

SESSION 2:

The Social Politics of Business Success

1. Tribe: a group of people that share some affiliation. Most people are members of many different tribes.
2. When it's you against the whole tribe, it's almost always the tribe that's going to win. So it's usually not a game worth playing.
3. Primates spend a lot of time grooming each other. We groom each other too - it's called "Social Grooming" - through gossip. Gossip is how we make other people worthy of being in our tribe. It's how we communicate the rules of the tribe without direct confrontation.
4. One type of gossip is totally negative: the kind where something is said to undermine the spirit of another.
5. 2/3 of all human conversation is gossip. This is the negative kind, idle conversation about social and sexual relationships and status. Most of this is "unaware" talk - people do it, and don't consciously know why.
6. Humans are in the position they are - and primates are not - because humans formed tribes. Neanderthals formed family clans, but not bigger tribes that stretched across families. Gossip helped humans form tribes. Here's how: If Bob was eating too much of the food, you can't front him directly, because one of the humans may not survive the fight. Instead, we tell Eben that Bob is eating too much of the food and we may not have enough for everyone else, and that message gets naturally spread throughout the whole group, as a lesson for EVERYONE to not eat too much food. The message may also end up getting back to Bob, but from the group as a whole, not an individual. This way the tribe "learns" and evolves the rules to keep it healthy and sustainable.
7. "The Power Of The Unstoppable Two" is one way to use gossip for good. Here's how it works: Two people form a friendship based on integrity. They commit to tell each other whatever they hear about each other, good or bad. Whenever one of them is in a discussion with someone else and the other person's name comes up, say something positive. It inoculates the tribe from negative gossip about them, and it helps each of them in their status within their tribes. Who can you form "The Power Of The Unstoppable Two" with?
8. Are you over-political, or under-political? Under-political types lose out to over-political types for promotions, credibility, etc.. At the extreme, under-political types are seen as weak and undeserving of respect. This kind of person doesn't know there's a way to get into the political game that works for them. Eben was one of these people. To some degree, if you don't show other people what you're doing, including your successes, other people will never know about your power and what you bring to the table. Under-political people have an over-developed sense of modesty and fairness in the world. If you just do the right thing, everything doesn't always take care of itself.
9. Overly-political types astutely focus on position, image, and self-promotion. This works until they over-do it and compromise their ethical balance, either along the way or at the outset. Winning the game is more important than anything, including ethics, since everyone has sacrificed their ethics anyways, right? This eventually costs them their reputation.
10. Don't do your politics in service of your personal "winning." Instead use them in service of the greater good.

11. When you get into a new tribe, identify the most important players and work on building personal relationships with those people. Don't try to impress them, or don't simply work along side them, but try to build an actual personal relationship with them. This can be huge for your success.
12. If you're already in a tribe and already have a reputation, go sit with the influential people and ask them what your reputation is. You've heard it's important to success, so ask them if they can help you understand what your reputation is. They'll start off with positive stuff. Thank them, then ask if there is anything else. Don't argue, ask who said what, etc. After you do this, if they hear anything negative or different from what they told you, they will probably tell you. This puts you in the drivers seat of your reputation, rather than at the mercy of it.
13. Stop making commitments, period. Go on a commitment fast. Stop saying "I'll do this or that..." Stopping making commitments will teach you a lot about about integrity and how your mind works. Take a week or a month off of making commitments. Then you can introduce them back into your life, one at a time. You'll then ask yourself, "Is this a wise commitment, and am I highly likely to keep it?"

