



Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • May 09, 2023

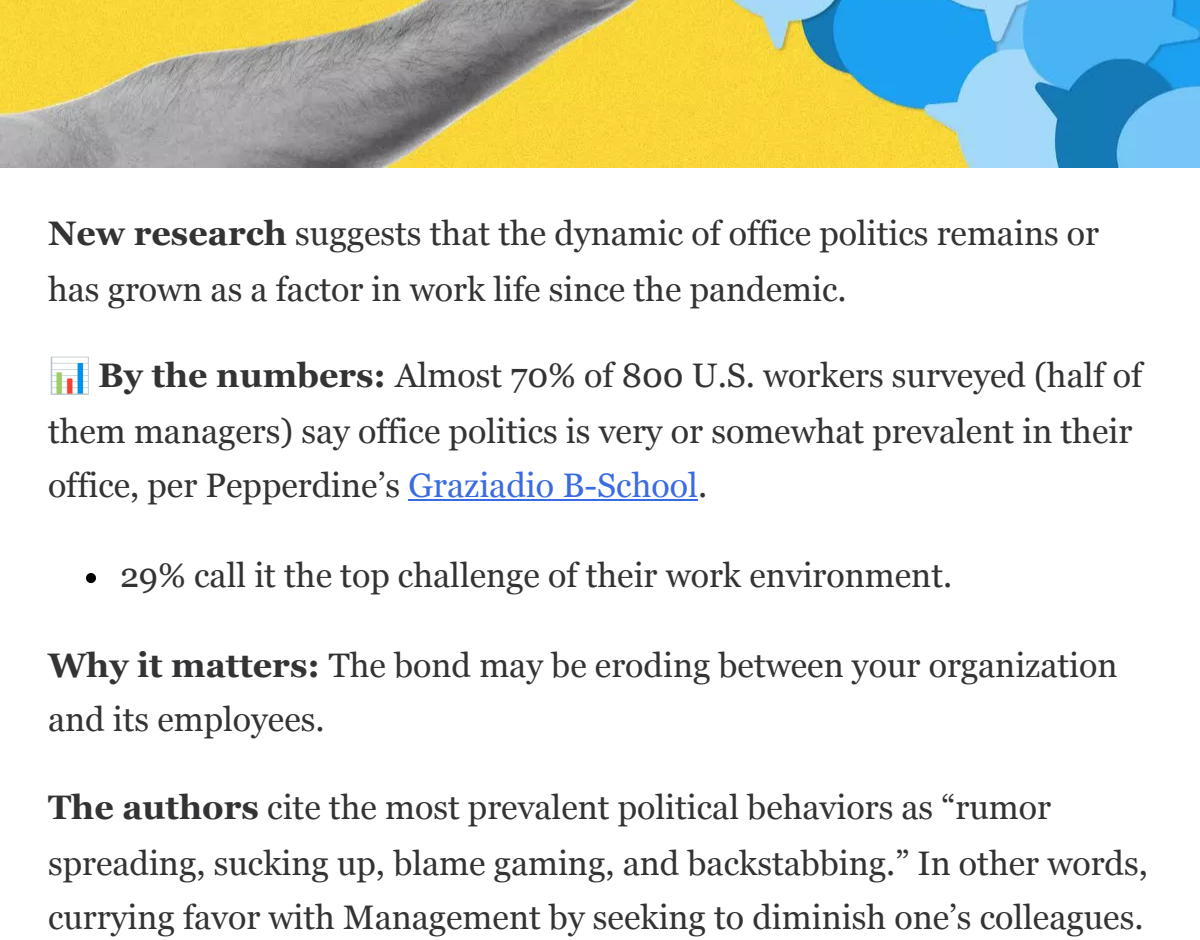
Smart Brevity® count: 4.5 mins...1180 words

Happy May to my senior leaders across industries!

👉 **Let's be the best leaders we can be.** Here are some straightforward insights and actionable tools & tips.

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1 big thing: Office politics persist without offices



New research suggests that the dynamic of office politics remains or has grown as a factor in work life since the pandemic.

📊 **By the numbers:** Almost 70% of 800 U.S. workers surveyed (half of them managers) say office politics is very or somewhat prevalent in their office, per Pepperdine's [Graziadio B-School](#).

- 29% call it the top challenge of their work environment.

Why it matters: The bond may be eroding between your organization and its employees.

The authors cite the most prevalent political behaviors as “rumor spreading, sucking up, blame gaming, and backstabbing.” In other words, currying favor with Management by seeking to diminish one’s colleagues.

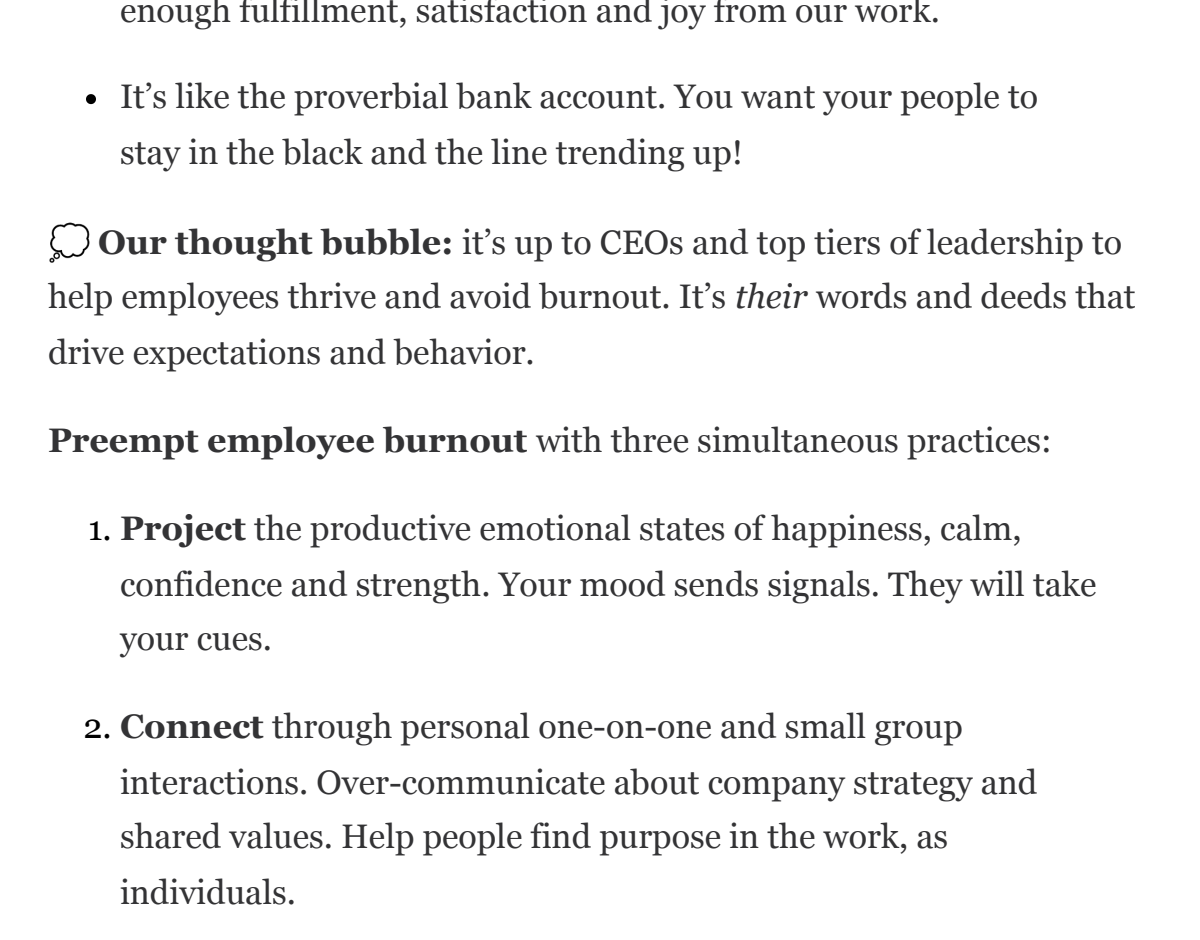
Many believe senior leadership has the most influence over the level of negative office politics. 94% say it’s their responsibility to prevent it from getting out of hand.

- 😬 **Case in point:** a business unit CXO recently sought coaching guidance from me after his boss’ boss, the enterprise CEO, spent most of an hourlong one-on-one meeting trash-talking underlings.

My POV: In healthy organizational environments, good work gets done through trust. It is the coin of the realm.

The bottom line: The higher the perception of office politics, the lower the organizational trust. Low trust is organizational poison.

2. How execs can preempt employee burnout



What's new: Burnout at work continues beyond the pandemic. Nearly 6 out of 10 US workers [reported](#) increased burnout, with industry specific instances described for [Healthcare](#), [Academia](#), and [HR](#), to name a few.

🌟 **Why it matters:** Damage to mental and physical health, reduction in job satisfaction, quality of life and productivity.

- *“But, besides that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?!?”*

Burnout occurs when our reserves of energy, enthusiasm and abundance are depleted.

- The stuff that propels us dwindles down when we don’t receive enough fulfillment, satisfaction and joy from our work.
- It’s like the proverbial bank account. You want your people to stay in the black and the line trending up!

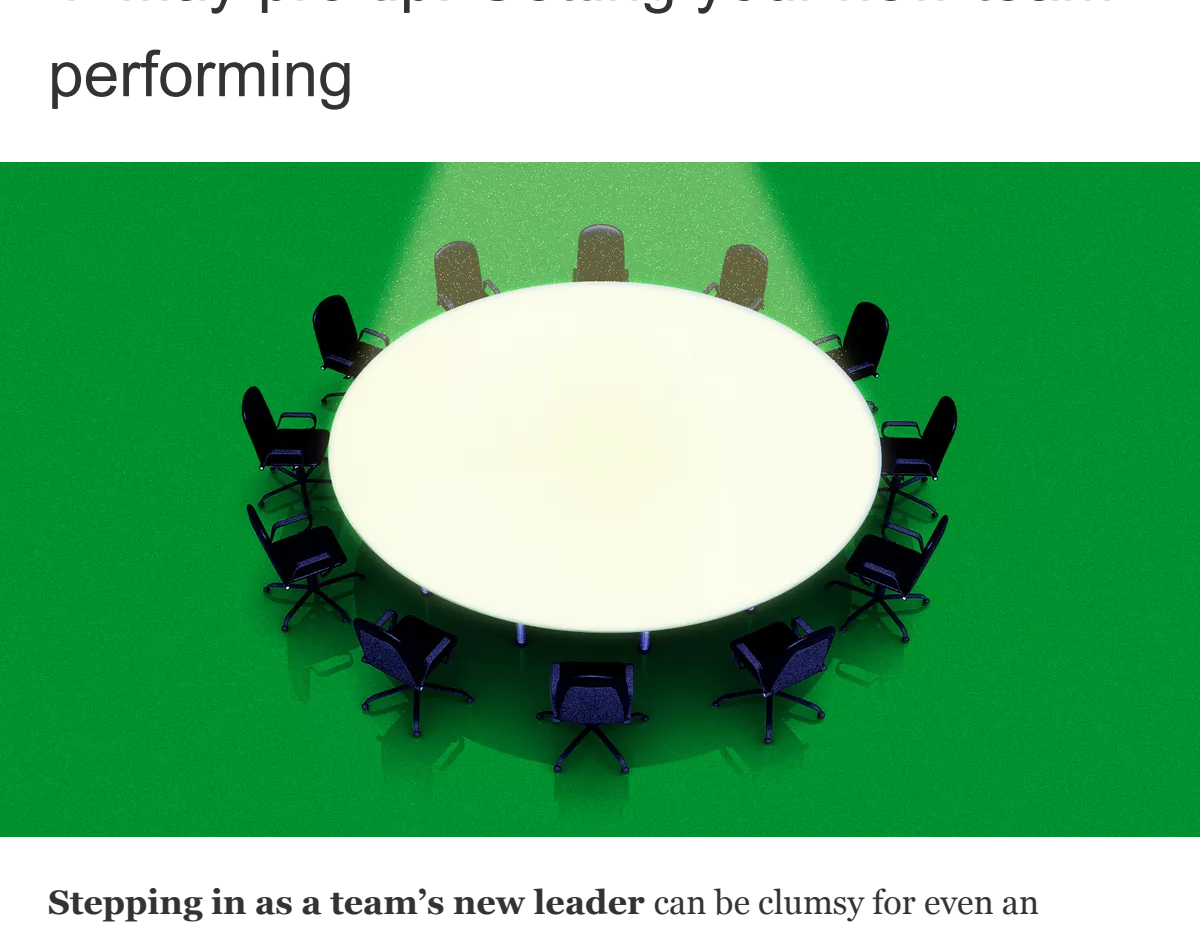
💬 **Our thought bubble:** it’s up to CEOs and top tiers of leadership to help employees thrive and avoid burnout. It’s *their* words and deeds that drive expectations and behavior.

Preempt employee burnout with three simultaneous practices:

1. **Project** the productive emotional states of happiness, calm, confidence and strength. Your mood sends signals. They will take your cues.
2. **Connect** through personal one-on-one and small group interactions. Over-communicate about company strategy and shared values. Help people find purpose in the work, as individuals.
3. **Protect** your employees from burnout. Don’t reward non-stop work. If there have been reductions in force, don’t expect the shell-shocked remainder to now do others’ work.

👉 **Go deeper:** Interesting take in [WSJ](#) re “*Combating the ‘Microstress’ That Causes Burnout.*”

3. Ownership for quiet types



Technical experts and professionals in Finance, IT, Actuarial and Legal who are now in senior leadership roles comprise a significant share of my clients.

- Many are quiet with a nonassertive style. They demonstrate rigorous analysis and detail with less emphasis on the big picture and driving results.

Why it matters: They sometimes lose credibility, influence and promotability when other stakeholders perceive them as an internal consultant — i.e., someone with no skin in the game and where the work is an intellectual exercise.

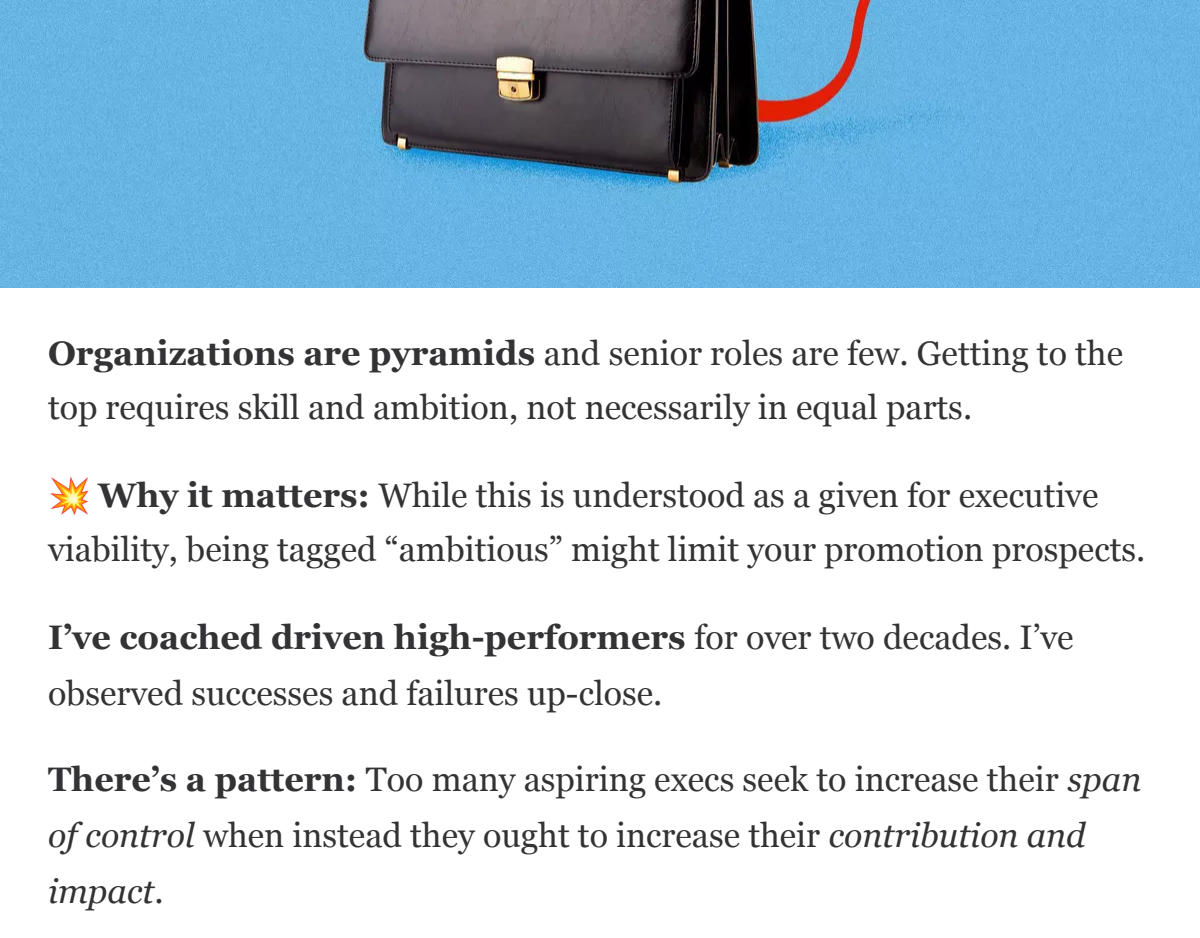
👉 **My POV:** Leadership resonance stems from ownership. That is, when others in the organization experience them as a CEO of their business, functional area, group, department, etc.

If this sounds like you, and you want to convey ownership, consider applying your attention to the following:

1. **Start with a vision** of what you want to do with your area. Assess what you’d want to change or do the same.
2. **Execute.** Make outcomes happen. Bring projects to completion and regularly over-deliver on promises. Share the victories inside and outside your team.
3. **Assert your will** to support the execution of your vision and drive the project over the finish line. While this might feel unnatural, lean in. This might be your key growth opportunity.

👉 **Go deeper:** My [brief video](#), “The #1 Mistake Introverted VPs Make in Meetings.”

4. May pro tip: Getting your new team performing



Stepping in as a team’s new leader can be clumsy for even an accomplished professional.

Why it matters: Getting the team on board and aligned is a key to early traction.

📺 **The big picture:** Whether you’ve been promoted from within or plucked from the outside, *Tuckman’s phases of team formation* will probably play out:

1. *Forming:* When teams come together, members approach one another politely and carefully;
2. *Storming:* As their comfort increases they begin to argue, test boundaries and act out;
3. *Norming:* To survive and overcome this stage they then establish methods, processes and systems around their work; and
4. *Performing:* They’re then positioned to perform and produce desired outcomes.

This is true for new teams leading large organizations, or simply taking on significant projects.

⚙️ **Accelerate the first 3 phases** so you can jump into high-performance more quickly. The objective is to get them to know you by clarifying preferences and expectations.

Run a facilitated process to explicitly discuss (maybe, even negotiate) the following:

- Your management style
- Your communication preferences
- Your performance standards & expectations
- How you and the team will go about decision-making
- Their hopes, aspirations and concerns

Once you’ve set them up for success, give them some leeway, oversee them supportively and apply positive and negative consequences consistently.

5. Career Corner: How not to be ambitious

Organizations are pyramids and senior roles are few. Getting to the top requires skill and ambition, not necessarily in equal parts.

🌟 **Why it matters:** While this is understood as a given for executive viability, being tagged “ambitious” might limit your promotion prospects.

I’ve coached driven high-performers for over two decades. I’ve observed successes and failures up-close.

There’s a pattern: Too many aspiring execs seek to increase their *span of control* when instead they ought to increase their *contribution and impact*.

- **My POV:** You should strive to make the greatest contribution to and through the most stakeholders. Engage others as you internalize greater depth of organizational understanding.

🧠 **It’s about Leadership:** My definition: “Getting valuable things done through others who benefit from following you.”

A common trap: Many coachees focus on workplace experiences and interactions they perceive as slights, whether passed over for a promotion they believe they earned or a simple stray comment.

- **Let it go!** [Earl Nightingale](#) famously said that “we become what we think about.”

The bottom line: Your reputation for contribution and impact is your main asset. Build that reputation and more opportunities, responsibilities, shared victories ... and yes, span of control will follow.

👉 **Thanks for your share of mind** and I wish you all the best!

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💡 **Parting wisdom:** “*The best way out is always through.*” Robert Frost

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