# CDU Receipt

**Dealing with Devious Political Tactics While Preserving Your Integrity**

For many, politics is nasty business. Some regard it as a game-one they decline to "play."

Out here in Reality, though, we know that politics is inescapable, and that not all politics is

nasty. Actually, politics is mostly helpful. The problem is in the definition. We define politics as what happens when we contend with each other for control or dominance, or when we solve problems together. That covers much of what happens in the knowledge-oriented workplace, including developing products, solving problems, planning and executing projects, managing risk, and management. But many find politics repulsive, because some do use nasty, vicious, unethical tactics. Those ruthless few rely on the naïve belief of others that nobody would ever be nasty, vicious, or unethical. In this program, we expose some of those unethical tactics. Our goal is to make politics more constructive by making the destructive tactics of the ruthless few easier to recognize and therefore less effective when used by those very few ruthless people.

Here's an example:

Jennifer's supervisor, Darth, knows that Jennifer wants to lead an upcoming project. He also knows that he and the project sponsor, Sandy, have already chosen someone else for the position without posting the opportunity publicly, which is contrary to company policy. To conceal their subterfuge, they won't be announcing their decision until next month.

Meanwhile, Jennifer has asked Darth to help her get the assignment, but Darth doesn't want to tell her the bad news. Since he also doesn't want to disappoint her, he wants her to believe that he's trying to help her. So before their next weekly one-on-one meeting in Darth's office, Darth composes an email message to Sandy that recommends Jennifer for the position, but he doesn't send the message. He prints it, and leaves the hardcopy on his desk, with a few revisions marked, as if he's working on the wording.

He arranges to be late for his meeting with Jennifer, and calls her mobile phone just before the meeting. He tells her that he thinks he'll arrive on time, but he might be a bit late, and if he is, she should wait for him in his office. He's relying on her curiosity-he expects her to read the fake draft message on his desk. When he arrives, he hastily gathers the papers on his desk and tucks them into a notebook. Maybe she reads it, maybe not. If she does, his ploy works.

This is an example of what I call a "cutout of the inanimate kind." It's a way of transferring false information to someone deniably. In this particular tactic, Darth is also relying on Jenifer's desire to keep her snooping a secret. That will prevent her from accusing him of deceiving her about his helping her secure the leadership position.

There are dozens of these devious ploys, and in this program, we examine many of them. Our purpose is to expose program attendees to the range of devious tactics, so that when they encounter similar behavior, they won't be as easily manipulated as Darth thought Jennifer was.

In the seminar formats of this program, participants are encouraged to ask about tactics they might have witnessed or heard about in their workplaces. We then offer analyses of what might have been happening, including many possibilities-benign, constructive, and devious. In this way, participants learn how to develop interpretations of all kinds, not just the devious ones.

Applications are more varied than one might first expect. Beyond the obvious uses for defending oneself when personally targeted, applications include:

\* Recognizing devious political operators, to note for future reference

\* Supporting and advising colleagues

\* As a team leader, knowing when to intervene when team members are targeted

\* In project risk management, devising mitigations for political risks

Political skills of all kinds are important assets for anyone. Recognizing devious tactics is one

of those skills.

**ID:** IIBACIC2019\_03  
**Contact Hours:** 1

**BABOK Coverage:**  BABOK Ch 9 – Underlying Competencies

## Presenter(s)

**Rick Brenner**

Rick Brenner is principal of Chaco Canyon Consulting. He works with people in dynamic problem-solving organizations that are making products so novel or complex that they need state-of-the-art teamwork and stronger relationships among their people. In his 30 years as a software developer, project manager, software development manager, entrepreneur, consultant, and coach, he has developed valuable insights into the interactions between people in complex dynamic environments, and between people and the media in which they work.

As a coach, he works with managers at all levels, emphasizing development of interpersonal skills, especially in fluid, high-stress contexts, such as organizations that are moving from a strict operational orientation to one in which ongoing operations must compete for resources with special enterprise-scale projects. Such a mixed environment creates organizational stresses that leaders must understand, not only because of the change-related issues that arise, but also because of the challenges to managers that they create, even when equilibrium is attained.

Over a period of seven years, he attended or assisted in numerous workshops under Jerry Weinberg, Dani Weinberg, and Jean McLendon. It was during this period that he acquired his skills in designing and facilitating experiential education. He was a founding member of the AYE Conference.

Mr. Brenner has held positions at Symbolics, Inc., and at Draper Laboratory, both of Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Symbolics, he was responsible for development of products based on Macsyma, a computer algebra system. At Draper, he was a principal investigator in a DARPA program, the Evolutionary Design of Complex Software, where he conducted research into advanced concepts for software development environments based on dynamic object-oriented programming languages. From 1993 to 2014, he taught Spreadsheet Models for Managers, a course he devised, at the Harvard University Extension School.

He serves as the facilitator and group administrator for a discussion group he created at LinkedIn.com: Office Politics, Workplace Politics, and Organizational Politics. Discussions there are energetic and enlightening. The group now has over 900 members.

Mr. Brenner holds a Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering from MIT. He is a member of the National Speakers Association (NSA), the Boston Software Process Improvement Network, and the Agile New England Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery. He has served in various leadership roles ranging from board member to vice president to chair (president) in local chapters of these societies. He was selected Chapter Member of the Year for NSA New England in 2001 and 2007. He is a member of the Project Management Institute.

His current interests focus on improving personal and organizational effectiveness in abnormal situations, such as dramatic change, enterprise emergencies, and high-pressure project environments. He has written a number of essays on these subjects, available at his Web site, [http://www.ChacoCanyon.com/](http://www.chacocanyon.com/). He blogs on the general topic of technical debt policy at TechDebtPolicy.com, tweets as @RickBrenner and @TechDebtPolicy, and writes and publishes a free weekly email newsletter, Point Lookout, which now has just over 3,000 subscribers.

## Event Details

## **Date:** 28-Mar-2019 at 11 am

**Host:** John Deere

**Location:** 6400 NW 86th St., Johnston, IA 50131

# Validation

This receipt is proof of attendance at the meeting described above by the following individual:

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Attendee Name