Welcome to Families and Work Institute’s Conversation Kit on the politics of promotion, created with Bonnie Marcus, an executive coach, award-winning entrepreneur and contributing writer to Forbes and Business Insider. She was formerly CEO of a ServiceMaster company and has held executive positions in startups and Fortune 500 companies. Her new book is The Politics of Promotion: How High-Achieving Women Get Ahead and Stay Ahead (Wiley, 2015).

This discussion guide focuses on understanding what is holding you back and how you can use some of the tools that Bonnie has included in her book to move forward. Please watch the video that accompanies this Conversation Kit before you answer the questions in this Discussion Guide. You can do this alone or in a group.

1. Bonnie’s story
   - What was your takeaway when you listened to Bonnie’s story of being passed over for a promotion?
   - Do you have a similar story?
   - What are the important lessons to learn from this experience?

   If you are discussing this as a group, have individuals share their stories and what they learned as a result.

2. How savvy are you?

   It takes both great performance and political savvy to get ahead. Bonnie states that political savvy is a skill not a trait and you can develop it over time. She identifies four stages of political savvy.

   **STAGE 1: Naïve Nancy**
   - Unaware of Rules of the Game
   - 100% work focused
   - Learn thru positive/negative experiences

   **STAGE 2: Great Work Greta**
   - Reputation as competent
   - Importance of relationships
   - Focused on career advancement
   - Limited networking

   **STAGE 3: Strategic Sarah**
   - Delegation/management skills
   - Strategic relationships
   - Seeking mentors/sponsors/coach
   - Talking about accomplishments

   **STAGE 4: Political Pam**
   - Using personal influence
   - Mentoring others
   - Maintaining credibility/visibility
   - Lead and inspire others
– How does your own experience compare with these stages?

– Do you identify with one of these four stages at this point in time?

### 3. Assessing Your Political Savvy

Women who attain leadership positions are women who both had great performance and had political savvy. Political savvy involves self-promotion and influence, strategic networking, and social astuteness/awareness. To see where you are, please fill out this political skill assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never or almost never true</th>
<th>Seldom true</th>
<th>Sometimes true</th>
<th>Often true</th>
<th>Almost always true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I spend dedicated time at work each week networking with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I know my value proposition and can comfortably talk about my accomplishments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I understand the way decisions are made in my organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I network to build allies and champions across the organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I have a good rapport with most people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I communicate effectively with people at all levels of the organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have strong relationships with decision makers and influencers in the organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I have identified my power network: who I know and who I need to know to achieve my goal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I call on my network contacts to help me get things done and open doors for my advancement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am well known across the organization as a top performer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I have or have identified a potential mentor/sponsor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I readily promote the accomplishments of my team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I pay close attention to what type of behavior and communication is rewarded</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have communicated my career aspirations to my boss and my network</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am tuned into the motivations and intentions of others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1: Strategic Networking</th>
<th>Category 2: Promotion/Personal Influence</th>
<th>Category 3: Political Savvy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Total:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What was your score in each of the three areas?
- Where do you need to focus your efforts to build your social and political skills?

If you are in a group, have everyone share their scores and where they think they are in their political savvy development.

4. Getting started

As more fully explained in the book, politics is about understanding what other people want and need and creating strategic relationships. In the process of helping others you can create credibility and visibility for yourself.

Having the answers to these questions is a great way to get started:

- Who are the people who have power and influence over your advancement?
- What are their goals? What motivates them?
- How can you help them achieve their goals because of the value you bring to the table?

If you want to go in more depth, you may want to complete the following exercise now and then read the book; or vis-a-versa! Either way, it will help you in your journey to become politically savvy.
Exercise: Positioning Statement

Key stakeholder: ____________________________

What are you trying to achieve/get done? ____________________________

What information do you know?

________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________

Does this need to be validated?

_____ Yes _____ No

What do you need to know?

________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________

Your positioning statement: ____________________________

________________________
________________________

If you are in a group, share your positioning statements with the group.


Based on *The Politics of Promotion: How High-Achieving Women Get Ahead and Stay Ahead* by Bonnie Marcus, M.Ed.

To learn more about the politics of promotion, please visit Bonnie Marcus’s website ([http://womenssuccesscoaching.com](http://womenssuccesscoaching.com)).