
Political Savvy Training Course: Power Mapping, Winning Allies and Shaping Decisions

26 – 30 October 2026
Amsterdam





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Ref: 539_28805 Date: 26 – 30 October 2026 Location: Amsterdam Fees: 4800 GBP

Programme Summary

Political savvy is the subject of this one-week training course for directors, vice presidents and heads of function, ending in a stakeholder influence plan for one live decision. Senior leaders often lose proposals not on merit but because power, interests and timing were misread. The programme builds a disciplined method for reading how decisions are really made, mapping stakeholders, forming alliances and influencing without formal authority, while keeping integrity visible. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on political savvy to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Organisations lose value when sound proposals stall in committees, when sponsors withdraw late and when senior colleagues work against each other without saying so. Leaders who read the informal side of decisions can raise issues early, secure sponsors before formal approval and avoid costly rework. Ethical practice protects trust, which every later negotiation depends on.

- Decision Cycle Time: Shortens as objections are surfaced and resolved before formal meetings.
- Initiative Approval Rate: Improves as sponsors and blockers are identified at the start of a proposal.
- Cross-Functional Friction: Falls as interests are understood and trade-offs are agreed openly.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Political astuteness: Described by the Open University Business School as reading the organisation, understanding what others want and building alliances ethically, it frames the diagnosis in Session 1.
- Stakeholder power and interest grid: Placing each stakeholder by power and interest sets engagement priorities in Session 2.
- Influence mapping: Drawing who persuades whom reveals the real routes to a decision and structures the alliance work in Session 3.

Intended Participants

- Directors who must gain agreement from peers who do not report to them.
- Vice presidents who sponsor change that crosses several business units.
- Heads of function who compete for budget, people and attention.
- Programme and strategy leaders who need board support for major proposals.

Typical functions include finance, operations, technology, public administration and professional services organisations.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose the formal and informal sources of power around a decision.
2. Participants will be able to construct a stakeholder map that ranks power, interest and stance.
3. Participants will be able to evaluate the interests and constraints behind a resisting colleague's position.
4. Participants will be able to design an alliance and sponsor plan for a contested proposal.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise influence tactics that fit the culture and the people involved.
6. Participants will be able to justify an influence approach against tests of transparency and integrity.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Political Savvy and the Reality of Organisational Power

How are decisions really made, and where does power sit beyond the organisation chart?

- Formal and Informal Power Sources Review
- Political Astuteness Self-Assessment
- Decision Pathway Diagram
- Organisational Culture Reading Guide
- Integrity Boundary Statement

Day 2: Mapping Stakeholders, Interests and Positions

Who can help or block a proposal, and what does each person need?

- Stakeholder Power and Interest Grid
- Stance and Support Register
- Interest and Concern Profile
- Influence Map
- Hidden Blocker Checklist

Day 3: Building Alliances and Sponsors

How are lasting coalitions formed without owing or trading unfairly?

- Sponsor Selection Matrix
- Coalition Building Sequence
- Value Exchange Table
- Pre-Meeting Conversation Plan
- Trust Account Ledger



Day 4: Influencing Without Authority and Handling Resistance

Which approach moves a colleague who has no duty to agree?

- Influence Tactics Selector
- Position and Interest Reframing Method
- Resistance Response Planner
- Escalation and Exit Options Chart
- Transparency and Fairness Test

Day 5: Applying the Tools to One Live Decision

Do the maps, alliances and tactics form one workable influence plan?

- Applying the Session 2 Influence Map
- Using the Session 3 Sponsor Selection Matrix
- Testing the Session 4 Resistance Response Planner
- Checking the Session 1 Integrity Boundary Statement
- Completing the Stakeholder Influence Plan

Methodology

The programme uses a case analysis method built on anonymised decision stories from companies, ministries and public agencies. Participants map a real decision of their own, test their reading with peers who play the stakeholders, and receive written facilitator feedback on each exercise set.

- Suggested activity: Reconstructing why a sound proposal stalled and who needed to be engaged earlier.
- Suggested activity: Role-playing a pre-meeting conversation with a sceptical peer.
- Suggested activity: Reviewing an influence approach against the fairness and transparency test.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a stakeholder influence plan for one live decision. It holds an influence map, a stance register, a sponsor and alliance sequence, a resistance response plan and an integrity statement. The plan is used at work to schedule early conversations, brief sponsors and track support before the formal approval step.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is political savvy suitable for leaders who dislike organisational politics?

Yes. Political savvy here means reading interests openly and acting transparently, not manipulation. The programme assumes senior management experience and gives a method that keeps integrity visible.



Which models does political savvy rest on in this programme?

Political savvy here rests on political astuteness, the stakeholder power and interest grid and influence mapping. Each model is applied to a real decision from your own work.

How is the plan from political savvy used at work?

You use the stakeholder influence plan to schedule early conversations, brief sponsors, track support and prepare for resistance before a proposal reaches formal approval.

How does political savvy differ from general stakeholder management training?

Political savvy centres on power, interests, alliances and influence without authority, while general stakeholder management training centres on communication channels and engagement reporting.