

33 Unwritten Business Rules

William Swanson joined Raytheon as a young engineer in 1972. He was timid and sat quietly scribbling notes at meetings. Decades of observations and wisdom have been boiled down into 33 concise leadership tips that Raytheon had printed into a 3½-by-6-inch booklet called *Swanson's UnWritten Rules of Management*.

1. Learn to say, "I don't know." If used when appropriate, it will be used often.
2. It is easier to get into something than to get out of it.
3. If you are not criticized, you may not be doing much.
4. Look for what is missing. Many know how to improve what's there; few can see what isn't there.
5. Presentation rule: When something appears on a slide presentation, assume the world knows about it and deal with it accordingly.
6. Work for a boss to whom you can tell it like it is. Remember, you can't pick your family, but you can pick your boss.
7. Constantly review developments to make sure that the actual benefits are what they were supposed to be. Avoid Newton's Law.
8. However menial and trivial your early assignments may appear, give them your best effort.
9. Persistence or tenacity is the disposition to persevere in spite of difficulties, discouragement or indifference. Don't be known as a good starter but a poor finisher!
10. In doing your project, don't wait for others; go after them and make sure it gets done.
11. Confirm the instructions you give others, and their commitments, in writing. Don't assume it will get done.
12. Don't be timid: Speak up, express yourself and promote your ideas.
13. Practice shows that those who speak the most knowingly and confidently often end up with the assignment to get the job done.
14. Strive for brevity and clarity in oral and written reports.
15. Be extremely careful in the accuracy of your statements.
16. Don't overlook the fact that you are working for a boss. Keep him or her informed. Whatever the boss wants, within the bounds of integrity, takes top priority.
17. Promises, schedules and estimates are important instruments in a well-run business. You must make promises - don't lean on the often-used phrase: "I can't estimate it because it depends on many uncertain factors."
18. Never direct a complaint to the top; a serious offense is to "cc" a person's boss on a copy of a complaint before the person has a chance to respond to the complaint.
19. When interacting with people outside the company, remember that you are always representing the company. Be especially careful of your commitments.
20. Cultivate the habit of boiling matters down to the simplest terms: the proverbial "elevator speech" is the best way.
21. Don't get excited in engineering emergencies: Keep your feet on the ground.

22. Cultivate the habit of making quick, clean-cut decisions.
23. When making decisions, the "pros" are much easier to deal with than the "cons." Your boss wants to see both.
24. Don't ever lose your sense of humor.
25. Have fun at what you do. It will be reflected in you work. No one likes a grump except another grump!
26. Treat the name of you company as if it were your own.
27. Beg for the bad news.
28. You remember 1/3 of what you read, 1/2 of what people tell you, but 100% of what you feel.
29. You can't polish a sneaker.
30. When facing issues or problems that are becoming drawn-out, "short them to the ground."
31. When faced with decisions, try to look at them as if you were one level up in the organization. Your perspective will change quickly.
32. A person who is nice to you but rude to the waiter; or to others; is not a nice person. (This rule never fails).
33. Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, an amateur built an ark that survived a flood while a large group of professionals built the Titanic!

Postscript: The qualities of leadership boil down to confidence, dedication, integrity and love.