leaders in all the mentioned scenarios is to lead by example.

Embodying the values, work ethic, and mindset you wish to see in your team is the bedrock of impactful leadership.

By consistently demonstrating the desired behaviours, leaders not only set the standard but also cultivate a trust, motivation, and collective success, ultimately steering the organisation towards sustained growth and resilience.

B. Blueprint: silos prevention

A company's success is jeopardised when employees engage in unproductive office politics. Management, being at the helm of the organisation, plays a pivotal role in curbing political behaviours and fostering a collaborative, less siloed work environment.

An organisation suffers when employees engage in dirty politics. Effective management is crucial to mitigate workplace politics and foster collaboration while minimising siloed behaviours.

- Roles and responsibilities
- Control
- Transparency
- Regular interactions
- Avoid partiality
- Team building activities
- Set an example
- Encourage cross-BU and cross-functional teams
- Reduce formality and the chain of command
- Establish common platforms and systems
- Design collaborative spaces for brainstorming

Roles and responsibilities

- Management should delegate responsibilities based on individuals' interests, specialisation, and educational qualifications to avoid job mismatch, which can lead to workplace politics.

Control

- Maintain good control over employees, ensuring adherence to set guidelines and predefined rules.
- Avoid special benefits for any employee; policies should be consistent for everyone.
- Well-defined hierarchies can reduce the likelihood of politics within the workplace.

Transparency:

- Maintain transparency at all levels.
- The management must respect employees to expect the same in return.
- Ensure every employee is aware of the organisation's goals and objectives, addressing issues openly to create a common understanding.
- Avoid discussing problems in closed cabins to prevent feelings of hatred and jealousy among individuals.

Regular interactions:

- Regularly interact with employees to understand their grievances.
- Encourage morning meetings in a non-formal setting, allowing employees to speak, discuss problems, and work with a calm mind.

Avoid partiality:

- Avoid being partial to any employee; unnecessary favouritism can lead to workplace politics.
- Don't jump to conclusions without concrete proof; investigate reasons behind negative feedback.

Team building activities:

- Promote healthy relationships among employees to reduce the chances of workplace politics.
- Organise team-building activities, celebrate festivals at the workplace, and occasionally plan informal get-togethers or picnics to bring employees closer.

Set an example:

- Management should set an example for all employees.
- Take strict action against employees involved in politics to send a clear message that such behaviours will not be tolerated.

Encourage cross-BU and cross-functional teams:

- Break down departmental barriers by promoting collaboration between business units and functional teams.
- Foster an environment where individuals from different backgrounds work together on company-wide challenges.

Reduce formality and chain of command:

- Create a culture that values informal interactions and open communication.
- Minimise bureaucratic hurdles that hinder quick exchanges of ideas and information.

Establish common platforms and systems:

- Implement shared platforms and systems across the organisation.
- Provide access to the same data and information for all employees, discouraging information hoarding.

Design collaborative spaces for brainstorming:

- Create physical or virtual spaces that facilitate cross-functional teams to come together.
- Promote an atmosphere where teams can brainstorm products, services, and processes in a relaxed setting.

It's political - Silos killing business

C. Step-by-step: collaborative silos

This step-by-step guide aims to illuminate the path towards fostering collaboration across silos, unravelling the complexities that hinder seamless communication and integration within an organisation.

Each step is designed to provide actionable insights for leaders and teams, so that organisations can proactively dismantle silos, promote open communication, and cultivate an environment where collaboration becomes not just a goal but an embedded part of the organisational culture.

1. Unveiling the silo syndrome
2. Instilling cross-functional collaboration
3. Shifting mindsets for seamless collaboration
4. Set the leadership's role in collaboration
5. Embedding a collaborative approach

1. Unveiling the silo syndrome

Understanding silos:

- Delving into the nature of silos and their impact on organisational dynamics.
- Recognising the detrimental effects of compartmentalised thinking on creativity, innovation, and overall efficiency.

Interdisciplinary innovation:

- Embracing the concept of cross-pollination as a remedy for siloed thinking.
- Drawing parallels between nature's cross-pollination and its application in a business context to stimulate fresh ideas and diverse perspectives.

2. Instilling cross-functional collaboration:

Encouraging cross-BU and cross-functional teams:

- Propagating collaboration by bringing together teams from different business units and functional areas.
- Facilitating an environment where employees can gain exposure to diverse perspectives and contribute collectively to company-wide problem-solving.

Reducing formality in communication channels:

- Eliminating hierarchical barriers by fostering open communication channels.
- Advocating for direct engagement with leaders, reducing the need for a rigid chain of command that impedes swift decision-making.

Establishing common platforms and systems:

- Creating unified platforms and systems that promote shared access to data and information.
- Mitigating information hoarding by ensuring transparency and equal access across the organisation.

Designing collaborative spaces:

- Allocating comfortable spaces within the workplace for cross-functional teams to converge.
- Facilitating a relaxed setting that encourages brainstorming, idea generation, and collaborative problem-solving.

3. Shifting mindsets for seamless collaboration

Overcoming resistance:

- Addressing the mindset barrier prevalent in healthcare organisations when breaking down silos.
- Fostering an open mindset that values data sharing and recognises the collective benefit of collaboration.

Embracing outcome-based measurement:

- Shifting focus from individual and departmental outcomes to collective organisational goals.
- Aligning performance metrics and rewards with the overarching objective of breaking down silos and promoting collaborative success.

4. Set the leadership's role in collaboration:

Aligning leadership objectives:

- Ensuring alignment among the leadership team towards common institutional goals.
- Cultivating a shared vision, trust, and effective communication to coordinate efforts across departments.

Establishing collaborative practices:

- Encouraging creative collaboration through integrative diversity.
- Recognising silos as obstacles to innovation and growth, and initiating practices that foster collaboration and integration.

5. Embedding a collaborative approach

Fostering a collaborative environment:

- Recognising the value of diversity in driving innovation and growth.
- Promoting integrative diversity and dismantling silos to unlock the full potential of the organisation.

Outcome-based measurement practices:

- Shifting measurement focus from means to end, collapsing silo walls.
- Realising the importance of collective outcomes in fostering collaboration and dismantling barriers.

It's political - Silos killing business

D. De-siloing framework

Are silos and internal divisions hindering your organisation's efficiency and collaborative potential?

Here is a step-by-step guide to breaking down barriers, fostering unity, and promoting a culture of collaboration.

Step 1: Define & investigate the silos

- What is Occurring?
- Where is it Occurring?
- When did it Occur?
- Impact of the Silos?

Example: "In Q1-Q2, communication breakdowns between departments have led to delays in project delivery, impacting customer satisfaction and overall efficiency."

Step 2: Brainstorm potential silo causes

- **Direct causes:** The factors directly contributing to silos.
- **Contributing causes:** Elements that contribute to the problem but don't cause it on their own.
- **Root causes:** The fundamental reasons for silos that, if addressed, can prevent recurrence.

Example:

- *Direct cause: Lack of cross-departmental communication.*
- *Contributing causes: Limited interdepartmental collaboration tools, Lack of awareness of other teams' goals.*
- *Root cause: Absence of a unified communication strategy.*

Step 3: Silo root cause analysis

— Use the 5-Whys process

Example:

Cause: Lack of cross-departmental communication.

- *First Why: There is no standardised communication strategy.*
- *Second Why: Lack of awareness about the importance of unified communication across departments.*
- *Third Why: Answer: Absence of regular communication training and workshops for employees.*
- *Fourth Why: Limited budget allocation and resources dedicated to employee training programs.*
- *Fifth Why: Lack of recognition of the long-term benefits of effective communication in overall organisational success.*
- *Summary: Lack of recognition of the long-term benefits of effective communication in overall organisational success.*

Step 4: Identify solutions & assign

Types of countermeasures:

- Containment/immediate action: Quick fixes to contain the problem.
- Corrective action: Measures to prevent immediate reoccurrence.
- Preventative action: Strategies to prevent the reoccurrence of silos.

Example:

- *Immediate action: Implement a cross-departmental communication platform.*
- *Corrective action: Conduct training on effective interdepartmental communication.*
- *Preventative action: Establish a standardised communication strategy across all departments.*

Levels of countermeasures:

- Containment: Sticky plaster solutions for immediate relief.
- Corrective: Actions to prevent the immediate return of the problem.
- Preventative: Strategies to ensure the long-term prevention of silos.

Navigating the path to corporate unity:

- Be aware: Recognise the existence of silos.
- Do what is right: Align actions with organisational goals.
- Build relationships: Network and foster strong connections across departments.
- Institute open policies: Support open feedback and communication.
- Stop negative behaviours: Discourage political behaviours detrimental to unity.

BONUS: Tips for Effective Implementation:

- Move decision making closer: Trust employees with decision-making.
- Manage tension: Understand and manage tension for constructive growth.
- Reduce distance: Bring decision-making closer to the front-line.
- Demand accountability: Hold all team members accountable for their actions.
- Reprimand political behaviour: Discourage and address negative political behaviours in the workplace.

De-siloing will foster collaboration, promote communication, and pave the way for a more efficient and united corporate environment.

Next

I've never liked the word '*conclusion*' when it comes to the last chapter of a book – this should be the starting point of a new journey.

In the fast-paced and dynamic landscape of today's corporate world, the presence of silos and the influence of corporate politics can be detrimental to organisational success. The scenarios presented in the case studies illustrate the tangible consequences of siloed behaviour, from missed opportunities to reduced productivity and damaged reputations. These real-life examples serve as cautionary tales, emphasising the critical need to address political silos and cultivate a workplace culture that thrives on collaboration and open communication.

The exploration of leadership dynamics underscores the importance of effective management in navigating corporate politics and dismantling silos. While C-level often serves as external example of leadership, internal company dynamics are equally

crucial. In many instances, silos and political mismanagement find their roots in managerial practices and are perpetuated by leaders at various levels. The failure to address these issues appropriately can lead to a breakdown in team collaboration, hindering overall organisational effectiveness.

Overcoming the challenges posed by silos and corporate politics requires strategic and proactive efforts. The identified challenges—supervision, innovation, and asymmetric information—highlight the need for a fundamental shift in leadership mindset. Transparency, open communication, and active dismantling of silos from the top down are imperative for fostering a healthier organisational culture.

To navigate these challenges effectively, a to-do list for leaders facing silos outlines specific situations and proposes solutions. Addressing power dynamics, "us" vs. "them" mentalities, dealing with Machiavellians, combating workplace bullies, and developing middle managers are key areas where leaders can make a significant impact. Leading by example emerges as a powerful and encompassing piece of advice, emphasising the importance of embodying desired values, work ethic, and mindset.

The blueprint for silo prevention outlines roles and responsibilities, control measures, transparency initiatives, and regular interactions as essential components of effective management practices. Encouraging team-building activities, avoiding partiality, and promoting great managers as a key benefit are strategic steps toward fostering a collaborative environment.

Collaboration across silos is a multi-faceted approach outlined in a step-by-step guide. Unveiling the silo syndrome involves understanding the nature of silos and recognising their detrimental impact on creativity and efficiency. Strategies for cross-functional collaboration include encouraging diverse teams, reducing formality in communication channels, establishing common platforms, and designing collaborative spaces.

Shifting mindsets for seamless collaboration involves overcoming resistance and embracing outcome-based measurement. The leadership's role in collaboration is critical, requiring alignment of objectives and the establishment of collaborative practices. Steps toward a collaborative embedded approach emphasise recognising the value of diversity, promoting outcome-based measurement practices, and fostering a collaborative environment.

This is a more structured approach to identify, analyse, and address silos within an organisation. By defining and investigating silos, brainstorming potential causes, conducting root cause analysis, and implementing solutions, leaders can systematically break down barriers and foster a culture of collaboration.

In conclusion, breaking down silos and fostering collaboration is not an easy task, but it is a necessary one for sustained organisational success. The comprehensive insights and strategies presented across these chapters provide a roadmap for leaders to navigate the complexities of corporate dynamics, promote collaboration, and build resilient, innovative, and united organisations.

Some of you might think “*what should I do next?*”. You might have questions, objections, and ideas. I am always up for sharing thoughts and experiences and working with leadership teams to uncover opportunities.

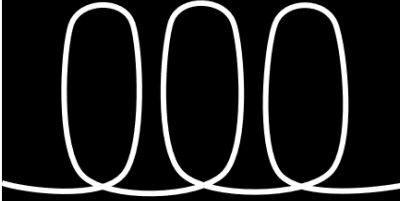
Final gift

"Bad Silos, Good Silos – Card Game" introduces a unique approach to tackling the pervasive issue of isolated silos within organisations. By acknowledging that silos exist and recognising the level of corporate politics at play, executives take the crucial first step toward addressing the challenges that arise from siloed thinking.

This card game is designed to make departments aware of isolation's detrimental practices and consequences in an engaging and competitive manner. The cards aim to foster a shared narrative among cross-functional teams, emphasising that business challenges are multifaceted and rarely fit neatly into a single silo. Ultimately, the game encourages a collaborative mindset, ensuring that organisations operate at their full potential by breaking down barriers and promoting a holistic approach to problem-solving.

Print, cut & play!

Bad silos, good silos.



kidaa.io

CORPORATE POLITICS

De-isolating silos.

Sales, Marketing, IT, Legal, R&D: organisations are divided into silos. Silos are not bad *per se*, on the contrary they are necessary.

The real problem is silos isolation, as business challenges never fit into a single silo.

Cross-functional teams are great, but they can also fail miserably without a clear shared narrative behind the processes and practices.



kidaa.io

CARDS

Bad silos, good silos.

Isolated silos are making organisations operating way below their full potential.

These cards are designed to make departments aware of insolation bad practices and consequences in a fun and competitive game.

Recognise that there is a level of corporate politics and that silos exist it is the first step for executives.



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RULES

Who is playing?

- 1 Master of the game in charge of preparing and overview the game
- Select 1 main player, possibly a C-level or top management, in the role of the Project Manager (PM) asked to complete the story, collecting pieces following the bottom-to-top order
- Create teams of at least 2 players each and identify a Team Leader for each team



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RULES

How to use these cards?

- The PM selects one story line
- On each story there are various steps to complete in order of priority
- Each team receive a stack with an equal number of random mixed colour pieces
- The PM can't clearly see the pieces
- The game runs twice with 2 different scenarios
- The Master chronometer scenarios
- The PM starts asking pieces, clock-wise
- The game finishes when story is completed



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SCENARIO 1

Collaboration

- Team's goal: to give away the right piece in the most efficient way
- PM's goal: to finish the story as soon as possible



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SCENARIO 2

Isolation

- Team's goal: to keep control of pieces as longer as possible
- PM's goal: to finish the story as soon as possible
- When asked, if the Team does not have the piece, it simply say "I don't have it"
- If the Team has the piece, it needs to take a Habit card and follow instructions before giving the piece away



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PRINT. CUT. SCRAP.

What to do with your paper scrap?

MAKE PAPER BEADS!

Place a toothpick on the long edge.











Glue & roll till the end.



Allow the glue to dry.



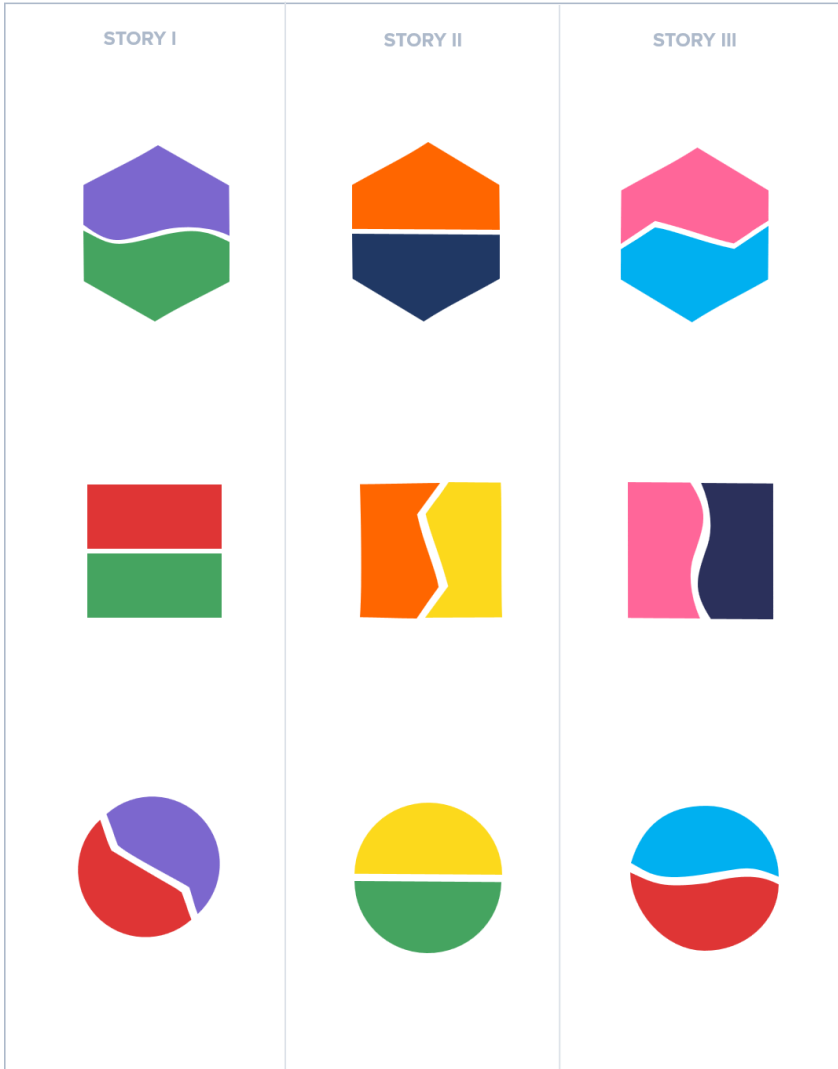
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<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Not in my objectives. We have other priorities. Ask (name the next team)”</p> <p>They need to go another round. If they ask you again, give the piece.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>	<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Sure. I am in between meetings, but I will put it on my desk – top priority”</p> <p>Wait 30 seconds before looking for the piece and giving the requested piece away.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>
<p>HABIT </p> <p>“My hands are tied, you know how it works”</p> <p>Talk with your team about the weather for 30 second before looking for the piece and giving the requested piece away. Take all the time you need.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>	<p>HABIT </p> <p>“I need to check this. Can you please ask this to me again differently.”</p> <p>Ask them 3 times to repeat their request in 3 different ways (e.g. Can you reformulate? Can you write it down? Can you draw it?). And then give it to them.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>

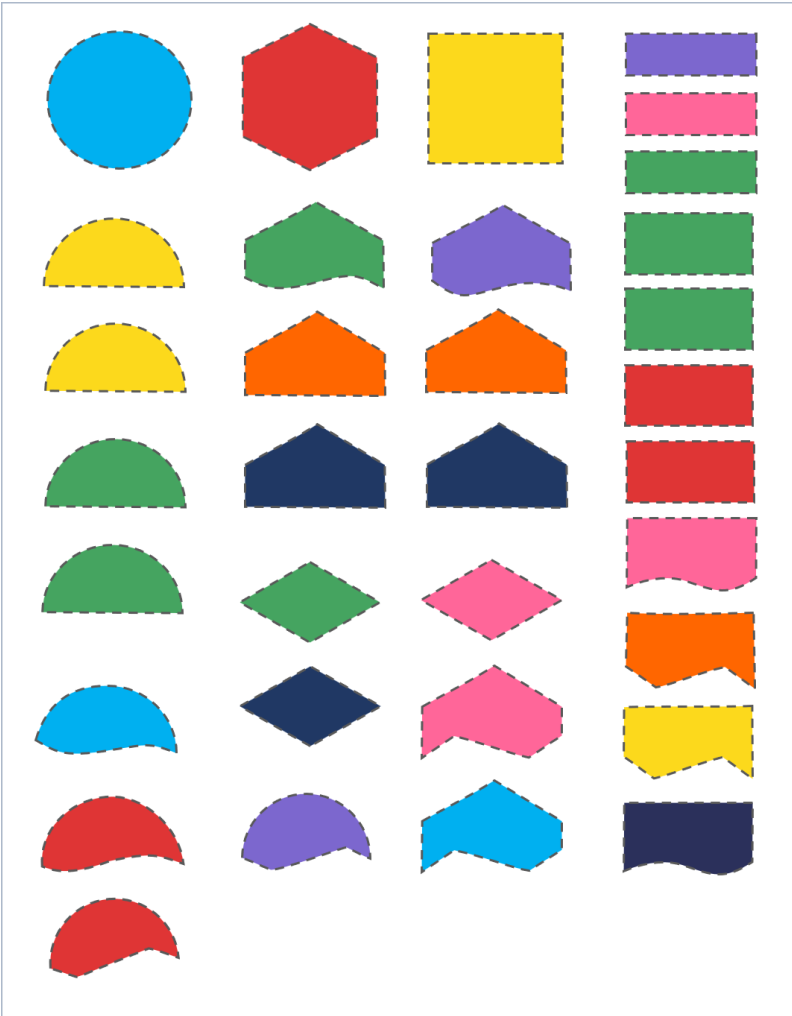
<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Look, let me come back to you shortly.”</p> <p>That is really a critical piece for your department – you can't just give away it without anything back. Discuss with your team about how to keep it or keep your department name credits. Then eventually give the piece after around 1 minute.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>	<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Sure”</p> <p>Ask your team to look for the piece. Once the you find it, start speaking about the weather or ask your team if they have a specific hobby. After around 1 minute come back to PM saying “It was a very hard work, but I did it, you know you can always count on me”</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>
<p>HABIT </p> <p>“I am happy to help, but... Ask (name the next team)”</p> <p>They need to go another round. If they ask you again, give the piece.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>	<p>HABIT </p> <p>“This is not the best way to go in this case. Ask (name the next team)”</p> <p>Wait them coming back and then give the piece.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>

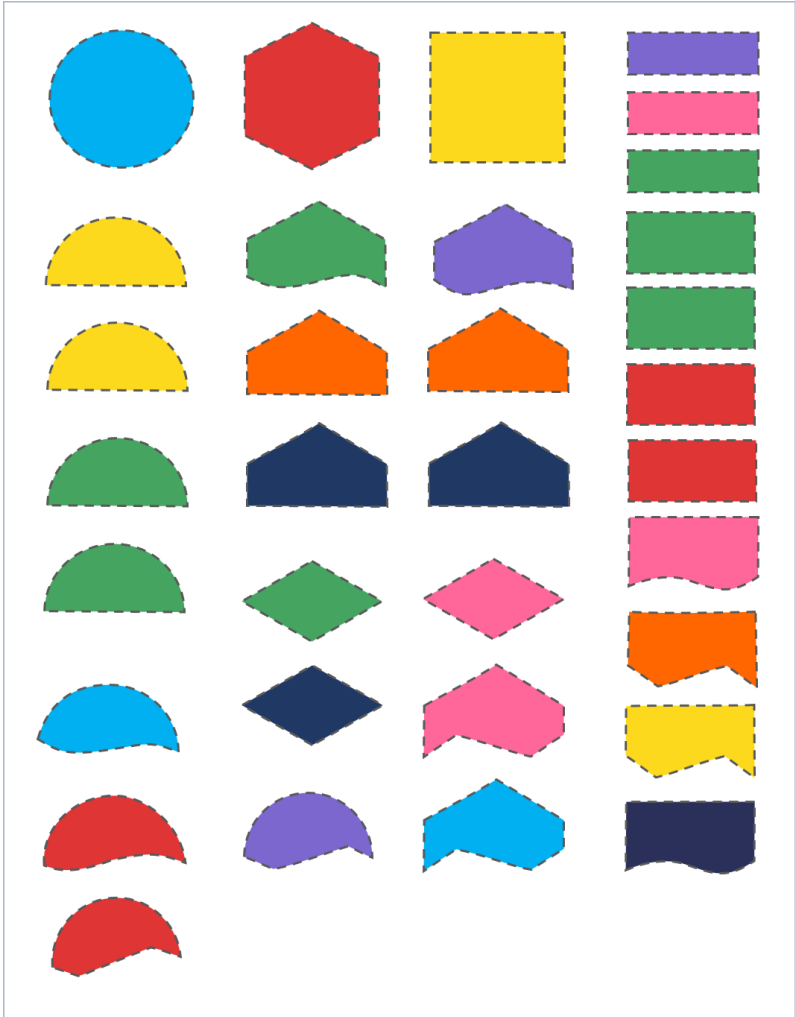
<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Yes, give me one second.”</p> <p>Give the wrong piece on purpose. If complain, say “sorry, I did not received clear instructions”. They need to go another round before receiving your piece.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>	<p>HABIT </p> <p>“Please ask to (name the next team), he is usually in charge for it”</p> <p>Your team member will say he is not the decision maker, and that you are. If complain, say “sorry, I did not received clear instructions”. They need to go another round before receiving your piece.</p> <p>kidaa.io</p>
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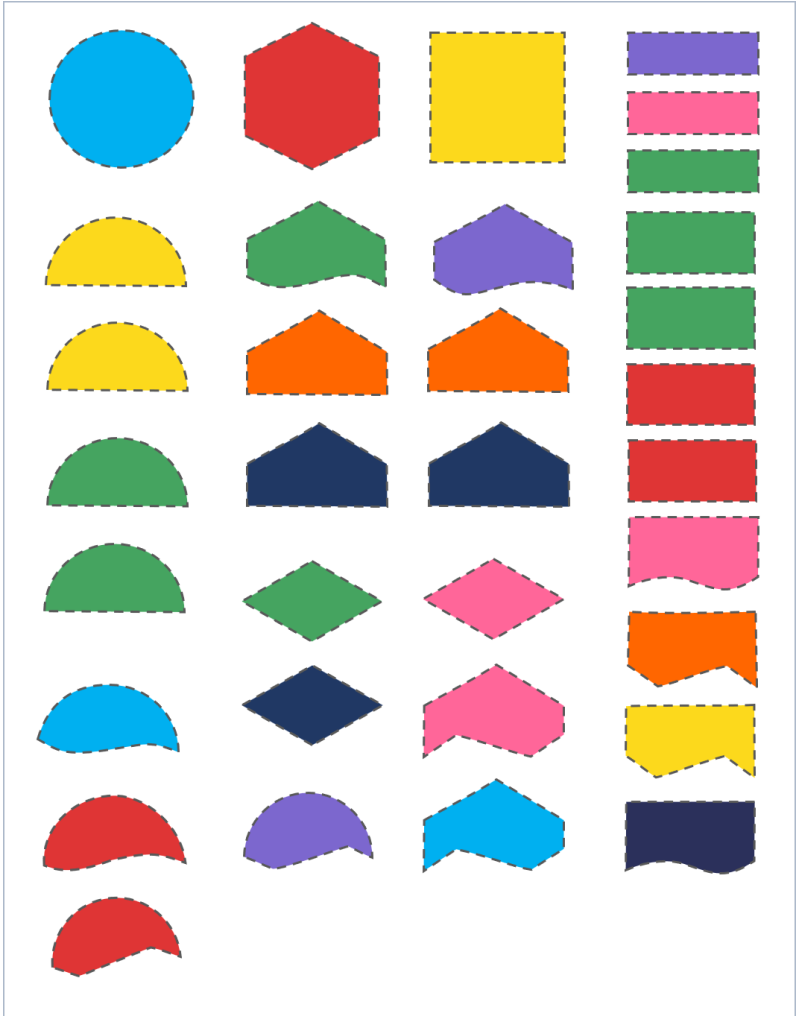
It's political - Silos killing business

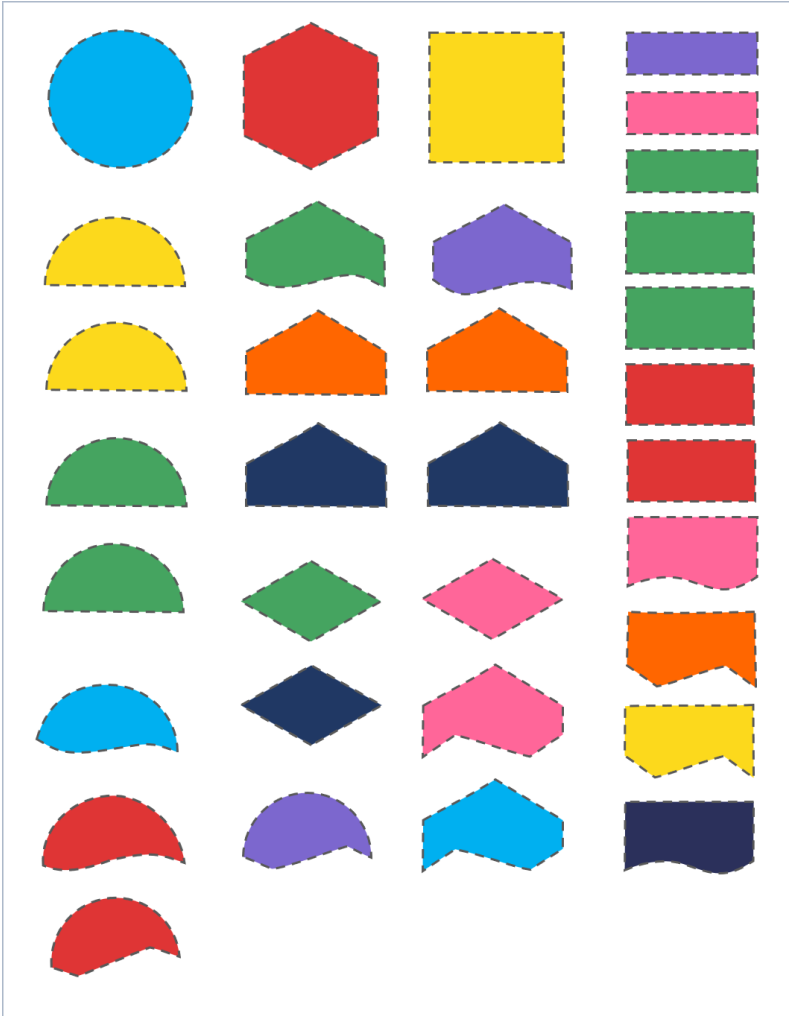


It's political - Silos killing business









Embark on a transformative journey through the intricate landscape of modern organisations with “It’s political - Silos killing business” This comprehensive guide, rooted in real-life case studies, practical challenges, and actionable solutions, unveils the complexities of siloed thinking and corporate politics that often hinder efficiency, innovation, and collaborative potential.

Explore the pivotal role of leadership and the resources to breaking down barriers, fostering unity, and promoting a culture of collaboration.

About the Author

Chiara Lamacchia is an entrepreneur and a consultant in legal, marketing and innovation, with a Combined Bachelor and MSc in Law from Bocconi University (Milan, Italy) and an MSc in Marketing from Edinburgh Napier University (UK). Chiara works with global organisations, across different sectors. Besides, among other things, Chiara introduced a new concept, 'lawrketing', combining law, business, marketing and innovation – and is also the Founder of lawrketing.com, promoting the adoption of innovative ways of using the law for competitive advantage.

