

JOBS AND  
CAREERS IN  
**POLITICAL  
SERVICE**

By Christopher Arterton,  
Margaret Gottlieb,  
David Ettinger &  
Julie Barko Germany

HOW TO GET STARTED IN  
A CAREER THAT MATTERS

The Graduate School  
of Political Management

---

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# JOBS AND CAREERS IN POLITICAL SERVICE

BY CHRISTOPHER ARTERTON, MARGARET GOTTLIEB,  
DAVID ETTINGER AND JULIE BARKO GERMANY\*\*

Professor F. Christopher Arterton was the founding dean of the Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) at The George Washington University (GW); Margaret "Mag" Gottlieb is GSPM's Director of Career Programs; and David Ettinger is a Librarian at GW's Gelman Library. Julie Barko Germany, an alumna of GSPM, is Vice President of Digital Strategy at the DCI Group. Their contact information is available at [www.gspm.gwu.edu](http://www.gspm.gwu.edu).

*Design: GW Marketing & Creative Services*

© Copyright by the Graduate School of Political  
Management, George Washington University

I	Thinking about careers in politics . . . . .	3
II	Careers that matter: paths to making a difference with your life . . .	5
III	Entry level jobs in politics . . . . .	7
IV	Strategies for job seeking and a long-term career . . . . .	11
V	Resources for finding that special job. . . . .	29
VI	Networking: igniting your career in politics . . . . .	33
VII	Case studies in finding that first job . . . . .	47
VIII	Education in politics: is it worth the time and cost? . . . . .	54
IX	Ethics and a profession of politics. . . . .	63
X	What is career success in politics? . . . . .	68
XI	Further reading to achieve success. . . . .	71

# THINKING ABOUT CAREERS IN POLITICS

*“Democracy is the worst  
form of government ...  
except for all the rest.”*

*—Winston Churchill*

Why would anyone want a career in politics?

In the United States and in many other countries, political life is largely despised, criticized as fraudulent and manipulated. Those who work in politics are often viewed as self-centered, disingenuous and corrupt. Why on earth would anyone who aspires to lead a good and productive life wish for a political career in politics?

## The Value of Politics

Step back a minute from the skepticism directed at those who pursue political careers, and consider the value of politics itself. Democracy provides the means of resolving social conflict without resorting to violence or authoritarian dictatorship. In short, we need democratic politics to achieve progress peacefully and to adapt to a changing world. Churchill’s famous quote reminds us, however, of the reality that democratic politics—even when well established and practiced in a responsible manner—will often be messy and full of argument, exaggeration and conflict. Within limits—which we will turn to in the section on ethics—all the squabbling may actually be a sign of health in a democratic system. It could mean that the political institutions are grappling with real issues that divide society. Addressing those issues means stirring up disagreements and conflict.



## What About the Farmers?

**FARMERS** have different concerns and interests than those of accountants or college students. Do we want a system in which the interests of farmers are either ignored or given priority over all other concerns of society? We think not. A dictatorship might arbitrarily control agricultural prices so as to benefit consumers. A revolutionary movement might seize land from the wealthy and redistribute it to the landless poor. But a democracy needs to understand the needs of the farming community and balance those interests against those of transporters, retailers, manufacturers, consumers and society as a whole. As Harold Lasswell said, "Politics determines who gets what" in society. That is the essential function of politics.

**HOPEFULLY**, reconciliation of these colliding interests is accomplished through democratic representation. Sometimes, the process doesn't work smoothly. Farmers in the United States have become so angry at times that they have made their determination known by driving their tractors to Washington, DC and blockading the Capitol with a solid ring of farming equipment. The result may seem chaotic, but it's really democracy at work. Congress acted; the farmers got some of what they wanted and went home. The American democratic machinery responded by balancing the farmers' needs—one societal group—against other essential interests.

**THOSE WHO WORK IN POLITICS** are often highly ambitious, notoriously self-confident and aggressive self-promoters. They are, however, no more corrupt, manipulative or self-serving than any other profession. More importantly, their work contributes to the difficult task of mediating conflicting values. Careers in politics offer many opportunities to mold the future and facilitate progress. In short, careers in politics matter. **If you work in politics, you will literally have a chance to create the future.**

---

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI

---

CAREERS  
THAT MATTER:  
**PATHS TO  
MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE  
WITH  
YOUR LIFE**



The field of “Politics” includes many areas of employment:

Electioneering  
Legislative Affairs  
Digital Strategy  
Issue Advocacy  
Lobbying  
Fund Raising  
Public Affairs  
Public Relations

Data Analytics  
Polling and Research  
Government Service  
Elected Official  
Public Policy Analysis  
Legislative Staffing  
Community Organizing

Within these areas, careers can be built in both non-profit and for-profit settings, within or outside the agencies of government or in political organizations that work to shape government policy. Moreover, each of these fields has spawned a variety of specialized jobs based on expertise and technical knowledge.



## Specializations in Politics

It would be impossible to list all of the types of work that those engaged in political careers undertake. There are just too many, and they keep proliferating. Nevertheless, the result is that productive and rewarding work can be found in numerous specializations within these fields. Below, we illustrate in two of the major fields of politics.

- **ELECTIONEERING** refers to the very visible and highly charged work of managing elections, either for candidates or issues on the ballot.
- **ADVOCACY** includes activities designed to promote public policies either by raising issues in the public consciousness or by influencing the thinking and behavior of public officials.

### ELECTIONEERING

Campaign Manager  
Field Organizer  
Fundraising  
Polling  
Advertising Consultant  
Convention Manager  
Delegate Hunter  
Press Secretary  
Targeting Specialist  
Social Media Manager  
Opposition Researcher

### ADVOCACY

Lobbyist  
Grassroots Contact  
Event Planner  
PAC Manager  
Communications Director  
Membership Coordinator  
Internet Strategist  
Policy Researcher  
Issue Analyst  
Blogger  
Videographer

Even within these fields, the above lists are not comprehensive. But, we suspect that, for many readers, these specializations lie well beyond their interests. Instead, they are mostly focused on getting that first job, that first step up the ladder of success. For these readers, we provide a list of entry-level jobs in several fields.

# ENTRY LEVEL JOBS IN POLITICS

## **Legislative Staff**

staff assistant, front desk,  
mail and telephones

## **Campaigns**

local field staff, clerical  
staff in headquarters,  
telephone outreach

## **Community Organizing**

canvassing, office manager,  
sidewalk solicitor

## **Non-profit, Advocacy Organizations**

legislative monitor,  
policy researcher

## **Public Relations**

junior account  
representative,  
social media manager

## **Polling and Consulting Firms**

staff assistant,  
research analyst

## **Lobbying Firms**

researcher,  
congressional monitor

## **Digital Consulting**

programmer,  
web designer

## **Television/Radio News**

assistant producer,  
booker, cub reporter

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI





On Capitol Hill, for example, here is a trajectory of promotions that one could move through over 10 or 15 years:

#### POLICY/LEGISLATION ROUTE

Staff Assistant  
Legislative Correspondent  
Legislative Assistant  
Legislative Director  
Committee Staff  
Committee Staff Director

#### ADMINISTRATIVE ROUTE

Staff Assistant  
Scheduler  
Social Media Manager  
Press Secretary  
Speechwriter  
Communications Director  
Deputy Chief of Staff  
Chief of Staff

#### **JOB TIP: The best time to look for a Hill job?**

*July of an odd numbered year. By then, some of the new staff who transitioned from the election campaign will have decided it's not for them and they be leaving or applying to graduate school.*

In considering a job on the Hill, follow Rule #1: Take any first reasonable job offered! Both MSNBC host Chris Matthews and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid began their careers as Capitol police officers. Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, a GW graduate, started his career as an intern for then Congressman Tom Bliley of Virginia. To start your career, you want to get on the Hill any way you can, because prior Hill experience is seen as the best qualification for being hired in a congressional office. Once on the Hill, you'll be on the inside and will have a deeper pool of information. You'll hear about jobs openings before they appear on the usual lists. That's why we often advise new students to start by looking for internships, even if unpaid. Internships lead to jobs; jobs start you up that career ladder.

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI



We've been asked what these jobs actually involve.

**Staff Assistants** answer the telephones, sort mail, photocopy, and complete all the tasks that make an office function. But, as one GSPM alum explained, "Your approach should be to give it your all, to be the best staff assistant they have ever seen." That puts you in line for a promotion.

**Legislative Correspondents (LCs)** are in charge of mail (snail and email) and responding to constituents. Most Hill offices have a rule that every message must be answered in 48 hours. The LC delivers on this commitment, specializing in a limited list of issues, sending "boilerplate" responses and individually tailored answers to constituent concerns.

**Legislative Assistants (LAs)** are responsible for following a limited range of issues as they move along through the congressional "meatgrinder" (subcommittees, committees, floor votes, etc.). They brief the member on developments, help him or her establish a position on issues and help the LC craft the policy statements that will go out to constituents in correspondence.

**The Legislative Director (LD)** manages the policy and legislative efforts of the congressional office, working closely with the member and directing the staff of LAs and LCs.

**The Committee Staff** members, appointed by the committee or subcommittee chair or "ranking member" (the highest ranked representative from the party in the minority), are the real issue specialists. They craft legislation and negotiate to achieve policies that can be voted out by the committee and be passed by the full Congress.

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

X

XI



Here is the similar progression of jobs in elective politics:

Volunteer <i>(mostly field work, GOTV)</i>	Digital/Social Media Coordinator
Volunteer Coordinator <i>(often paid staff)</i>	Director of Communications
Scheduler	Finance Director
Advance	Campaign Manager
Fundraiser	General Strategist
Internet	Pollster
Press Secretary	Creative Advertising Strategist

Most campaign work starts out on a volunteer basis, but the general rule is that if you show up regularly and demonstrate talent, you will move up the ranks quickly. In fact, many volunteers rise into paid positions within a month or two of their start. Campaigns are enormously entrepreneurial—they don't have time to operate otherwise—and they give significant responsibility to those who are good at their jobs and demonstrate reliability. At the other end of this career ladder, by the time one gets to the last four levels, one is usually working in a consulting firm that is hired by the candidate. Beyond that, successful consultants start their own firms, a move that gives them an ownership stake, and at the height of their careers they may cash out by selling their firms to a larger entity. Some retire very rich. A few decide to run for elective office themselves.

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI

# IV

## STRATEGIES FOR JOB SEEKING AND A LONG-TERM CAREER

### Part A: Job Seeking in Politics: Finding That Special Job

There are many different paths a job-seeker can pursue to get that one special job in politics. Every political veteran you encounter will probably have a different and unique story as to how he or she was able to successfully land a job. So, there are different routes young people may follow to enter the political field. Regardless of prior work experience, most “first-timers” coming to Washington, DC, or their state capitols and hoping to “break into” the political field start off in entry-level positions. In these entry-level positions, one is looking to obtain experience and to start working one’s way up the ranks.

#### Internships and Fellowships

Many of the available internships and fellowships require that one volunteer to work or that the employee works for a small stipend or subsidy.\* Hopefully, these positions give one the opportunity to learn the “tricks of the trade” and hopefully to transition that knowledge or skill-set into a paying position. The trick is to establish a firm schedule of the days and hours that you will work and then stick to it, so that you establish your reliability.

\* The availability of unpaid internships may well be in transition over the coming years as illustrated by a ruling by U.S. District Court Judge William H. Pauley in the case *Glatt v Fox Searchlight*. Pauley ruled that in hiring Eric Glatt and several others to work on the film *Black Swan* as unpaid interns, Fox Searchlight had violated the provisions of several fair labor statutes.



Countless political organizations, lobbying firms, political consultants, government agencies, corporations, trade associations and public-interest groups provide internship opportunities for eager job seekers. In today's market, many organizations only hire people who have interned with them. Internships and fellowships are a way for both the employer and potential employee to see whether there is a good fit between the two parties.

## How do I really know what field to specialize in?

Some people are born knowing exactly what they want to do in life. It's almost as if they start out in preschool with a game plan, and they follow that plan throughout their careers. For better or worse, most people aren't like that; instead, they spend years trying to figure out what they want to do with their careers, or they decide they want to "change gears" somewhere in the middle of their career paths. Fortunately for those who have the "political bug," there are many things one can do within the political, legislative and public affairs arenas. In school, students learn about many different segments of the political profession such as campaign management, fundraising, legislative affairs, government relations, lobbying, advocacy, issue management and public affairs. The best way to determine what area one wants to specialize in is to "try on many different hats." That is, one should try to land a number of different internships or take on various projects to see what area "fits best." One should never feel stuck in any area. It's best to gain experience in many different fields within the political world to broaden one's horizons and to add to one's portfolio of accomplishments and experiences. By learning the basic skills of research, writing, speaking, computing and listening, one can move fairly easily within various segments of the political world. Historically, women and minorities, in particular, have often felt stifled at the lower rungs of the political spectrum, leaving the "cream of the crop" jobs to the "old boys' network." Fortunately, those days are changing, however slowly. Importantly, the more skills one learns and the more people one gets to know, the more successful one will be in one's career. The more you know, the more in demand you will be, and people will not care who or what you are if you can help them address their needs and solve their challenges.



## Identifying the Opportunities: How to Locate Job Opportunities

This is no time to be shy. Now is the time to reach out and start communicating with people. You have to create, build and maintain a network of personal contacts. Start talking with people you know and branch out to those you don't. There's an old adage, "It's not what you know, but who you know that counts." As technical expertise has become more important in mobilizing political support, that saying is not as accurate as it used to be about politics in general. But it still does apply in getting a job in any field—especially in politics. One referral leads to another; one contact can put you in touch with someone looking to hire. Here are some sources to reach out to for help in securing the job you want:

Family Members, Friends and Neighbors

Classmates and Professors

Co-workers or Contacts through Work

School Alumni Associations

Elected Leaders

Political Donors

Your Clubs or Organizations

Members of your Church

*Directories (The directories listed in Chapter V can help you identify people you could contact.)*



## Informational Interviews

After identifying the opportunities mentioned above, you can arrange informational interviews with many of these people. An informational interview is NOT a job interview. Rather, it is an opportunity to meet with someone in your field of interest and ask them about themselves—how they entered the field, how they obtained their position, what advice they might offer you to get your foot in the door and so forth. Because this is not a job interview, you will probably find it is easier to arrange. Many people want to help others get started, and who doesn't like to talk about himself or herself? Even so, you should treat it like a job interview: dress well, arrive on time and be prepared. You want to make a great impression, so that when you leave the office, the person will make a call to say, "I just met the most extraordinary young person that you should also meet..."

During your informational interviews, ask for the names of other people to talk to and add to your list of potential contacts. Always remember to thank people for sharing their time with you. Many people fail to do this and it reflects very poorly on them. People will remember that you took the time to show your gratitude. A simple email or mailed note will do. However, as the glut of email accelerates, hand written note cards become more noticeable.

Remember to make it a "two-way street." That is, if there is something you've learned in class or found an article or some other information you may be able to pass on, do so. People don't want to feel as though they're being used. You should always be thinking of ways you can help the people you meet with; that will help to separate you from the "rest of the pack" of job seekers. Once you've been on several interviews, you may start hearing about job openings from a number of the people you've met.



## Presenting Yourself: Cover Letters, Resumes and Job Interviews

Job seekers should be practiced at explaining what position they desire, what skills they have and how they relate to the position in question. This means clarity in both written form through a cover letter and resume as well as verbally in an interview. It's difficult for people to help you if you don't know what you're looking for and if you can't explain why you are the right person for the job. Your written and verbal presentations need to tell a story that exemplifies your claims, so be sure to include your education, jobs, and accomplishments. Remember to always be honest in all of your communications. You don't need to include everything you've done, but now is not the time to be too modest.

Once in an interview, strive for balance; make sure that you don't talk too much nor too little. Most important, never, never go to an interview unprepared. Research the organization on the web and search for the people you are going to be meeting. Think about how you would fit into their organization. You'll probably have only about five minutes to make your case that you are the right person for the job. Practice what you will say. Be ready to respond to their question, "What questions do you have about us?" Always remember, you will undoubtedly have competition for the job. If you don't get the job, try to find out why so that you can improve the next time. Following a job interview, send a thank you letter to everyone you've met. Email thank you notes are acceptable, but handwritten notes are even better.

---

I
II
III
<b>IV</b>
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---



## Find a Mentor

A key factor in whether one's career is successful or falters can be whether the person can find a mentor. Mentors are individuals who share their organizational skills and know-how, as well as their specific knowledge of a company or a group. A mentor is someone to whom you can turn to for advice as you move up the career ladder—someone with whom you can to discuss possibilities, ideas and difficulties. He or she can give you an outside perspective and keep you focused on the larger picture of your long term career moves, rather than the small day-to-day frame of your current job. Your mentor doesn't necessarily have to be someone in politics, but given that there are unique challenges to the competitive world you're entering, it does help if your mentor has some understanding of the world of politics.

Mentors usually germinate from everyday working relationships, alumni bonds or shared interests. If someone seems willing to share their experiences and skills with you and takes an interest in your career, it is possible that they would be willing to mentor you. Sometimes, mentorships just evolve out of conversations and career advice. In other instances, the person seeking assistance may explicitly ask if the other person would be willing to serve as a mentor. Unfortunately, we can't tell you which is the better approach. We'll have to leave it to you to pick up on the "vibes" of the personal connection in order to decide whether you should broach the subject or just let a mentoring relationship grow organically.

Try to find different mentors for different areas of your professional life. One person alone cannot generally provide all of the guidance you need to get ahead. The best mentors will continue their relationship with you if you stay in contact with them and demonstrate that you value their advice and assistance. Remember that a mentorship can be a two-way street. You can show your gratitude by keeping your mentor abreast of your progress and also sharing information with them that may be helpful to their interests.

---

I
II
III
<b>IV</b>
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---



## How Long Should I Stay in My Job?

On the one hand, the days of getting the proverbial gold watch from working thirty years at IBM are long gone. On the other hand, that doesn't mean one can jump from one job to another anytime one feels the urge to move on. Fortunately for people starting out in their careers, more employers today usually understand that young people may want to "try on" a couple of different jobs before settling down. Still, it's not good to be considered a "job hopper," so this can be a very fine line. But "trying on" a few different positions means one should expect to stay about one year before moving on. Regardless of how long you stay at a single job, you need to commit to working hard, show appreciation, ask for assignments, speak well of your co-workers and bosses and to try to leave a positive impression with everyone you encounter.

A word of caution: never appear to be "too good" or "too important" to do some of the different tasks one is expected to do early in one's career. This doesn't mean you have to be servile, but it does mean you cannot act like a diva, queen or prince who is "too self-important" to make copies, buy coffee, fetch donuts or the like. Even in established political organizations, the culture reflects that of campaigns: everyone from the campaign manager down lends a hand stuffing envelopes and doing their own photocopying. The more you show you are able to do this without complaining, the more likely you will be offered and able to take on higher responsibilities.

After the entry level job, one may be expected to stay longer to benefit the organization and to leave one's mark on growing and enhancing one's respective workplace. The basic rule of thumb is that most employers will understand if a junior employee has two or three early jobs with short tenures; after that, expect to stay longer. Nevertheless, people do tend to move around in political careers; the average "half-life" of a job in politics may be only 18 months. But, remember: make a mark (a positive one!) regardless of how long you work at a given place.

---

I
II
III
<b>IV</b>
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---



## Getting Fired or Laid Off - Mag Gottlieb Responds When a Student Asks What To Do About a Job Loss

### QUESTION:

"I just lost my job and I am really depressed. I was very good at the job, so I don't understand why I was laid off. I'm supposed to get married soon and now I'm thinking about canceling the wedding. What should I do?"

### ANSWER:

"I was sorry to read about your job loss. It's normal to feel depressed and angry when you lose a job. Take a day to take it all in and then it's time to start moving. The longer you wait to look for another job, the worse it will be. I'm not really able to say whether you should postpone your wedding or not. That is something for you and your fiancée to discuss. If you are totally relying on your salary for the two of you, then you might want to think twice about postponing. Otherwise, don't call off the wedding just yet.

"I hope you know that you didn't have to do anything wrong to lose your job. As everyone knows, the economy is terrible—it's the worst since the 1980s. Unfortunately, many, many good people are losing their jobs right now through no fault of your own. You need to make a plan of action for yourself:

1. Remember to get some exercise every day. Try to start each day off with something active like a walk—you'll feel much better and less depressed.
2. Review your resume and cover letter drafts if you haven't come in to see me or if you haven't emailed me for my input, please feel free to do so.



3. Have an interview outfit ready to go, and be prepared for calls that ask you if you can be there the very same day as the call for an interview.
4. Spend at least two hours a day looking over websites, job postings, etc.
5. Remember your network—let everyone you know you would like their help in trying to find another job.
6. Research organizations through directories available at the library such as The Washington Representatives Book, The Yellow Book Directories, Encyclopedia of Associations, etc.
7. Don't sit back and wait for results. I'm seeing too many people who just reply to job postings. That is just one part of a comprehensive job search.
8. Get out there and ask people for informational interviews—ask them, what advice they would give you and to keep you in mind if they hear of any suitable openings for you.
9. Remember to thank people. You'd be surprised at how many people never take the time to thank the people who help them, listen to them, and provide leads. They will remember you if you express your gratitude."



## Part B: Strategies for Starting a Successful Career

Once you've secured that first job that starts you up the ladder of success, it's time to start managing your career over the long haul. From our observations of successful people in this business, we can think of five different strategies that have proved effective in achieving success in politics. They are not mutually exclusive, meaning that you can employ elements of each model in your life.

### 1. Latch onto a Rising Star as a Mentor/Boss

Actually, the roles that bosses and mentors will play in your career are quite different. But hopefully, you will be fortunate enough to find both wrapped up in one person. We have describe the role of a mentor above. Bosses, on the other hand, are easier to find ... and easier to fire. In the narrowest sense, they are the people you will be working for as your career unfolds. Since the average length of a job in politics is about 20 months, you'll have plenty of bosses along the way. Not all will be mentors; not by a long shot. Think of it this way: a mentor/boss is someone whose career you will work to advance and in return someone who will take an interest in nurturing your career. If fact, you may not ever work directly for that person as a straight-out boss. Yet you'll be clearly identified as someone in that person's network. For example, think of James Carville as someone described as a diehard "Clintonista" or Karl Rove as a dedicated "Bushite."



The first step toward implementing this strategy is the careful selection of a mentor/boss. Of course, this is a two-way street; the mentor/boss has to choose you, too. But, to some extent, you have the initiative, so let's pretend here that the choice is entirely yours. What should you look for in a boss and mentor? First and foremost, you should find someone with whom you agree politically and someone who shares your values and goals for our society. It's just not worth giving years of service toward policy directions that you don't support. Find someone whose style, ideals, ethics and positions you admire.

Second, you want a mentor/boss whose career is starting to take off. You want to find someone who is going to succeed in political life, so selecting the best mentor/boss will require some shrewd judgment on your part. Is this person properly positioned for success? Still, don't look too high up the food chain. If he or she is too far up the success ladder, it will be harder to catch her or his attention, and there will be all sorts of "assistants" already surrounding this leader. You'll probably find that these acolytes will try to screen out any new arrival. All this may sound brutally self-serving, but since we're talking about your future, let's be candid about the problems you might face. Trying from scratch to break into the inside circle of someone with a good chance of being the next president is probably going to be a waste of your valuable time. But in 2006, who knew that a first-term senator from Illinois would be elected president. Many of those young people who were attracted to Obama's team early in his career are now well launched on their own very successful careers in public life.

---

I
II
III
<b>IV</b>
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---



Another important question is whether your intended mentor/boss has displayed the trait of being loyal downward. Some politicians demand loyalty from their close supporters, but they fail to return the favor. If you do something for them, they think that only entitles you to do something else for them. If it's all "take" on their part and no "give," that's not the mentor/boss for you. Instead, you want to find someone who will take seriously the role that mentors are supposed to play: teaching the next generation and nurturing their careers. You should also consider another important aspect of this possible relationship: how your mentor/boss will react when the time comes for you to leave their direct employ and go out on your own or go work for someone else? Will your mentor/boss consider this as an act of treason on your part or an opportunity to expand his/her network through your success? You want the latter boss. Ask around to see if you can learn how he/she has behaved in this situation.

If you pick correctly, your career will flourish as your mentor succeeds, opening great opportunities for you to make a difference in this world. Governors, senators, corporate CEOs, cabinet secretaries, and extremely well-paid lobbyists have followed this route. There is, of course, a cost for you to bear for this apprenticeship. In return for riding up this escalator, you will be expected to work ceaselessly and aggressively to make that person's career a substantial success. You'll be establishing a symbiotic relationship in which you help each other, most likely never explicitly stated or agreed to, but consecrated by acts of mutual loyalty. At the beginning, it may seem like you're giving more than getting in this relationship, but, remember, we are talking about a long-term strategy that may take 10 to 15 years to come to fruition. If you've chosen a mentor/boss wisely, you'll wind up at the very top of this profession.



## 2. Develop an Expertise

A second career strategy is that of developing a significant expertise in a narrow range of political activity. This could be achieved by taking on a particular area of public policy and making it your own. Here, commitment and dedication are essential. It could be toward a cleaner environment or more oil production; what matters is that you really want to work toward a policy direction to which you are wholeheartedly committed. It also helps if, at the beginning of your career, you pick a narrow focus of expertise. As you succeed and acquire more influence, you will be able to expand your field, but at the start it really matters if those around you recognize that you are the go-to person on X, whatever X is.

A variant of the expertise strategy is the possibility of becoming expert in getting the process of politics done: a “fixer” or a “fireman.” This is, frankly, harder to achieve precisely because the skills involved are so general that they are less likely to be easily recognized by others. Nevertheless, one recognized career path is to acquire expertise in the processes of political communication. Polling, speech writing, media relations, Internet communications, and direct mail all come to mind as technical fields in which expertise is highly valued. They all demand superior writing ability and extraordinary facility in networking. Here again, the usual pattern toward success is to start off by developing recognition in one specialized aspect of communications and then broadening your focus as you move up the ladder of success.

### 5 STRATEGIES TO IGNITE YOUR CAREER

- Find a Mentor
- Develop Expertise
- Build Public Support
- Become Wealthy
- Pursue Power



### 3. Build Public Support

The pursuit of public support constitutes a third strategy for a successful career through political service. In essence this strategy requires you to think of yourself as a leader (or a potential, future leader) early in your career. That is, rather than viewing yourself as staff to someone else, you find yourself willing to take on the role of a public leader. Here, networking skills become the absolute, essential coinage of success. (See Section Six.)

Within this approach, there are two routes to growth: running for office, or issue advocacy. The first is straight forward: starting with a local election—by some estimates there are over 300,000 elective offices in the United States—one runs for a succession of elected positions up the chain toward president. It takes a thick skin, vast ambition, hard work, perseverance, integrity and luck. Over time, one builds a growing constituency comprising both key insiders who help advance your career and the general public. Hard work, careful self-reflection as to your values and fidelity to your principles are essential to success.

An alternative means of building a career upon public support comes through issue advocacy. Consider the fact that some of the most influential leaders in politics never hold elective office. Instead, they build a growing constituency around an idea or an issue. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is probably the most visible example of profound influence without formal authority. But there are many others: Phyllis Schlafly, founder of the Eagle Forum, has had a major impact on the pro-life movement, and Ralph Nadar almost single-handedly launched the consumer protection movement.

Leadership in issue advocacy begins with an overriding – and often single-minded – commitment to a direction in public policy. Particularly early in their careers, these people live and breathe their issue and little else. They also tend to be entrepreneurial in that they create organizations and institutions rather than work their way up through an existing organization. For a prime example, try Googling Grover Norquist, who founded Americans for Tax Reform and the “Leave Us Alone Coalition.” You’ll find a life full of action and innovation.



## 4. Find a Way to Become Wealthy

Let's face it, money often equates to political influence and success. It is definitely not a guaranteed path to achievement in the public domain, but it certainly has been a route followed by many, whether they decide to enter the arena by running for office themselves or by influencing the actions of those who are in politics. Former Governor Jon Corzine earned a fortune as CEO of Goldman Sachs before he entered politics, winning a Senate election and then the governorship in New Jersey. Billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City started the data company that bears his name. Senator Jay Rockefeller from West Virginia inherited his money. George Soros has funded numerous causes on the liberal side of the political spectrum, having earned his money in currency trading; his politics are balanced by the conservative donor Richard Mellon Scaffe.

If one has inherited or earned millions, why would one want to leave a life of luxury to enter the competitive and hardball world of politics? Ideology is a motivator for some; ego for others. Though it may sound naïve, many are moved by a sincere desire to influence the future toward values they believe offer the best for mankind. In other words, they just want to make a difference.

---

I  
II  
III  
**IV**  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI

---



## 5. Pursue Power

Power is the basic coinage of politics. In pursuing this strategy, the ability to influence the ideals, understandings, goals, attitudes and behavior of others is paramount. There are numerous sources of power, many of which are alluded to above: information, expertise, authority, wealth, charisma and persuasiveness, to name a few. One of the best books to read for understanding how one can acquire power is a historical account of how Lyndon Baines Johnson slowly maneuvered to gain control over the U.S. Senate in the 1950s.\* Johnson was ambitious, conniving, manipulative, nasty and often crude. He would use any means to dominate others, but he also was responsible for passing the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, which, 100 years after the end of slavery, finally allowed the nation to make significant gains in race relations.

Power is necessary to make things happen and to achieve your vision of a better world. It is both an ingredient and a benchmark of success. But, there is a very important warning here. As Lord Acton reminds the ages, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And, Abraham Lincoln cautioned us that, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." All those seeking a career in politics and public life should beware: power can become a narcotic, and the pursuit of power can become an end in itself. Power is necessary to bring about change, but its justification must be based on values, goals and ideals.

---

\* Robert A. Caro. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.



## Part C: The Necessary Ingredients for a Rewarding Career:

In the long run, a career in politics can be very rewarding, professionally, personally and financially. Some in this field will literally create the future. Many will achieve financial prosperity. Top lobbyists in Washington, DC, for example, earn rather handsome salaries. Successful campaigners establish major consulting or public relations firms that they sometimes are able to sell to larger firms for substantial sums.

### Four Keys to A Successful Career:

In public life, stunning success can be achieved by those who are industrious, talented, connected and lucky. Each of these traits are important; the combination is dynamite.

1. **Industrious.** Early in his career as a congressional staffer, Lyndon Johnson would get to the office before everyone else and stay later. In fact, most true “politicians\*” are never on vacation and never off their guard. They are never far from a factsheet or a policy memo. Each day, they read several newspapers online or in hand, watch the cable news networks and C-SPAN, listen to radio news and catch the Sunday news shows. They read books on contemporary issues, biographies and history. And, they are constantly on the go, meeting people and running to meetings. They exhibit a trait that psychologists call “grit,” referring to the fact that success appears to really be all about one’s ability to persevere, to work hard and to persist in the face of struggle.\*\*

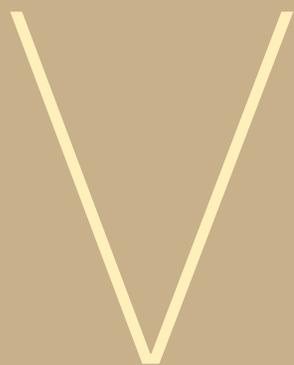
\* Here we use the word “politician” to refer to all of those who work in the myriad fields of political and public life, not just those who run for elective office.



2. **Talent.** Energy and drive will only get you so far. Successful professionals in politics have developed a series of talents, most of which center around what we call “people skills.” They are cordial and intelligent, at ease in groups of strangers, aggressive in reaching out to create personal contacts and empathic in that they intuitively understand what will motivate others. Perhaps it’s needless to say, but most are way above average in communicating, especially in public speaking. Of course, these positive virtues can be carried too far. Ambition can lead them to become self-centered. Those whose careers stagnate often have a habit of talking more about themselves and their careers than about the ideals or purposes for which they are in public life.
3. **Connected.** In Section Six, we stress the importance of networking for building your career. Here we can only add that it is simply impossible to develop a successful life in politics without honing this skill and assertively pursuing an ever-expanding group of contacts, supporters and allies.
4. **Lucky.** No greater case can be summoned than the career of President Barack Obama. When he first ran for public office in 1996, his opponent in the race for the Illinois State Senate became involved in a sex scandal that imploded his campaign. Much the same thing happened in 2004 when he ran for the U.S. Senate. In 2008, when he ran for President, the economy tanked 50 days before the election making it extremely unlikely that any Republican could be elected. It is often said that winners create their own good luck. That may be partially true, but having the real thing can be a great career booster. Politics is rough and tumble; not every deserving career flourishes. Be forewarned: can be a risky way of life. But, the rewards are great for those who combine these traits and persevere.

---

\*\*Jonah Lehrer, “Which Traits Predict Success? (The Importance of Grit),” *Wired Magazine*, accessed at <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/03/what-is-success-true-grit/>



# RESOURCES FOR FINDING THAT SPECIAL JOB

The following resources, available at many libraries and/or online, are useful in identifying major associations, organizations, government departments and agencies. The asterisk denotes materials accessible online via databases available through George Washington University's Gelman Library.

## Part A: General Directories

### **Directories in Print\***

"A descriptive guide to print and non-print directories . . . of all kinds," a directory of directories.

### **Encyclopedia of Associations\***

Multivolume directory with information on thousands of national and international associations.

### **Consultants & Consulting Organizations Directory\***

"Provides information on firms and individuals from the U.S. and Canada in the consulting services industry," including political consulting.

### **National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States**

Provides contact and background information on national trade associations, professional societies, and labor unions.

### **State Yellow Book**

Lists executive and legislative branch officials of each of the 50 states.

### **Leadership Library\***

". . . provides high-quality contact information for the leaders of major United States government, business, professional and nonprofit organizations."



## Part B: Directories for Washington, D.C.

### **Washington Information Directory\***

"The definitive source for finding contacts at government and nongovernmental organizations."

### **United States Government Manual**

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/>  
Official guide to all federal agencies

### **Federal Staff Directory**

One-stop reference for all contacts in the Executive Branch

### **Policy and Supporting Positions**

<http://www.fdsys.gov>

### **Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives (Government Printing Office);**

list of executive branch political appointee positions published every two years and known as "the Plum Book."

### **Congressional Staff Directory**

Contains detailed listings for all members of Congress, including their staffs, as well as information on all congressional committees and other organizations related to the Congress.

### **Washington Representatives**

Profiles of more than 18,000 Washington-based lobbyists, public and government affairs representatives.

## Part C: Capitol Hill Jobs

### **Senate Placement Office**

<http://senate.gov/employment>



### **House Listings**

Hardcopy only - pick up at 227 Longworth House Office Building.

### **Resume Drop-Off Points**

Senate – Senate Hart Office Building 116, House–  
Longworth House Office Building Room 240.

## Part D: Jobs/Fellowships in the 50 Statehouses

### **National Conference of State Legislatures**

<http://www.ncsl.org/legislative-staff.aspx?tabs=856,33,816>

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) maintains a list of fellowship/internship opportunities in the respective 50 statehouses.

## Part E: Good Online Resources/ Job Postings Sites

### **[www.therileyguide.com](http://www.therileyguide.com)**

An extensive career guide offering “A-Z” job advice, information on any aspect of the job search.

### **[www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)**

Use buzz words such as “legislative affairs,” “government relations” and “public affairs” and choose your geography of choice; job leads can be sent to your email account every day.

### **[www.rcjobsonline](http://www.rcjobsonline)**

Free site to use for finding jobs on Capitol Hill, with trade associations, non-profit organizations and consulting firms.



**[www.asaenet.org](http://www.asaenet.org)**

Free site to use for locating positions with trade associations, produced by the "association of associations - The American Society of Association Executives.

**[www.bradtraverse.com](http://www.bradtraverse.com)\***

Brad Traverse used to work on Capitol Hill. For a small fee (one-time sign-up fee of \$10, plus \$5 a month as long as you subscribe), find jobs that aren't posted anywhere else.

**[www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)**

There are some job postings on this site, but the site is hard to navigate.

**[www.politico.com](http://www.politico.com)**

Another good site to find jobs on Capitol Hill, at trade associations, etc.

**[www.theaapc.org](http://www.theaapc.org)**

The American Association of Political Consultants periodically maintains a job board of campaign jobs.

**[www.hillnews.com](http://www.hillnews.com)**

Another site to locate positions on Capitol Hill, trade associations, etc.

**<https://www.usajobs.gov/>**

This site is a source for jobs with the U.S. government.

**<http://www.pmf.gov/>**

People with graduate degrees may compete for the prestigious Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF).

**<http://tommanatosjobs.com/>**

Tom Manatos worked for former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. His site has a small fee and lists jobs on Capitol Hill, non-profit jobs and private sector positions.

---

\* Please note that as a benefit, GSPM students are given free access to these postings. Additionally, GSPM students have many other career service offerings available through the GWork career portal. For information, email Mag Gottlieb at mag@gwu.edu.



# NETWORKING: IGNITING YOUR CAREER IN POLITICS

Nothing could be more important to your career in politics than the ability to network. Granted, politics has become much more technical and managerial in the last 50 years, but it still remains a business of human connections. Who you know can be as important as what you know.

Networking is more than just building a circle of friends. It involves meeting and staying in more or less continuous contact with a group of individuals who give mutual support and help to each other's careers.

While many who are just starting out in politics recognize the need to network, they often have little idea about how to go about it. This section is intended to give you some ideas and suggestions about how you can build a personal network that will fuel your political career. A warning is appropriate at the outset, however: networking isn't easy, and it doesn't occur without attention and systematic work on your part. And, while social networking sites can be very useful—especially when tied to face-to-face contact—they work best as a supplement to the hard work of making acquaintances and keeping in touch with a growing number of individuals who can be helpful to your career.

## 6.1.0

The Basic Tools: You will need business cards, thank you note cards and a professional email address.

## 6.1.1

The most fundamental piece of equipment you will need is an up-to-date business card.\* At all occasions, you want to be able to give out your contact information easily. But, for your purposes, the ritual exchange of give-and-get is more important. You want to collect business cards like flypaper catches flies. In this case, getting is better than giving. Getting allows you to seize the initiative in the relationship.

---

\* *Business cards on which you have to handwrite corrections are unimpressive. It's worth the time and expense to get nice cards printed every time you change jobs. Inexpensive business cards can be ordered from [vistaprint.com](http://vistaprint.com).*



### 6.1.2

You will then need some system of filing and accessing information. Use the professional email addresses on those business cards to follow your new contacts on LinkedIn. This method is preferred because it will allow you to stay connected to people after the change jobs. You can buy a card reader that scans information into a database, but their accuracy is questionable. Tape or paste them into a rolodex, photocopy them onto sheets in a 3-ring binder or enter the information into an address book of professional contacts.

### 6.1.3

Next and most critically important, you must follow up on the contact. Collection alone is useless; you will need to invent some reason to contact them again. Perhaps your first effort at initiating a solid connection will only be an email on the order of, "Nice to meet you, wanted to follow up on XYZ." Better yet, think back on your conversation with the person and try to come up with some little favor that you can do for him or her. Maybe it's sending on a link to a relevant newspaper article or a restaurant suggestion or another contact she or he might need. Or maybe the contact had not heard of your organization, and you can send a link to the website. If you can't think of anything, simply write, "Nice to have met you, let's stay in touch." However you do it, follow-up contact is absolutely essential to get you beyond the meaningless "let's do lunch" phase.

### 6.1.4

It is said that George H.W. Bush got to be president by writing thank you notes! Wherever he went, he spent his spare time writing out brief notes to people he came in contact with. He made friends everywhere. He was elected to Congress, but after that, until he was elected President in 1988, he was appointed to one job after another (ambassador, national party chair, envoy to China, director of the CIA, etc.). Thank you notes played a significant role in his career path. Follow his example: a good bit of the personal side of politics is ingratiating yourself to others in the field. Saying "thank you" in writing can be critical to your career and remains significantly more impressive than email or texting. Personal, handwritten notes are the most effective way of saying "I care about you" to another person.



### 6.1.5

Obviously, email can be useful for staying in touch with a group of contacts. Start by creating a professional-sounding address. Addresses like partyman@yahoo.com or bikerbabe@gmail.com may make a personal statement but will not set the professional tone you want. In sending out emails to your contacts, recognize, however, that professionals often get overloaded with email and triage their inboxes to respond to clients and bosses first and new connections last.

### 6.1.6

Except for communications with your very closest work associates or with friends and family, you should remember that the more frequent the email messages, the more likely they are to be ignored. And, given the glut of messages in everyone's inbox, a hardcopy letter or handwritten note sent by "snail mail" may sometimes be more effective than email.\* On the other hand, you don't want to let too much time elapse between contacts. When it comes to emailing your contacts, make the content relevant to them as individuals. In general, the larger the distribution list, the less useful the communication is as a networking builder.

### 6.2.0

Where to Start; How Do I Meet People? The next step is figuring out where and how to meet people who could be relevant to your career.

---

\* After the anthrax scare, U.S. mail to offices on Capitol Hill can take forever. It's better to hand-deliver these items.



### 6.2.1

Each day, numerous events relating to politics take place all over Washington and in every state capitol, events which draw people working in politics.\* For example, many states have a society which organizes an annual community-building event that you could attend. How would you find out about this? Suppose you're from Texas. You could Google the Texas State Society and, sure enough, you would learn who runs the society, when the next event is and how to become a member. But, if you do that, you haven't really caught the networking spirit. Call (or better yet, drop by) your local congressional office and introduce yourself to the staff assistant. Ask about the society. Are they fun? Do people in your age group feel welcome? Get the name or the person you're talking to; perhaps you'll meet at the next event.

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---

---

\* To keep apprised of upcoming events, go to <http://nationaljournal.com>. You will find a navigation bar labeled "Day Book" which lists events for today, tomorrow and the coming week. You can even set up an email alert which will daily inform you of events in the offing.



## Three Tips on Introducing Yourself

When attending political events, don't be shy. In introducing yourself to those around, you will be received as outgoing and friendly, not as pushy and arrogant. Here are three tips about greeting people in politics:

1. Unless you're absolutely sure you've never met the person, don't say, "Nice to meet you." It can be embarrassing if the other person responds, "Actually, we met last month. Don't you remember me?" Instead, say, "Nice to see you." Politicians often say, "Good to be with you."
2. Even if you've met the other person before, assume they don't remember your name. Always lead by introducing yourself: "Hello, I'm Abe Lincoln," rather than just saying, "Hi, George. How's Martha?"
3. If the event distributes nametags, put it on the right side of your chest. When you shake hands, you tend to pull your left shoulder back, making it more difficult to read your nametag.

### 6.2.2

Volunteering for charitable work is big in Washington, especially among congressional staffers. You can get involved through Greater DC Cares ([www.greaterdccares.org](http://www.greaterdccares.org)). The trick is, rather than just attending an event, volunteer to work on putting together an upcoming event, usually a dinner but it could be something like a 10K race. In the process of planning, organizing and preparing for the event, you'll come into repeated contact with a lot of other people whose day jobs are in politics. Then, you can work on broadening those relationships. You can also find a list of upcoming events at <http://www.washingtonlife.com/calendar/> or at <http://www.clotureclub.com/>.



### 6.2.3

In Section Eight, we comment on the value that an educational program might bring to your career in politics, but here we might just note that the opportunities for expanded networking is one real advantage. Fellow students constitute an obvious group; they, like you, will be working politics. Also you won't be limiting yourself to members of your own political party or philosophy. While you'll be working against students from the other party professionally, individually you're more likely to be in competition for jobs with members of your own party. Inside information, background perspective, and actual job leads are as likely to come from across the aisle as in your own party. The same applies to the program's alumni community. Most alumni recognize that, as the network surrounding your program builds, its reputation will grow. Developing network can only increase the value of your and their degree and, in the process, assist their careers. Finally, faculty and particularly guest lecturers are a tremendous source of connections. After class, introduce yourself to a guest lecturer who appears to be relevant to your future. Have your business card ready! Write a thank you note mentioning some point from his or her lecture. Starting within your academic program, you're beginning to get the hang of networking.

### 6.3.0

Make no mistake: beneath a veneer of surface cordiality, Washington, D.C. is a competitive town, and politics is a competitive business. The depth of that veneer varies from person-to-person. In general, those who are genuinely friendly people tend to do better, but you will meet some arrogant and competitive types. Usually they will be in the middle ranks of power, status and access to information. In climbing the ladder of success, they don't want anyone to pass them (but they are very likely to be highly deferential to those higher on the ladder).



### 6.3.1

Assume that everyone you meet is going to succeed. Today's staff assistant answering phones in a congressional office is likely to be chief of staff in 10 years. So don't ignore him or her now. One way or the other, this person will remember you, and you want those memories to be positive. Almost every important player has a special assistant who can help you or hurt you in getting access to the boss. Learn that person's name and treat him or her as a person as important to you as the boss.

### 6.3.2

As one moves up the ladder—gaining access, information and influence—it can be hard not to use that power to exclude others seeking the same things. Remember that at some point, you'll probably make a mistake, maybe even a bad one. The difference between those who survive and those who crash in this town is often made by the number of enemies accumulated. Players who are especially self-regarding and competitive usually have generated a group just waiting for an opportunity to pounce in their moment of weakness. Or, better stated, they just don't have a large reservoir of friends who will come to their defense when they need it.

### 6.4.0

Networking Online.

### 6.4.1

Social networking tools like Facebook and LinkedIn are what you make of them. If you have peers on those networks, and you use them to organize your life, store contact information and keep in touch with like-minded people and most of your peer set, they are invaluable—absolutely invaluable. Many events—from panels to networking events to candidate fundraisers—appear on Facebook. A lot of meetings and phone calls are scheduled now using LinkedIn because so many people find email too cluttered and ineffective.



#### 6.4.2

These social tools also provide a way to interact with the personal details in the lives of people in your circles. For example, every time you wish someone a happy birthday on Facebook or use a Google+ hangout to brainstorm with a group of people about a conference or a project, you're building up social capital.

#### 6.4.3

Keep in mind, that, being social, the popularity of these different tools can change over time as users devoted to MySpace found out. As this writing, LinkedIn is emerging as the dominant channel for professional contacts, a "tentacle rolodex" as Commentator Alexandra Samuel called it on her Harvard Business Review blog.

#### 6.4.4

Sites like Facebook and LinkedIn are only as good to you as the amount of attention you give them and to your contacts through them. Just building a profile, then walking away, or just friending people and not continuing to interact with them just isn't going to build the kinds of relationships that will help your career. Online relationships can greatly enhance offline relationships and expand your network over time, but from a professional perspective, they are most powerful when people use them to stay in contact with the people they already know in the real world. In other words, you need to do much more than just posting frequent status updates on Facebook.

#### 6.4.5

Remember also that different sites appeal to different peer groups, and people use different sites in different ways. There aren't a lot of hard and fast rules, since most of it depends upon who you are, where you geographically, what you want to get out of it and where you want to go professionally.

#### 6.4.6

What you really need is a balance between online and offline networking in order to make the most of your professional networks, as well as how to promote your personal brand using both online and offline tools.



## A Success Story from the World of LinkedIn

Working in the marketing department of a Fortune 500 company, “Jim” was restless in his job and looking for a bigger challenge. He started by going on job boards and taking notes of the descriptors used by employers for the type of employment he wanted. He then edited his LinkedIn profile to make it much more robust, being sure to use the same key words to describe his qualifications and experience. He began receiving emails from recruiters for various firms in his geographical area inquiring as to whether he would be interested in moving on from his current employer. Eventually, Jim spoke on the phone to most of the recruiters who had initiated the contact using web-crawling software that located his LinkedIn profile. As these conversations developed, ultimately, Jim landed a terrific job tailored exactly to his interests.

### 6.4.7

Another vehicle for connecting with professionals of similar interests is through listservs, many of which relate to politics. Locating and signing on to those that fit your narrow interests can be valuable to your career. These vehicles let you know what others with your same passions are up to and offer many opportunities for you to get involved in events that will expand your network.

---

- I
- II
- III
- IV
- V
- VI**
- VII
- VIII
- IX
- X
- XI

---



#### 6.4.8

Beyond politics, a great way to network with those who work in politics is to find a community of interest. You may like yoga, knitting, duck hunting, golf or poker. Plugging into a group engaged by one of these interests will expand your circle of connections. When you meet someone at a political event, find out what they do with their free time. You could ask a congressional staffer what he or she plans to do during the coming recess or about their last vacation. Once you have zeroed in on a leisure activity that interests you, you might even take the lead in organizing events built around that recreation, events to which you could invite people with similar interests. The conversations that take place during recreation work to cement friendships.

### GSPM Alums Comment on Social Networking Tools

#### LinkedIn

“LinkedIn is a great place to develop your professional reputation and connect with the people you meet at real world networking events. People update their jobs and accomplishments on LinkedIn regularly, and job scouts and recruiters often use the site to find the right person for executive-level positions. LinkedIn results also help drive search engine results for many people.” “More and more, LinkedIn is becoming the critical tool for professional networking - finding who to contact and then reaching out to them through those you already know. The latest trend is the emergence of a few ‘super-connectors’ who have established centrality within their network”

# POLITICO

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON DC



## BATTLEGROUND POLL

Lake Research Partners • The Tarran Group



### Facebook

"Facebook is essential to my professional networking. Sure I use it to keep in contact with family and friends from school, but I most of the people in my network are young professionals in DC, older professionals in DC, techies, and people I meet when I lecture or speak at events. I get invited to almost all the events I go to on Facebook, and I post or forward all the events I plan or am involved in. I conduct business on Facebook—like when people want to interview me or meet me and either don't have my email or can't remember it. I have also planned events on Facebook—like happy hours and panel discussions."

### Twitter

"Twitter can be a great place to expand your interests and connect with journalists or organizations. I hear about events and news on Twitter and interact with the details about people's lives. Here's a tip: when you see a tweet by someone 'up the career ladder,' retweet with an added comment. If what you say adds value to the conversation, that will slowly build the number of people who decide to follow you, adding to your network."

### Tumblr, Pinterest, and Instagram

"People often use more visual sites, like Tumblr, Pinterest, and Instagram, to connect their interests with affinity groups and with real world events in a design-heavy, often humorous way."

### Quora

"Quora allows its users to build up their reputations as thought leaders by posting and answering questions about everything from healthcare policy to surfing."

### Google+

"While Google+ isn't great as a tool for building your network, it can be a great way to work on projects with others, primary through the site's video conference tool called Google+ Hangouts. I use this feature often to run meetings with people across the country or brainstorm creatively to solve problems."

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI



## Path

“Who needs another social networking site? But, I know that, since Path limits your friends to a total of 150, many Hollywood types use it to communicate with a select group of their peers, without that conversation getting to the general public. It could be useful to connect with a small list of family and friends that are really important to me. I could discuss things that I really don’t want broadcast widely. But, I wouldn’t use it professionally.”

### 6.6.0

Terms of Trade - Favors: Favors are the basic exchange of political networks. One GSPM faculty member says, “I like it when somebody asks me for a favor. It means we are connected and working together. I can ask for a return favor and on it goes.” Don’t be hesitant to ask those with whom you have established a firm connection to do you a favor. It might be to make a call on your behalf, to find out an important piece of information, to spend a day going door-to-door on a campaign, to attend an event to fill up a room or to put a line in a House bill. Remember, however, that by asking for a favor, you may be obligating yourself to do a return favor.

### 6.6.1

In some circumstances involving large favors, the exchange may be an immediate quid pro quo: “I’ll do that, if you can do this for me.” Now you’re into bargaining.

### 6.6.2

If you make a commitment to do a favor, keep it. There is nothing more detrimental to your career in politics than getting a reputation for not keeping your word. Conversely, those of whom it is said “her word is her bond” are highly valued as network partners, and their careers flourish. If it turns out that you can’t deliver on your commitment—say, for example, you’ve tried, but can’t find out that crucial piece of information—then get back to your contact and tell him or her that you can’t deliver. Don’t just let the contact languish; you’ll be burning up your network and destroying your political capital.



### 6.6.3

Be careful what you agree to do. At some point, you will probably wind up doing something that you would rather not do, simply because of who has asked you to do it. That's part of the game. But, watch your ethics. A good rule: don't do something that you wouldn't want to see in Politico. But also, if you pay attention to 6.6.2 above, you won't agree to do that favor in the first place. Saying "I can't do that" may weaken a network connection, but it won't break it as surely as will agreeing to do something and then not delivering.

### 6.6.4

Perhaps you could make your networking more explicit. In the late 1970s, a group of 12 Democratic women decided to create an informal organization, called "Women United." The explicit deal was that they would work to help each other's careers. If one was in a position to hire a consultant, she would hire one of the 12. Whenever someone asked one of them who she would recommend for a job or a position, the answer would always be one of the Women United. By the 1990s, they all had become very successful. They didn't, incidentally, advertise the fact that they were all working together, but neither did they try to keep "Women United" a big secret. [We don't think they had a secret handshake!] Here's another case: in the early 1980s, the national chairman of the Young Republicans was Jack Abramoff. His campaign manager in running for that post was Karl Rove and his two advisors were Ralph Reed and Grover Norquist. The four have been working together for 20 years as their careers flourished. In Abramoff's case, the trading of favors and influence has gotten him into real trouble.

### 6.7.0

Work at networking constantly. A final word. Networking is not easy and it doesn't just happen. But start now and it will become a habit. It also needs to be continual. If you are not regularly in touch with your network partners, you are likely to be forgotten. And remember, success breeds success; the larger the network, the more others will want to join it and soon you'll discover that people are courting you. Networking leads to influence and influence leads to power and you know what they say about power. So, keep your head about you and keep your ethical standards high.



## Lou Adler, "Hire Economics: Why Applying to Jobs Is a Waste of Time." \*

Companies use sequence of steps to fill jobs from promoting people internally, networking and getting referrals, and searching through resume databases and posting on job boards. This sequence results in two job markets, one that's hidden, the other public. Based on some of our semi-scientific analysis (public and private survey data) it appears that about half of all jobs are filled in each market.

This is good news to job-seekers, but you can't get to these jobs by applying. Here's why: jobs in the public market are filled by matching skills listed in the job posting with those found on the resume. At best, this is a poor process, and why most jobs in the public market take so long to fill. Jobs in the hidden market are filled based on internal promotions, referrals and recommendations, with candidate's being assessed on their past performance and future potential. For job-seekers who aren't perfect matches on skills and experience this is great news, but to get the chance to be evaluated this way you need to be recommended by someone in your network.

In my book, *The Essential Guide for Hiring & Getting Hired*, I suggest that recruiters should employ a 20/20/60 recruiting strategy. The idea is to only spend 20% of their time posting jobs, 20% looking for resumes and 60% networking. This allows companies to find the best people available, not just the best people who are applying to their job postings. A similar 20/20/60 job hunting strategy should be used by job-seekers. In this case 20% of the time responding to job postings by going through the back door rather than applying through the front, another 20% ensuring your resume and LinkedIn profile are easy to find and worth reading, and the remaining 60% networking to find jobs in the hidden market.

\* Published by LinkedIn, June 14, 2013. Lou Adler is CEO and Founder of the Adler Group devoted to performance based hiring.



# CASE STUDIES IN FINDING THAT FIRST JOB

## Student One: She Landed Her Job Without Any Connections

"I came to Washington without "connections." I had applied for Hill jobs listed on paid subscription services but had gotten nowhere until my boyfriend reached out to former Hill staffers he knew to put me in touch for informational interviews. It was nothing formal; I met a few people for drinks or meals and picked their brains about how to get on the Hill. Ultimately, their advice boiled down to getting the listings, paying your dues and working your network to get to the top of the pile.

"Getting the listings was a matter of joining the right listservs. As a Democrat, I joined the list maintained by Tom Manatos in then-Minority Leader Pelosi's office ([tommanatosjobslist-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:tommanatosjobslist-subscribe@yahoo.com)) and as a woman I joined the WIN List ([www.winonline.org](http://www.winonline.org)). I started to get Hill job listings in real time and applied to any job I thought I could get. I had two years of work experience at that time, but I was told that interning was an expectation before consideration for a Hill job.

"Finally, I started getting responses, and I landed a summer writing internship with my home congressman's office. That wasn't an accident; members of Congress want to give chances to people from their state or district. It was tough financially, but we figured out a way to make it work as an investment in my career. In only a few months, I learned how a Hill office worked, researched legislative issues for mail responses and gained access to an office full of Hill staffers who thought I was the bee's knees. They didn't have an opening for me when my internship ended, but they were extremely helpful and offered to serve as references and let me know about opportunities.

"In the meantime, I took a job at a trade association where I was able to learn more about how outside organizations impact the legislative process. It was a great job, but after a year I ultimately wanted to learn more about how the process worked from the inside. I had been waiting for a legislative correspondent opening, and in the fall after the 2006 elections there were suddenly tons of openings. I interviewed for a number of jobs and ultimately was offered a position with a freshman congressman's



office where I had no connections, based on my writing samples and the recommendation from the staffers with whom I had interned.

“Paying my dues as a legislative correspondent was both helpful and challenging. I learned a lot about the legislative process and about different issues, and I was able to get a good reputation in my office for getting things done well. Still, it was tough to get paid less than I had been and to be older than a lot of the other staffers in that position. I had to ask several times to be trusted with small legislative issues, but ultimately my office agreed to let me handle a small portfolio. It paid off in the next Congress, when I was promoted to legislative assistant.

“It’s definitely easier to come to Washington, DC, with some connections, and I encourage people to use their networks to create opportunities for themselves. For me, getting on the Hill was about taking advantage of the network I did have—including my GSPM classmates and the workshop sessions through the graduate school—and building my connections from the ground up. I put my resume in front of dozens of people for comments and honed my cover letter skills until I could write a highly tailored cover letter as soon as I saw a listing. I took positions to get my foot in the door and made sure I had a great attitude even while I was working in jobs that didn’t use all the skills I had to offer. All the while, I was learning more about what I wanted to do, and I was learning that managing a career in politics can be fun and frustrating. At the end of the day, no one does it themselves, and most people are willing to help others along the way—especially GSPM alumni! All you have to do is reach out.”

## **Student Two: This is a Strange Way to Get a Job**

“During GSPM orientation, one of the program’s current students was talking about his experience in Washington, DC, and about his job at a media consulting firm in town. As the student was finishing his remarks, he mentioned that his boss was shooting a political ad in Northern Virginia and that they needed volunteers for a couple of shots. Along with some other students, I volunteered and a few days later I was in a small park not far from Clarendon. The theme of the ad was a wolf in sheep’s clothing,



nominally some sort of attack ad that was being filmed for a congressional race out West. The partner of the firm, who was there directing the shoot, was finishing up when he asked if anybody could howl like a wolf (he needed a wolf cry to end the ad). Having no shame and figuring why not, I started howling into a mike in my best wolf impression. My enthusiasm at making animal noises must have impressed the partner as he asked if I was looking for an internship. I said yes and he invited me to come to his offices to interview for the position the following week. After a short interview, I was offered my first political internship in Washington, DC. I found out later that, though there had been other applicants, the partner was dead-set on hiring “the guy who howled like a wolf” despite my limited (i.e., no) political experience.”

### **Student Three: One Thing Led to Another**

“I got my first internship with then-Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) after my freshman year of undergrad. I was pretty hooked on Washington after that and returned the following spring semester and interned with then-Senator John Kerry’s (D-MA) office. During my time with Kerry’s office, I had the opportunity to serve as staff assistant, so it was an internship that turned into temporary employment. I had a couple of other non-Hill internships following that, and when I graduated and couldn’t find work in my home state, I got back in touch with the staffer in Senator Bingaman’s office and inquired about any job openings in their office or elsewhere. Luckily, something had opened up at around the same time, and I was offered a position as staff assistant and moved back to Washington. A couple of months later, I moved into a different position—assistant to the chief of staff. It was a great opportunity, and I was with his office from 2002 until last month, when I joined Senator Tom Udall’s (D-NM) office as his administrative director.”

---

- I
- II
- III
- IV
- V
- VI
- VII**
- VIII
- IX
- X
- XI

---



## Student Four: Short and Sweet

"My interview with the congressman lasted all of five minutes. The congressman simply asked me my opinion on a political issue and before I could fully complete my response he was pulled away to vote. Thankfully, I answer enough of the question, correctly, to be hired!"

## Student Five: Starting My Own Political Consulting Company

*By Dr. des. Louis Perron (Switzerland)*

"Immediately after I graduated from GSPM, I wanted to start my own consulting practice. I finished an internship at The Mellman Group and moved back to my home country, Switzerland. Five years later, I have clients in all three linguistic areas of Switzerland and in Germany, the United Kingdom, Romania and Asia, and I can't remember the last month where I did not sell for five-digit numbers.

"The beginning, however, was not easy. When I got my master's, I knew a whole lot about politics and winning elections, but nobody taught me how to make money out of what I had learned. At that point, I had two things working in my favor. First, having been an activist for 10 years, I got to know a lot of people in politics and second, I successfully obtained a scholarship to write my PhD dissertation. The first helped in paving the way for my networking while the second took care of the bare essentials: my lodging, food and transportation. From the very beginning, I treated the PhD as my first client, which means that I immediately tried to attract more business while writing it. For this, I positioned myself in a well-defined niche (winning elections) and did a lot of work laying the ground.

"This approach included a lot of cold pitches where I would send out a thousand letters to potential customers. On the average, this would lead to five meetings and one or two contracts. It's a lot of work that does not pay off immediately, but this is how I landed projects with Switzerland's biggest telecommunication company, Swisscom, and one of Switzerland's biggest labor unions, Syna.



"After two years of trial and error and having read hundreds of books about politics, it occurred to me that I could also do the same for consulting. I went on Amazon and purchased about 10 books on the subject. Truth be told, many of them were mediocre and of little help. But if you think about starting your own consulting business and you will read one book, and one book only, my money is on *Getting Started in Consulting* by Alan Weiss. Here are some of the things he says, which I found to make a lot of sense:

- Only amateurs charge based on time. A consultant is not selling time but value. The way to handle many clients, maximize their potential and make them happy is to charge based on value.
- You sell by offering potential clients the appetizer for free. Good marketing is not about the consultant, his methodology and tools nobody except the consultant cares about. Good marketing gives a little value to the client immediately. If I talk to an endangered incumbent, for example, I immediately talk about lessons learned from races from other endangered incumbents.
- Invest in what Weiss calls marketing gravity. In short, this means to get exposure through publishing, public speaking and similar ventures. I started out with speeches at service clubs, and I now average one speech a week. At first, I gave interviews as an expert on political matters on the local radio stations. During the last U.S. presidential election, I was a frequent guest on Bloomberg television in Germany, the United Kingdom and France. The purpose of investing in marketing gravity is to make people come to you. And it also gives you more credibility among people you know already, and it is support for your cold pitches.
- The most important time to market is when you don't have time to market. It's what Weiss calls the success trap, and this happened to me. I grew very rapidly at the beginning and neglected marketing. After a few months, all approved projects were finished but no new ones were in the pipeline. It took me almost six months to recover.

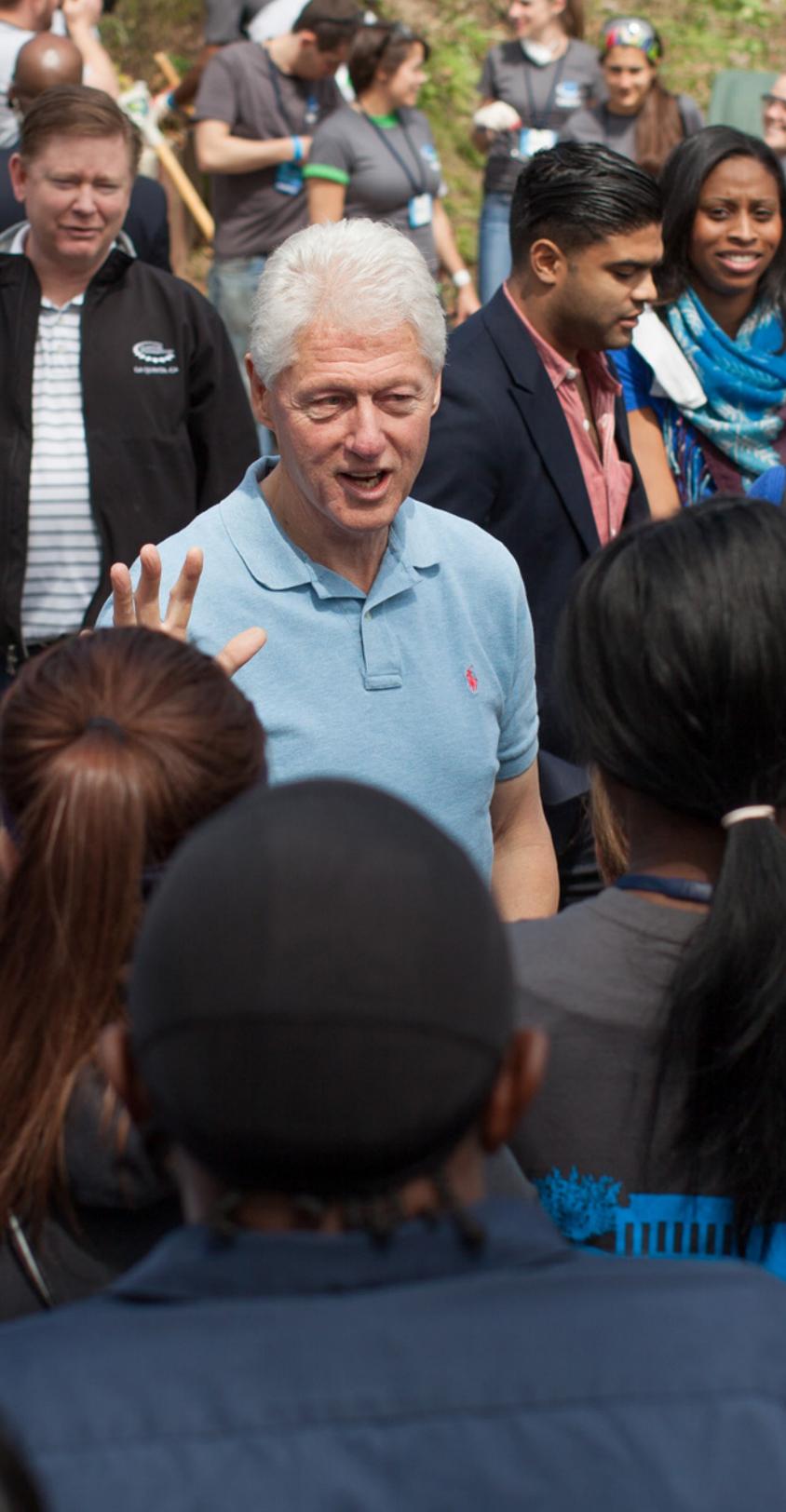


“If people generally imagine a consultant, they think of a 50-year-old guy with grey hair and not a 27-year-old kid, which I was at the beginning. It was key for me to start out with a clear niche where I had something substantial to say. A trick I often use is to cite examples from way back that the other people don’t know or don’t remember (I started in politics when I was 14, so at 27, I had already observed politics for 13 years). Further, I concentrated on marketing activities which gave me a platform to talk. For example, I noticed that people didn’t take me serious at informal cocktail parties where folks just chat informally. What works much better are things like a speech, where I could show substance. I noticed that people would ignore me before the speech and change their behavior toward me after the speech.

“The media also is an important ally, since they don’t care much about age. What matters much more for journalists is that you are an expert who is easily accessible and capable of making a long story short. If you give them what they want, they are easy to penetrate. My recent analysis on Obama was not only published in Switzerland but also in papers in Germany, Japan and the Czech Republic.

“Especially for a young consultant, it is important not to be intimidated and to interact with potential clients as equals. We are not begging for projects, we look for win-win situations. It is a bit like dating, where there should always be a balance. Good relationships are the ones where you can’t say who needs and loves the other person more. It’s the exact same way in consulting. When I started out, I would try to convince the client even as I sensed that he was resistant. Now, I learned that one of the most effective sentences in this kind of situation is to say, ‘You know what, I think you are right, you don’t need me.’ It immediately changes the dynamics of the conversation.

“The age was even more a problem working abroad. In Asia, every meeting usually starts with the potential client mentioning my young age. Sometimes, I would make a joke out of it: ‘Yes I am very young, that’s why I am so affordable.’



"Of course, running your own business has a lot of risks. If one has a family to take care of, it would take much more savings on the side to afford running the risk. There are definitely difficult periods, but in my experience, the plus side clearly weighs out the negatives. Here, you are your own boss and you have a lot of liberty to organize your time and life. You don't have to spend hours in endless meetings and on office politics. And, there is no cap to your potential income. A friend of mine once told me that people who work for a salary in the long run misunderstand a basic thing about how capitalism works. I thought a lot about that statement during the past five years.

"However, it's not only about the financial benefit. In doing consulting work, I get to meet interesting and powerful people, and I get to know them from a very personal and sometimes vulnerable side. This actually helps in putting perspective on the kind of work you do. It situates you in the thick of things and opens your eyes to just how effectual your work can be.

"At this point, I am still in the process of building up, but so far, it has been an extremely enriching time. I never regretted having taken this route, and I am grateful to the people who helped me along the way. There are many nights where I walk up and down my apartment at 3am, pumped up with excitement for the next part of the journey."



# EDUCATION IN POLITICS: IS IT WORTH THE TIME AND COST?

Formal education in professional politics is a comparatively new development. Until quite recently, the only way to advance a career in politics was through “OJT”—on-the-job training. Even today, when a growing number of universities offer degree programs in applied politics, still a number of young people launch their political careers by just going to work. That raises the question: is it worth all the time and expense that is required to undertake a master’s degree in politics? Since the authors work for George Washington University, dear reader, you won’t be surprised that we think there is great value in political education. But, let us state the case and then you can decide.

Stepping back from the development of degree programs in democratic politics, let us reflect on the fact that in many areas of politics—lobbying, campaigning and issues advocacy—the old personal networks of yesterday are being supplemented by technical means of building support, means that can be taught and learned. That is to say, the skills and power of yesterday’s politician were rooted in an elaborate network of individual contacts. Who you knew was critically important. Who would return your phone calls; who you could ask for a favor?

“What you know has become equally important as who you know.”

While people skills and networking are still tremendously important in political life, one is struck by how different is today’s politics. Contemporary politicians build their support, constituencies and power through adroit use of narrowcasting on cable television, focus group research, digital communications, massive databases, computer-driven mail lists, micro-targeted communications through a variety of channels, websites, mobile apps, social networking software, email programs and fundraising. They maneuver in a world in which legislation is influenced as much by public opinion polls and 30-second advocacy ads as by the smoozing and



backslapping of lobbyists in the capitol corridors. In short, what you know has become equally important as who you know.

Although some in academia and journalism may bemoan the trend toward increasingly technical communications, it is, nonetheless, irreversible. An inescapable fact of modern political life is that success in politics, and even access to those in power, now depends increasingly on the acquisition of the expertise taught at such places as the GSPM. Since the trend toward a politics mediated by communications technology in contemporary politics is irreversible, we had better learn how to conduct a genuine politics of civil debate, educative advocacy, responsible choice, and accountability within the confines of advances in communications technology. That will necessarily mean coping with a growing list of specializations in political communications and a lessening in the potency of amateurism.

In this increasingly technical field, the heart of the matter is the role that formal education can play in preparing young people for careers in politics. Here we offer six answers.

**First**, educational programs afford an opportunity to learn comprehensively. Academic learning magnifies the lessons of practical experience by exposing you to a wider breadth of understandings acquired through study. In one year in an academic program, students learn how to read and use poll data; how to create, film and edit TV ads; how to set up a field organization to contact voters; how to design an effective digital presence including websites, an email campaign and a mobile app; how to develop and use a political database; how to raise political money; how to employ social networking websites to maximum effect; and how to manage people in the hectic environment of an election campaign. And so on. There are so many techniques of mobilizing political support, on-the-job learning just takes too long.

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---



It would take several years working in a variety of positions to master these skills and other techniques necessary to succeed in politics, particularly as careers tend to get tracked in one specialized area of politics. So, in addition to bringing students to the forefront of these expanding areas of expertise, a curriculum of applied politics allows them to become informed consumers across a whole range of applications that are effective and indeed necessary. Moreover, because the skills and techniques used in politics all tend to reinforce each other, learning politics through education allows one to reap value from the bandwidth that a formal curriculum provides. Many of those who attend an academic program will never become pollsters themselves, for example, but they will know what to expect from a pollster, how to differentiate a good question from a poor one, whether a question order distorts the findings, what sort of analysis provides the best insight into their strategic environment, how to read poll data in order to sharpen the effectiveness of their communications, and what sorts of techniques and statistical analysis are appropriate for different types of poll data. In short, they are better able to get the most out of the pollsters they hire.

**A second** important and fortunate benefit of creating a formal curriculum in politics is that, in contrast to the way that personal politics inherently excludes, a curriculum in politics can be broadly shared. At the GSPM, more than half of our students are women. We have, in addition, a strong group of students from minority groups and an increasing flow of applicants from the world's emerging democracies, including many from Latin America. We view the expanding access to political proficiencies by these groups as a major benefit of the social role that professional schools can play. For the student, this diversity adds richness to the practice of politics and better reflects the way the world is trending than does exposure in the current job market.



**A third** strength of formal political education is the importance of separating knowledge about how politics works from partisan preferences as to the outcomes of politics. No doubt, partisan politics and strong advocacy of policy preferences matter greatly to the workings of democracy. Nevertheless, those who advance only through practical experience are likely to become isolated in one highly charged partisan community that limits their perspective on both policies and political process. The antidote to this tendency can be found in academic programs, where students must learn how to respond to and communicate with peers and faculty who hold the full range of political views. With the increased polarization of politics, the opportunities to befriend and learn from those on the other side have been sharply reduced. But not at schools of applied politics.

---

- I
- II
- III
- IV
- V
- VI
- VII
- VIII**
- IX
- X
- XI

---



Learning political skills in a university setting allows sharing of knowledge across party lines, facilitates respect and cordiality between those who disagree politically, and creates a greater sense of professionalism among those who work in politics. We have seen numerous examples in which students, who will spend their professional lives working against each other, have become close personal friends during their time at the school. And, these friendships persist after they leave and serve to strengthen a feeling of professional community that transcends partisan differences. In a broader context, alumni loyalty, contacts with successful faculty and tightly bonded friendships with classmates all serve to create an extensive community and support network for the individual rising in her political career. Alumni tell us that some of their most important job leads came from a friend “on the other side,”

**Our fourth** argument on behalf of the educational route: most degree programs offer career development services which assist students and alums in advancing their careers. Elsewhere in this ebook, we have emphasized the importance of both entrepreneurialism and networking, a characteristic and a skill that are essential to success. These can be bolstered by assistance in managing your career offered by individuals who make that assistance their life’s work. Advice over such aspects of job seeking as resume drafting, cover letter writing and interviewing techniques is supplemented by both help in strategizing and by job banks that are exclusive to the degree program, by job leads provided by alumni, and even by preference in hiring decisions made by faculty and alumni.

*“Old school ties” create a supportive community far more diverse and extensive and less partisan than OJT.*



## FACTORS IN FAVOR OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN POLITICS

- Comprehensiveness
- Inclusiveness
- Multi-partisan
- Career Assistance
- Analytical Reasoning
- Ethics and Professional Responsibility

**Our fifth** argument on behalf of political education is that universities can play a role to the degree they emphasize an analysis of why political techniques work. In a year of study, students master subjects in great depth, learning more than simply what was done in a given situation. As a result, once working in the field, they can do more than merely copy what they have observed others doing. We want our students to know why things were done one way and not another. More importantly, we want them to be able to analyze situations so that they will be able to innovate as well as replicate. When conditions change, they will have learned the reasons behind the use of different techniques, they will be better able to adapt to change.

**Sixth,** finally and most importantly, we believe that formal education can give greater attention to the teaching of ethics and professional responsibilities that go along with the use of political skills. All academic institutions have a dual mission: they teach tomorrow's leaders and they generate knowledge. To these, professional schools add a third: an obligation to engage the related profession in a critical examination of its values, mores, and consequences. The GSPM attempts to stimulate self examination within the profession of politics by advancing knowledge in the field, lauding appropriate professional conduct, encouraging the discussion of ethics and the development of professional standards and striving to identify societal imperatives that should take precedence over the narrower agendas of individual practitioners. We hope that, through self-examination and debate,

---

- I
- II
- III
- IV
- V
- VI
- VII
- VIII**
- IX
- X
- XI

---



our students and alumni will come to see themselves as managers of democratic practices with obligations that transcend their duties to their clients. [See Section Nine for more on professional ethics.]

Schools educating the next generation of politicians have the prospect of teaching and nurturing more than on-the-job skills. Formal study inherently subjects an area of human activity to broader debate than does the unquestioning mentorship implicit in the old boy network. If there is a central justification for the ivory tower, it should at least be that we provide a haven for those political professionals—budding and fully formed—to think through their obligations, principles and balancing tests that ought to constrain the exercise of the technologies and skills we teach. We hope that exposure to potential problems and the opportunity for self-reflection will strengthen the resolve of our students to abide by professional standards of conduct. They will ultimately be more successful if they do, and they are a whole lot less likely to get into professional trouble. All of this is the reason why GSPM's motto is **"Making Democracy Work!"**

#### ISN'T THERE ANOTHER OPTION?

*What about short-term training programs on campaign management? Why shouldn't I just go to one of those?*

Several companies or organizations, even university based programs, offer training seminars on various aspects of political management that only last a few days. They take less time, they're usually taught by professionals in the field and they cost a whole lot less than a master's degree. Where does the comparative value lie with these programs?

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
<b>VIII</b>
IX
X
XI

---



While they may look similar on the surface—participants listening to a lecture and asking questions—training and education are two entirely different propositions. In a training seminar, participants are fed a great deal of information in a compressed time. While there is often a lot of handouts for “take-home value” and usually time for questions and answers, the opportunity to digest the material is very limited. More to the point, most frequently, there is little or no time for the individual reflection that comes through the extensive reading and writing that is demanded by a credit granting academic program. For most of us, until we are forced to write something down, we really don’t know what we think about a topic or where the gaps in our knowledge lie. Then, there is also the matter of feedback from the experts on your work and achieved knowledge—by this we mean the sometimes unhappy business of written evaluations and grades! Our students tell us that, when they have attended training seminars, their all-too-frequent pattern was to sit and listen, take the materials home with all good intentions and then get caught up in the day-to-day business back at the office, so that they never really around to doing the hard work of digesting the conference materials. In short, they found that a quickie seminar was no real substitute for the year or two spent studying in detail. They also note that an academic program provides sustained collegial interaction with professional faculty and peers—interaction that is missing from a seminar. And, all this, they note, doesn’t even count the value of having a master’s degree to add to their resume.

So where does all this leave us on the value of education in politics? In the final analysis, the faculty at our school does not think that the degree is a complete substitute for practical experience in the field. Rather we believe that both are necessary for a successful career in politics. Field exposure is essential to ensure that a sense of practical experience gives meaning to the lessons we teach. Experience also adds judgment and perspective to the application of proficiencies learned in school. On the other hand, we have found that studying politics systematically can accelerate the gains of experience. On average, our students and alumni move up the ladder of success more rapidly than they would without this education.

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
<b>VIII</b>
IX
X
XI

---



## A GSPM Alum Comments on his Education and the Start of His Career in Politics

### ZACH ZAGAR '10

*Political Management*

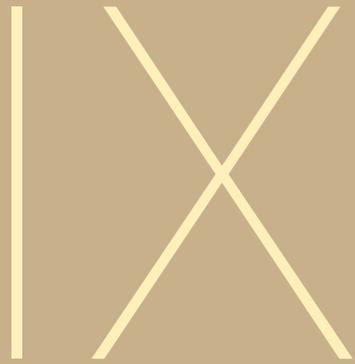
"While I never intended to work on the Hill, here I am.

"It's hard to directly attribute one experience to why anyone gets anywhere in the profession we call politics, but I can attest that much of what I learned at the GSPM, the people I met there (and am still meeting) and a decision to remain involved as an alumni have either directly enhanced my career or my support system for "making it" in Washington.

"It took me awhile to understand that the program is only as good as the effort I put in. It's up to you to engage the world-class political talent who make up the faculty in all of the GSPM tracks, as well as the students you study with. These are your mentors and future colleagues. Building and using those relationships is invaluable as you start and continue your professional path.

"Leadership and professors at the school are incredibly understanding of the haphazard manner in which politicians live. No request is too small or too big, and without their understanding, I couldn't have accelerated my coursework in my final semester to be more agreeable to the 2010 campaign schedule, leading to my first paid position on a campaign. Thanks to electoral success, I still work with my boss today, albeit in a different role. As I've been entrusted with more responsibilities, the personal value of my time at the GSPM has only increased.

"Remember to always put yourself out there, engage everywhere, and take advantage of the short time you are studying here. Two years goes by fast."

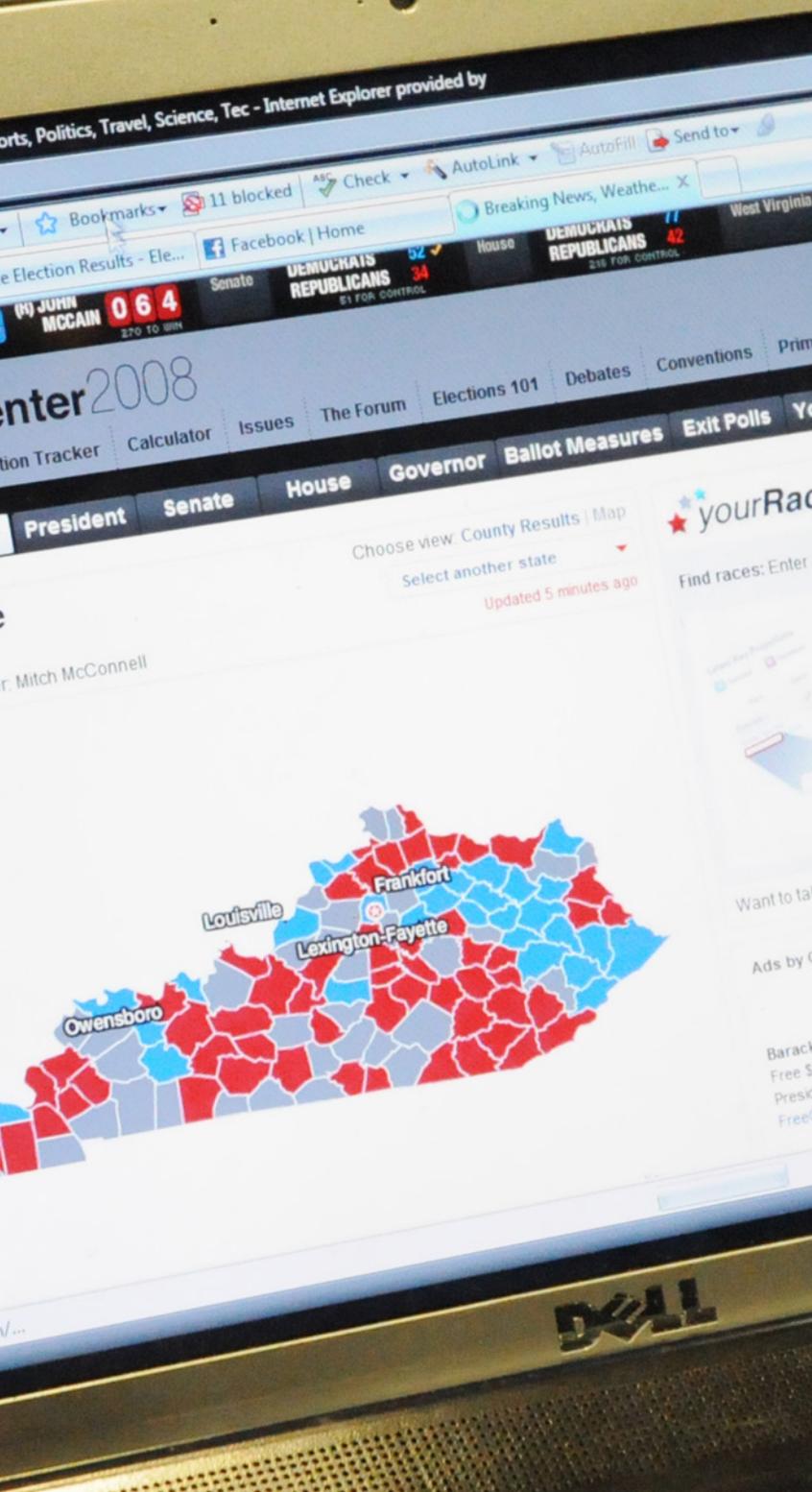


# ETHICS AND A PROFESSION OF POLITICS

Let's start with a bit of squabbling over definitions. There are many ideas of what constitutes a profession. At the most stringent level, professions like law and medicine are licensed by a government agency based on knowledge demonstrated through tests (think bar exams or med boards) and experience. State licensing results in restrictions upon entry, a tightly defined roster of practitioners, a body of codified knowledge and an enforceable code of ethics. But, while many people reserve the term "profession" to denote this maximum definition, in fact, there are several other ways of thinking about professional behavior which are a lot less demanding.

There are, moreover, good reasons why such a vigorous definition of a profession should not apply in the field of politics. The most persuasive of these is that democracy inherently requires that the barriers to entry be minimal. We want citizens to be able to exercise effective influence on the political process. The great value of volunteerism is that it allows a democratic system to respond rapidly to social change. As new issues arise, as government policies impact on citizens' lives, as the activities of private groups, organizations or corporations affect people, the political institutions must be open to citizens mobilizing to affect public policy. A closed profession would limit the ability of uninvolved citizens to become activists. For this reason, the First Amendment stands vigilant guard over state action that would limit citizen access to effective participation in politics.

So what might be a way of thinking about a profession of political management that applies a less restrictive definition and yet demands a sense of ethical duties? One argument suggests the need for procedures of certification, for example like CPAs: certified public accountants. There are tests and qualifications for CPAs, but other individuals can practice accounting without going through that process. Closer to the field



of politics, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) conducts a certification program leading its members to append APR–Accredited in Public Relations—to their names. Through an elaborate procedure involving validation of work experience, a computerized test and an oral interview, practitioners are able to demonstrate they have the skills and knowledge necessary to bear this designation. The presumptions here are, first, that potential clients would rather hire someone certified than someone who might be less qualified. So it's good for business. Second, that with certification comes the possibility of de-certification if one violates the professional standards set by the accrediting body, so ethics reviews might have some teeth. And, third, that certification limits access to the field to those who have demonstrated the necessary expertise at a high level. Thus, certification by a professional organization doesn't close the door to access as firmly as does licensure, but it does provide some measure of accountability for those who practice this profession.

At the minimal level, a profession requires something of a self-conscious community sharing a common set of skills which provide expertise beyond that which their clients possess. We go to doctors because they know more about our health than we do. Candidates use political consultants because they know more about the mechanics of communicating with voters than do the would-be office holders. In the realm of politics, we see the emergence of a community of practitioners who recognize their commonalities and share a vocabulary, a range of skills and a body of knowledge of how to build political support and power.

A critical factor in defining a profession is whether its community of practitioners recognizes a set of ethical principles and professional responsibilities that limit the use of their skills. While not yet true in the emerging profession of political management, slow progress is being achieved.

Given the cynicism directed toward those working in politics, it may surprise you that there is an ongoing conversation about how the importance of ethics in politics might be advanced. For those in the field of political management, careful thought about appropriate behavior should be essential. For some, the discussion is about how basic concepts of



morality—concerns with right and wrong, honesty and fairness—might direct their behavior. Derived from cultural and religious values, moral principles are learned early in life and, presumably, shape all of our interactions with others, including those in political life. For others, professional conduct should be determined by a set of best practices that should guide their commercial relationships around a host of conflicts of interest. For still another group, political management should be governed by rules and laws codified by society to regulate human interaction. Simply stated, “If it ain’t illegal, you can do it.” Politics, this argument goes, is about winning, and the only limits on behavior should be what the law says is criminal behavior.

Most of those who work in politics, however, aspire to do more than merely stay out of jail. They are engaged in this field to advance society through democratic practices and that means they have some obligations to maintain and even reinforce democratic institutions. So logic leads them to live by some core values of democracy:

- Democracies require citizen participation, so behaviors specifically designed to decrease or deny citizens the ability to participate are unethical.
- Democracies require an informed citizenry, so behaviors intended to mislead or misinform the public are unethical.
- Democracies require political leaders to advocate their politics and prescriptions actively and openly, so behaviors which obscure relevant, factual information or constitute lies to the public are unethical.
- Democratic institutions serve to bridge social conflict, so efforts which are designed to exacerbate divisions among demographic groups such as race, religion, ethnicity, etc., or to build political support by pitting one group against others are unethical.



- Democracies aspire to promote equality among their citizens, so unethical behaviors include those which are specifically designed to produce inequality through penalizing or limiting the influence of some groups.
- Democracies value pluralism, so efforts to create a unitary system of political power are antithetical and unethical.

None of these principles are unambiguous or easy to apply in the real world of politics. Engaged players will inevitably disagree as to where the lines of appropriate behavior should be drawn in all of these areas. Over time, debate as to the appropriateness of concrete actions in specific circumstances will lead to more precise understandings of how these values should guide behavior. For the present, keeping these principles in mind should provide a mind-set of awareness and sensitivity to the ideas of fair play upon which democracies are founded.

No serious student of history should ever believe that democratic systems are inevitable or eternal.

Most importantly, it is our obligation to pass along to future generations the norms and institutions of a functioning democracy. No serious student of history should ever believe that democratic systems are inevitable or eternal. Although democracy has grown in the United States for over 200 years, we should not take that fact for granted. Throughout history, democracies have withered away by gradual internal corrosion, rather than by conquest from outside.

Beyond these obligations we should cite the importance of understanding—and eliminating as much as possible—conflicts of interest that can complicate professional behavior. The possibilities are too plentiful to discuss here, but some examples might help make the point. Some consulting firms subcontract out work to other firms or recommend vendors from whom they will receive a “finder’s fee” without disclosing these facts to their clients. A firm that engages in lobbying the same clients



that it helped get elected may transcend the bounds of ethical practice, particularly if knowledge gained in the course of the election strengthens their leverage over the client. These and other business practices need to be constantly examined by the professional organizations that represent the interests of those in politics. Their judgment as to what constitutes best practices needs to be considered and published.

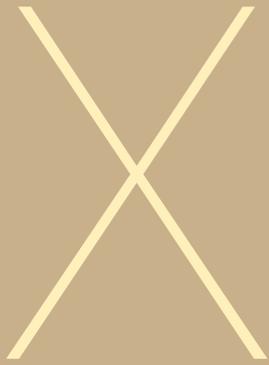
Finally, we should note that there are certainly a number of laws designed to regulate the conduct of those working in politics. Campaign finance regulations are only the most visible. States and local governments have enacted conflict of interest statutes for those serving in public office. Congress requires lobbyists to register and disclose many of their activities and finances, and its ethics rules governing both congressional members and staff are repeatedly revised as new issues emerge. Too often, however, these and other laws and regulations are treated by those working in politics not as accepted practices to be observed, but as inconveniences that should be exploded by expanding every conceivable loophole in an attempt to gut the law.

In conclusion, over the past 50 years, we have commercialized much of our political activity; in order to professionalize politics, we need to create and follow a set of ethical guidelines and best practices in professional responsibility.

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
<b>IX</b>
X
XI

---



# WHAT IS CAREER SUCCESS IN POLITICS?

We conclude with a few words about a career in political service and the life you can expect to lead. It's exciting, exhausting, entrepreneurial, challenging, rewarding, meaningful and addictive.

Expect long hours marked by hard work, commitment and great camaraderie. Many of the important decisions are made by those who are in the room at the time. So those working in politics tend to arrive early at work and stay late. But you'll be surrounded by people who are committed to improving the world. And, if you have truly thought about your ideals and what you really value, you'll find yourself working for causes and ideas that will literally create the future, for you and for lots of other people. In the process, you'll make solid friendships and lasting contacts that will endure for a lifetime, long after you moved onto other things.

Expect long hours marked by hard work, commitment and great camaraderie.

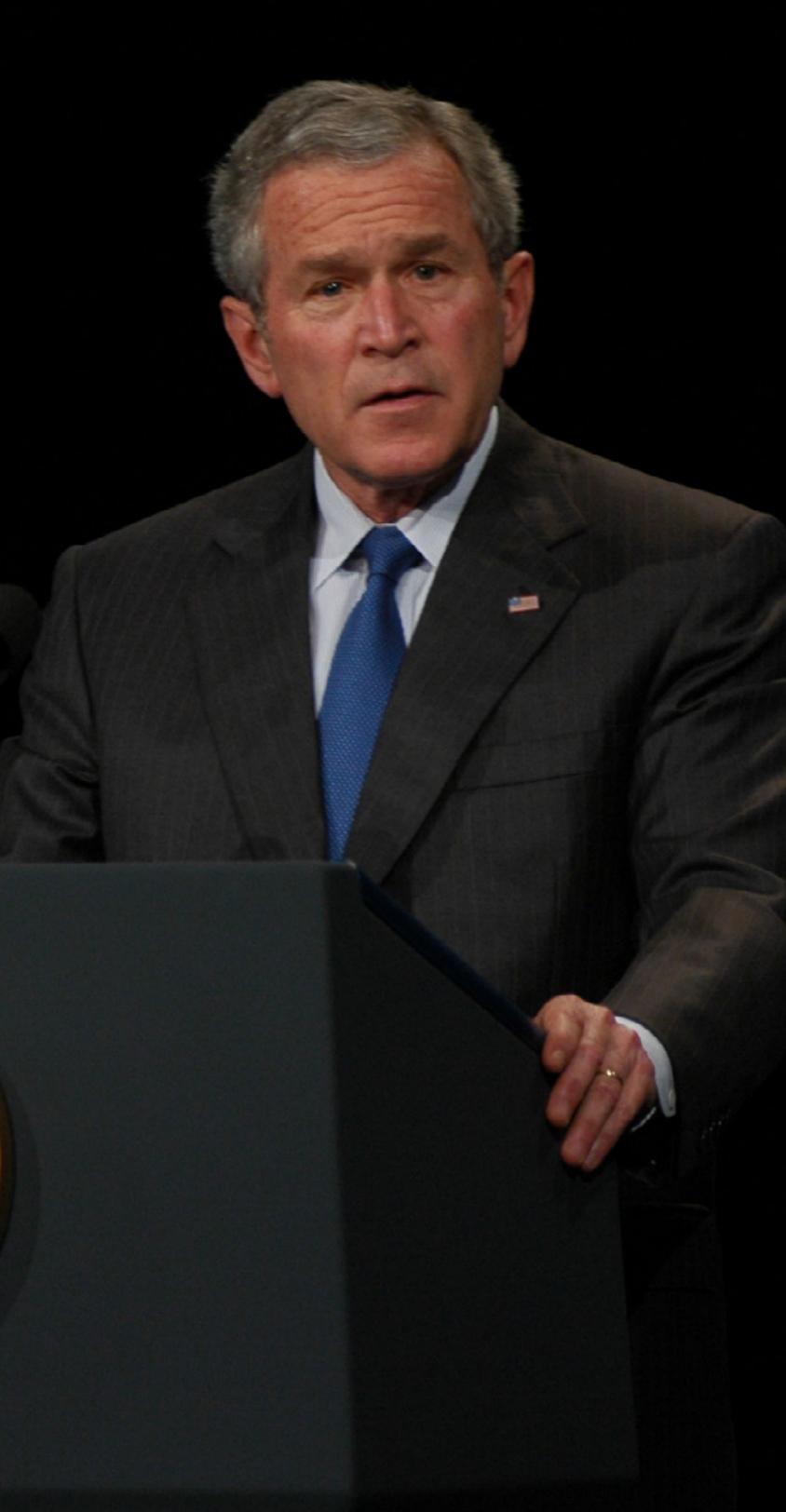
There's a lot to politics that makes it a young person's game. The length of a political job is about 20 months. People move from job to job, sometimes with periods of unemployment in between. Quite often, work will take you out of town—or even out of the country—for months at a time. All this, combined with the long hours, can put a real strain on family ties. Because of a fundamental desire to make a difference, there's not really a burn-out factor; a life in politics is too addictive for that. But, for many, there is a slowing down as they become successful and move into consulting and strategizing rather than being on the front lines of action.



At the same time, the entrepreneurial nature of political service makes for rapid career advancement for the talented and hardworking. Every White House staff, for example, is filled with young people in their late 20s who have real influence on the future. But regardless, if you achieve—or even desire—a job at that level of engagement, political careers can reward you with significant power at a very early age. Those who are successful in politics move on to significant jobs in industry or non-profits, jobs that provide better pay, significant responsibility and power and a lifestyle that is considerably more stable and manageable.

These advantages to a career in politics are possibilities, not certainties. Political life is very competitive. People engaged in its practice can be extremely ambitious. This goes naturally with deep commitments to a set of ideals as to what the world should look like. In addition to those great friendships, you may make some enemies, either because they do damage to you or you prevent them from attaining their desires, whether intentionally or not. To some extent, entrepreneurialism means victory to the talented, to the dedicated and to the lucky. So, it's a risky life. But, at least you'll be testing yourself against the best. And, in the process, you'll be making a difference in your life and through your work.

*Political life can be very competitive ....  
you may make some enemies.*



**FAIR WARNING:** a career in politics offers great satisfaction, considerable risk and significant achievement. As you think about getting into this field, it is important for you to consider your motivations and what you would accept as success in the long run. Project forward to your retirement and think about what, if you thought back over your life from that vantage point, you would like your life to have been about. Would the ultimate goal be fame, recognition and public acclaim? Would you seek vast financial wealth? Would you like to look back and say, with satisfaction, “I made a difference?” Would you be totally content with nudging the world toward a future aligned with the values you think best for humanity? Do you want enough power to make others do your bidding? Do you wish to be liked and loved by those around you? Some of these motivations are more readily attainable through a career in politics and public service. The more thought you give to these questions, the more you’ll understand your own motivations and the happier and more successful you will be in and after your career. As we argued at the start of this ebook, in the long run, politics matters. That means that through a career in political service, you’ll matter!

---

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI

---

## Part A: General Works

- **The Everything Get A Job Book:** The Tools and Strategies You Need to Land the Job of Your Dreams. 2nd ed. Dawn Rosenberg McKay. Adams Media, 2007. Covers all aspects of the job search process.

*“Would you like your life to have been of benefit to your country?”*

*—Doug Bailey, 1933–2013*

*Political Consultant*

*GSPoM Faculty and Board*



# FURTHER READING TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

- **A Foot in the Door: Networking Your Way into the Hidden Job Market. 2nd ed.** Katherine Hansen. Ten Speed Press, 2008. Using networking to land a job.
- **The Job Search Solution: The Ultimate System for Finding a Great Job Now! 2nd ed.** Tony Beshara. AMACOM, 2013. Expert advice from an executive job-finder.
- **Knock 'em Dead 2013: The Ultimate Job Search Guide.** Martin Yate. Adams Media, 2012. A comprehensive guide to all aspects of job searching.
- **Land Your Dream Job (52 Brilliant Ideas): High-Performance Techniques to Get Noticed, Get Hired, and Get Ahead.** John Middleton, Ken Langdon, and Nikki Cartwright. Perigree Trade, 2007. Suggestions that will make you stand apart from others.
- **What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job Hunters and Career Changers.** Richard Bolles. Ten Speed Press, 2013. The classic guide to career exploration and job hunting, updated annually.
- **Have No Career Fear.** Ben Cohen-Leadholt, Ari Gerzon-Kessler and Rachel Skerritt. Natavi Guides 2004. Discussion of job seeking written by three "20-somethings" based on their successful experiences.
- **The Essential Guide for Hiring and Getting Hired.** Lou Adler. Workbench Media, 2013. Adler, a well-known consultant on the hiring practices of corporations, provides guidance for job seekers as well.
- **The Job Search Solution: The Ultimate System for Finding a Great Job Now!** Tony Beshara. AMACOM, a division of American Management Association, 2012. Advice from one of the top job placement experts in the US.



## Part B: Political Careers and Jobs

- **A Career in Professional Politics.** Institute for Career Research, 2005. Provides an excellent overview of careers in the field of political management.
- **Career Opportunities in Politics, Government and Activism. 2nd ed.** Joan Axelrod-Contrada. Checkmark Books, 2008. "Detailed information on a broad spectrum of careers, from consulting, community issues, and political campaigns to law, lobbying, and nonprofit administration."
- **Careers in the U.S. Congress; State Legislatures: Elected Officials, Aids and Staffers.** Institute for Career Research, 2005. Discusses job opportunities in the electoral sphere.
- **Getting a Job in Politics, and Keeping It.** Ben Wetmore. West Michigan Signature Publishing, 2010. A "blueprint for landing entry-level positions and climbing the ladder in political jobs."
- **Insider's Guide to Finding a Job in Washington: Contacts and Strategies to Build Your Career in Public Policy.** Bruce Maxwell. CQ Press, 2000. The "inside track" on locating jobs in Washington, D.C.
- **An Insider's Guide to Political Jobs in Washington.** William T. Endicott. John Wiley & Sons, 2003. Advice on landing a job in the Washington political establishment.
- **Careers in Focus: Politics.** Ferguson Publishing. 2011. Basic stuff you may already know.

I  
II  
III  
IV  
V  
VI  
VII  
VIII  
IX  
X  
XI



---

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

---

WASHINGTON, DC