

# Episode 88: What is a wedge issue and how do I use it?



On the whole it is a mistake to think success at work is about politics.  
Having said that, there are things politicians use that can help us – like wedge issues.

## 1. What is a wedge issue?

The name comes from the way people use wedges to open or break things apart.  
In politics, the use is to not only show your difference but to drive the conversation.  
In the USA today, illegal immigration is a major political wedge issue.  
- Democrats portray Republicans as being unfair and therefore not caring people.  
- Republicans portray Democrats as not caring about borders and therefore security.  
The truth is of course a matter of opinion and a wedge issue helps drive the debate.  
Used well it achieves two things - firstly it can put 'clear blue water' between two sides.  
Secondly it can help move an undecided voter, with your wedge issue, to your side.

## 2. Wedge issues in the market.

There is similarity between two competitors in markets or politics: you can use a wedge issue to separate you in the market.  
You take a differentiation and try to make it a negative for your competitors.  
Let's compare a disposable razor-blade business with an electric razor business.  
An electric razor business may choose the environment as a wedge issue, campaigning on issues making disposables look bad.  
They use the fact that disposable blades are not biodegradable as an issue, which is good for them.  
Then they offer to dispose of your old electric razors in an ecological way.  
Balance is not important, it's about making sure the consumer sees the difference - but you still need to be truthful.

## 3. Wedge issues in the workplace

Think carefully before using this tactic against a person at work.  
You can use it to influence people who may control things like your promotions.  
It can be useful to stand for something, to have an issue you are really clear on.  
It might be the environment, it might be emerging markets – it could be anything.  
But you should use this issue to drive what makes you different, not the failings of others.  
When roles or jobs come up in that area, you will be seen as a good candidate.  
Balance is important here – you might get pigeonholed into one area.

Bottom line: We all want to stand out from our competitors, in the market and in the workplace, and one of the best ways to do that is to find an issue that separates you and drive a wedge into it.