

INTERNATIONAL BEST-SELLING SERIES

# THE RULES OF WORK

EXPANDED EDITION



A Definitive Code for  
Personal Success

RICHARD TEMPLAR

The author of the international bestseller *The Rules of Life*

THE

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WORK

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Personal Success

EXPANDED EDITION

RICHARD TEMPLAR

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© 2010 by Pearson Education, Inc.  
Publishing as FT Press  
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

Authorized adaptation from the original UK edition, entitled *The Rules of Work*,  
Second Edition, by Richard Templar, published by Pearson Education Limited,  
© Pearson Education 2010.

This U.S. adaptation is published by Pearson Education Inc,  
© 2010 by arrangement with Pearson Education Ltd, United Kingdom.

FT Press offers excellent discounts on this book when ordered in quantity for bulk  
purchases or special sales. For more information, please contact U.S. Corporate  
and Government Sales, 1-800-382-3419, [corpsales@pearsontechgroup.com](mailto:corpsales@pearsontechgroup.com). For  
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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing June 2010

ISBN-10: 0-13-707206-6

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-707206-4

Pearson Education LTD.

Pearson Education Australia PTY, Limited.

Pearson Education Singapore, Pte. Ltd.

Pearson Education North Asia, Ltd.

Pearson Education Canada, Ltd.

Pearson Educación de Mexico, S.A. de C.V.

Pearson Education—Japan

Pearson Education Malaysia, Pte. Ltd.

Templar, Richard, 1950-2006.

The rules of work : a definitive code for personal success / Richard Templar.  
p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-707206-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-13-707206-6

1. Success in business. 2. Executives. I. Title.

HF5386.T34 2010

650.1—dc22

2010001942

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I am indebted to Rachael Stock, without whose support, encouragement, and enthusiasm this book would never have happened.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the readers who have emailed me over the years with comments on my books, and especially those who have contributed ideas to this new edition of *The Rules of Work*. In particular, may I thank:

Anil Baddela

Johnson Maganja Grace

David Grigor

Frank Hull

Hubert Rau

Pawan Singh

Tina Steel



# Foreword

Most of us (I'm guessing here) want to do our jobs well. Most of us (still guessing) want more important jobs, bigger salaries, greater security, higher status, and a bright future. So we try to do our jobs so well that we will be rewarded, respected, and promoted.

And that is where we go wrong. (I'm not guessing anymore.)

Of course, we have to do our jobs really well. There's no future for the screw-up, the bum, or the sociopath. But Richard Templar puts his finger on the flaw in the implied logic that concludes that the better we do our job, the faster we will rise up the organization. He points out that we are all doing two jobs, but most of us are only conscious of one of them—the job in hand: meeting our sales targets, reducing machine downtime, speeding up monthly management accounts, whatever. The other job is both larger and vaguer: making the organization work. If people think you have it in you to solve the problems of the organization itself, not just your small part of it, you've broken away from the pack. But how do you do that? There's an easy answer: read this book. Follow the Rules.

I realized when I read this book that I have always been half conscious of the Rules, though I never managed to formulate and analyze them with the clarity and detail that Richard Templar brings to the task. There was a time when I had to interview a lot of promotion candidates in the BBC, and with most of them I had this feeling that somehow they didn't look like top management material. Was it how they dressed, how they walked, how they talked? Bits of all of those, but most of all their attitude, their frame of mind, which somehow affected all the others.

Most of them stressed how well they did their present job, which was quite unnecessary. We knew that; that's why they were there. It was their entrance ticket to the interview, and there was no point in constantly waving it at us. Amazingly few of them had given any real thought to the problems of the job they were applying for, as opposed to the job they were doing, let alone the problems that

faced the BBC as an organization. They were oblivious of the Rules.

The American management guru Peter Drucker makes a useful distinction between efficiency and effectiveness: efficiency is doing the job right, effectiveness is doing the right job. Your boss will tell you how to do the job right, but you have to work out for yourself what the right job is. It means looking at the world outside the organization: what it needs, and how its needs are changing, and what the organization must do (and stop doing) to survive and prosper.

I remember interviewing two chief executives of great corporations. Both had joined from college with hundreds of other bright ambitious graduates, and I asked them why it was they had gotten to the top of the heap and not any of the others. One said he didn't know, but what he could tell me was that every job he'd ever done was abolished after he left it. The other didn't know either, but said that no job he'd ever done existed until he started doing it. Both of them were striking examples of people who focused on doing the right job, of thinking like the chairman even when they were junior or middle managers. And I have no doubt they followed all the other rules as well, always somehow looking and sounding like someone who should be in a higher job. And as Richard Templar stresses—they were popular and respected throughout the organization. You can't be a successful chief executive if you're surrounded by embittered, resentful, and demoralized colleagues.

*The Rules of Work* is first and foremost a guide for the individual manager, an eye-opener for all those who would like to rise to the top but don't seem to be able to find the map. But it is also very much a book for the organization itself; the great danger is fossilization, becoming preoccupied with its internal tasks and systems and procedures, and losing touch with the world outside. And this will happen if everyone is concentrating on being efficient rather than being effective—in other words, if they don't follow the Rules.

Sir Antony Jay  
Author, *Yes Minister* and creator of Sir Humphrey  
Founder, Video Arts

# Introduction

I first started formulating *The Rules of Work* many, many years ago when I was an assistant manager. There was a promotion going for the next step up—manager. There were two possible candidates, myself and Rob. On paper I had more experience, more expertise, most of the staff wanted me as their manager, and I generally knew the new job better. Rob, to be honest, was useless.

I was chatting with an outside consultant the company used and asked him what he thought my chances were. “Slim,” he replied. I was indignant. I explained all about my experience, my expertise, my superior abilities. “Yep,” he replied, “but you don’t walk like a manager.” “And Rob does?” “Yep, that’s about the strength of it.” Needless to say he was quite right, and Rob got the job. I had to work under a moron. But a moron who walked right. I studied that walk very carefully.

The consultant was spot on—there was a manager’s walk. I began to notice that every employee, every job, everyone in fact, had their walk. Receptionists walked in a particular way, as did the cashiers, the catering staff, the office workers, the admin, the security staff—and the managers, of course. Secretly, I began to practice the walk.

## Looking the Part

As I spent a lot of time watching the walk, I realized that there was also a manager’s style of attire, of speaking, of behavior. It wasn’t enough that I was good at my job and had the experience. I had to *look* as if I was better than anyone else. It wasn’t just a walk—it was an entire makeover. And gradually, as I

watched, I noticed that what newspaper was read was important, as was what pen was used, how you wrote, how you talked to colleagues, what you said at meetings—everything, in fact, was being judged, evaluated, acted upon. It wasn't enough to be able to do the job. If you wanted to get on, you had to be seen to be the Right Type. *The Rules of Work* is about creating that type—of course, you've got to be able to do the job in the first place. But a lot of people can do that. What makes you stand out? What makes you a suitable candidate for promotion? What makes the difference?

## Act One Step Ahead

I noticed that among the managers there were some who had mastered the walk, but there were others who were practicing, unconsciously, for the next walk—the general manager's walk.

I happened at that time to be travelling around a lot between different branches and noticed that among the general managers there were some who were going to stay right where they were for a long time. But there were others already practicing for their next step ahead—the regional director's walk. And style and image.

I switched from practicing the manager's walk and leapt ahead to the general manager's walk. Three months later I was promoted from assistant manager to general manager in one swift move. I was now the moron's manager.

## Walk Your Talk

Rob had the walk (*Rule 18: Develop a Style That Gets You Noticed*), but unfortunately he didn't adhere sufficiently to the

number one rule—he didn’t know the job well enough. He looked right, sounded right, but the bottom line was—he couldn’t do the job as well as he should have done. I was brought in over his head because they couldn’t sack him—having just promoted him it would have looked bad—and they needed someone to oversee his work so that his errors could be rectified quickly. Rob had reached the level of his own incompetence and stayed there for several years neither improving nor particularly getting worse—just looking good and walking right. He eventually shuffled himself off sideways into running his own business—a restaurant. This failed shortly afterward because he forgot *Rule 2: Never Stand Still*—or maybe he never actually knew it. He carried on walking like a manager instead of a restaurateur. His customers never really took to him.

By practicing the general manager’s walk, I got the promotion, but I also got it because I paid great attention to doing my job well—Rule 1. Once in this new job I was, of course, completely out of my depth. I had to quickly learn not only my new role and all its responsibilities, but also the position below, which I had not really held. I had stood in for managers but I had never been a manager—now I was the manager’s manager. I was in great danger of falling flat on my face.

## Never Let Anyone Know How Hard You Work

But I was, by now, a dedicated Rules Player. There was only one recourse—secret learning. I spent every spare second available—evenings, weekends, lunch breaks—studying everything I could that would help me. But I told no one—*Rule 13*.

Within a short time I had mastered enough to be able to do the job well enough. And the embryonic *Rules of Work* were born.

## Have a Plan

Being a general manager was both fun and pain. It was 50 percent more work but only 20 percent more pay. My next step, logically, was regional director. But it didn't appeal. More work—much more work but for not that much more money. I began to develop a plan (*Rules 24–34*). Where did I want to go next? What did I want to do? I was getting bored being stuck in the office all the time and all those endless dreary meetings. And all that time spent at head office. Not for me. I wanted to have fun again. I wanted to practice the Rules. I formulated my plan.

What the company didn't have was a roving troubleshooter—a sort of general manager's general manager. I put *Rule 4: Carve Out a Niche for Yourself* into play. I suggested to the chairman that a report was needed. I never suggested that this was the job I wanted, but the agenda was obvious, I suppose. I got it, of course, and became a peripatetic general manager, answerable directly only to the chairman and with a job description I wrote myself. And pay? A lot more than the regional directors were on, but they didn't know and I didn't let on (*Part V: Look After Yourself*). I cultivated their support and friendship; I was never a threat because it was obvious I wasn't after their job. They may have wanted the money I was making if they had known, but they didn't want the little niche I had carved out for myself.

And I did this without being ruthless, dishonest, or unpleasant. In fact, I was always diplomatic when dealing with the general managers. I treated them with courtesy and politeness, even when I had to confront them on some aspect of their job. I added *If you can't say anything nice—shut up* and learned the rules in *Part VIII: Cultivate Diplomacy*.

# Knowing the People Who Count

And I quickly learned that if I wanted to know what was going on in a branch, it was best to speak to the people who really knew—the maintenance staff, the receptionists, the cashiers, the elevator attendant, and the drivers. It was important both to identify these people and to be on the right side of them—*Rule 94*. They supplied me with more information than anyone would have believed—and all for the price of a simple “Hello Bob, how’s your daughter doing at college these days?”

*The Rules of Work* took shape. Over the next few years I watched them grow up and gain maturity and experience. I left the corporation and founded my own consultancy. I trained managers in *The Rules of Work* and watched them go out into the world and conquer their destiny with charm and courtesy, confidence and authority.

But I see you have questions. How do these Rules work—are they manipulative? No, you don’t make anyone else do anything; it is you that is changing and improving.

- Do I have to become someone else? No, you may need to change your behavior a bit, but not your personality or values. You’ll go on being you, but a slicker, quicker you, a more successful you.
- Are they hard to learn? No, you can learn them in a week or two—but it does take a long time to really master them. But we are learning all the time and even practicing one Rule is better than none at all.
- Is it easy to spot others doing them? Yes, sometimes, but the really good Rules Players will never let you see what they are doing; they’re too good for that. But once you become a Rules Player too, it does become easier to see what Rule people are using at any particular time.

- Will I notice benefits right away? Oh yes, you betcha—immediately.
- Do I still do them? I wouldn't even admit to doing them in the first place—I'm a Rules Player after all.
- Is it ethical to use the Rules? Yes. You aren't doing anything wrong, merely utilizing your own natural skills and talents and adapting them, using them consciously. This is a key area for understanding the Rules—consciously. Everything you do will have been decided beforehand—you'll still appear spontaneous, of course, you decided that as well—but you will be a conscious controller of any situation rather than an unconscious victim. You will be awake and aware, living in the moment and taking advantage of your own abilities. The bottom line is that you must be able to do your job—and do it well in the first place. The Rules are not for slackers. You think you work hard now? It's nothing to doing the Rules successfully—now that really does take work.

And let's face it, you love to work. You love doing your job. You have to, to be wanting to read the Rules and to want to be moving up. What I am suggesting is that you consciously think about every area of that work and make changes to improve

- The way you do it
- How people perceive you to be doing it

If you don't practice the Rules, you will muddle along, get by, maybe find what it is you are looking for. You may already know a lot of these Rules—and be practicing them—instinctively and intuitively. Now we will do them consciously. If you do you will

- Get promoted
- Get along better with your colleagues



- Feel better about yourself
- Enjoy your work more
- Understand your job better
- Understand your boss's point of view better
- Take more pride in both yourself and your work
- Set a good example for junior staff
- Contribute more to your company
- Be valued and respected
- Spread an aura of goodwill and cooperation around you
- Be successful if you leave to start your own business.

These Rules are simple and effective, safe and practical. They are your 10 steps to building confidence and creating a new and more powerful you. And building that new you morally and ethically. You aren't going to do anything that you wouldn't expect—and appreciate—others doing to you. These Rules enhance personal standards and elevate your individual principles. They are my gift to you. They're yours. Keep them safe, keep them secret.

PART I

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WALK YOUR  
TALK

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These first Rules are the underlying ones that govern all the others—know your job well, do it well, and be better than anyone else at doing it. It's that simple. The secret part is to make sure nobody knows how hard you have to work to do it so well. You can do all your learning in secret, in private—don't let on, and don't let anyone know you do this—and never ever let anyone know you've read this book; it is your secret bible. The important thing is to look calm and efficient, on top of everything and totally in control. You glide through your daily work with ease and confidence. You are unflappable and unstoppable. Bottom line is, however, you must be really good at your basic job.

## Get Your Work Noticed

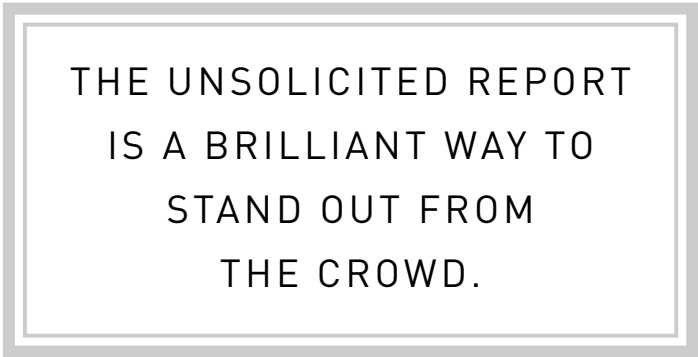
It's all too easy for your work to get overlooked in the busy hurly-burly of office life. You're slaving away, and it can be hard to remember that you need to put in some effort to boost your individual status and personal kudos for your work. But it's important. You have to make your mark so you stand out and your promotional potential will be realized.

The best way to do this is to step outside the normal working routine. If you have to process so many widgets each day—and so does everyone else—then processing more won't do you that much good. But if you submit a report to your boss of how everyone could process more widgets, then you'll get noticed. The unsolicited report is a brilliant way to stand out from the crowd. It shows you're thinking on your feet and using your initiative. But it mustn't be used too often. If you subject your boss to a barrage of unsolicited reports, you'll get noticed but in completely the wrong way. You have to stick to certain Rules:

- Only submit a report occasionally.
- Make really sure that your report will actually work—that it will do good or provide benefits.
- Make sure your name is prominently displayed.
- Make sure the report will be seen not only by your boss, but by his boss as well.
- It doesn't have to be a report—it can be an article in the company newsletter.

# RULE 1

Of course, the very best way to get your work noticed is to be very, very good at your job. And the best way to be good at your job is to be totally dedicated to doing the job and ignoring all the rest. There is a vast amount of politics, gossip, gamesmanship, time wasting, and socializing that goes on in the name of work. It isn't work. Keep your eye on the ball, and you'll already be playing with a vast advantage over your colleagues. The Rules Player stays focused. Keep your mind on the task at hand—being very good at your job—and don't get distracted.



THE UNSOLICITED REPORT  
IS A BRILLIANT WAY TO  
STAND OUT FROM  
THE CROWD.

# Never Stand Still

Most people go into work each day with only one thought—getting through to going home time. During their day they will do whatever they have to, to arrive at that magic time. You won't. You won't stand still. Having gotten the job seems enough for most people that they will just do it and thus remain static. But doing the job isn't the end game for you—it is merely a means to the end. And the end for you is promotion, more money, success, amassing the contacts and experience to set out on your own, whatever it is that is on your wish list. The job, in a way, is an irrelevance.

Yes, you have to do the work. And yes, you have to do it supremely well. But your eye should already be on the next step, and every activity you indulge in at work should be merely a step in your plan to move up.

While others are thinking of their next coffee break or how to get through the afternoon without actually having to do any work, you will be busy planning and executing your next maneuver. In an ideal world, the Rules Players will have gotten their work done by lunchtime so that they have the afternoon free to study for the next promotion, to assess the competition among close colleagues, to write the unsolicited reports to get their work noticed, to research ways to improve the work process for everyone, to further their knowledge of company procedures and history.

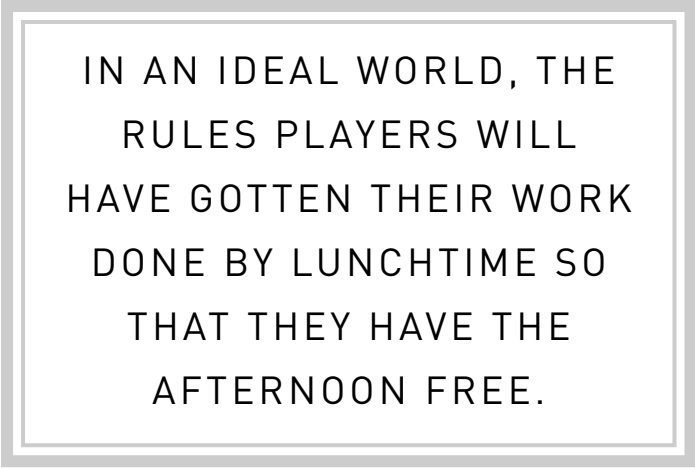
If you can't get your work done by lunchtime, then you will have to fit all these things into and around the work. What the competition will be doing is not doing them. But you don't stand still. Never accept that doing the job is enough. That's

## RULE 2

for the others. You will be moving right along preparing, studying, analyzing, and learning.

We talked earlier about the manager's walk; well, that's what you'll be doing, practicing the manager's walk—or whoever's walk it is you need to master. You have to see promotion—or whatever else it is you want—as a movement. You keep moving or you grow moss. You have to have movement or you grow stagnant. You have to like movement or you grow roots.

Movement requires of you that you don't sit on your backside and do nothing—don't stand still.



IN AN IDEAL WORLD, THE  
RULES PLAYERS WILL  
HAVE GOTTEN THEIR WORK  
DONE BY LUNCHTIME SO  
THAT THEY HAVE THE  
AFTERNOON FREE.



# Volunteer Carefully

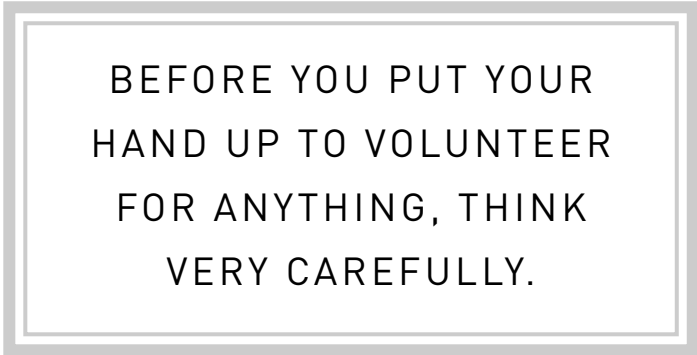
A lot of people think that if they say “yes” to everything, they will get noticed, get praised, and get promoted. Not true. The clever manager above them will use this “I’ll do it” mentality, and you will end up overworked, undervalued, and abused. Before you put your hand up to volunteer for anything, think very carefully. You have to ask yourself various questions:

- Why is this person asking for volunteers?
- How will this further my plan?
- How will I look to senior management if I volunteer?
- How will I look if I don’t volunteer?
- Is this a dirty job that no one else wants?
- Or is this person genuinely, desperately overburdened and really in need of my help?

It might well be a dirty job that no one else wants, and by volunteering you might look very good in the eyes of senior management—they think you capable of rising to a challenge, being useful, and being prepared to get your sleeves rolled up and stuck in. On the other hand, they might think you are an idiot. Or if you volunteer to do the filing, they’ll see you as a mere filing clerk. Or you might generate a load of goodwill for helping out someone in real need of support. Be careful and choose your moments. There’s no point sticking your hand up if it means you’re going to be seen as a monkey. Only take that one step forward when you are confident you will look good, gain benefit, or make a difference to someone who needs help.

## RULE 3

Also be aware that sometimes you seem to have volunteered without putting your hand up or stepping forward. It just happens that sometimes all your colleagues take a collective step backward, leaving you there out in the open seemingly volunteering when you really had no intention of doing so. The first time this happens, you will have to ride with it and do the job—but make sure it doesn't happen again—not to a Rules Player, not twice. Keep your ear better attuned next time and feel out the collective approach. Make sure you're stepping backward with the rest of them.



BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR  
HAND UP TO VOLUNTEER  
FOR ANYTHING, THINK  
VERY CAREFULLY.

# Carve Out a Niche for Yourself

I once worked with a colleague who made it a great personal skill to find out stuff about customers that we couldn't. It seemed he always knew the names of their children, where they went on vacation, their birthdays—and their spouses'—their favorite music and restaurants. Consequently, if you had to deal with a particular customer you went to Mike and asked, politely and humbly, if he could give you some little titbit that would get you well in with the customer. Mike had carved out a niche for himself. No one asked him to become a walking encyclopedia of customer likes and dislikes. It wasn't part of his job description. It took a lot of work and unseen effort. And it was a very valuable asset. It didn't take long for the regional director to hear of this extra effort Mike had put in, and his rise up the corporate ladder was swift, meteoric, unprecedented. That's all it took. I say "all," but it was in fact a lot of work and immensely clever.

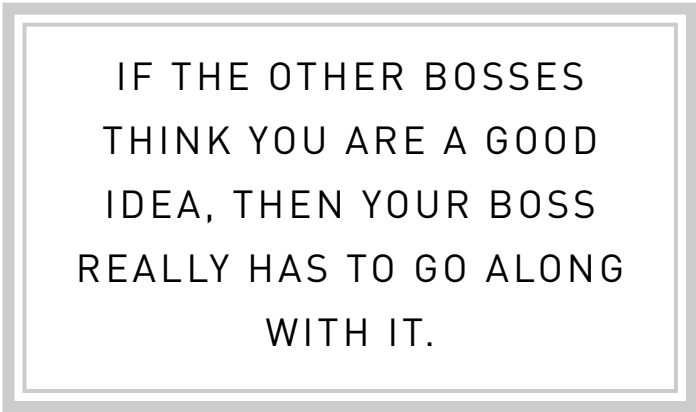
Carving out a niche means spotting a useful area that no one else has spotted. It might be as simple as being great at spreadsheets or report writing. It might be, like Mike, knowing something no one else does. It might be being brilliant with company software or budgets or understanding the system. Make sure you don't make yourself indispensable, or this rule backfires.

Carving out a niche for yourself often takes you out of the normal range of office activities. You get to move around more, be out of the office more often without having to explain to anyone where you are or what you are doing. This

## RULE 4

makes you stand out from the herd and gives you independence and a superior quality. I once volunteered to edit the company newsletter—bearing in mind the previous rule—and could wander about between our seven branches at will. Obviously, I always made sure my work was done on time and supremely well.

Carving out a niche for yourself frequently means you get noticed by people other than your boss—other people's bosses. These bosses get together and they talk. If they bring your name up it will be in a good way—"I see Rich has been busy doing some really original market analysis." This makes it difficult for your boss not to promote you if she wants to win her peer group approval. If the other bosses think you are a good idea, then your boss really has to go along with it.



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# Under Promise and Over Deliver

If you know you can do it by Wednesday, always say Friday. If you know it will take your department a week, say two. If you know it will cost an extra two people to get the new machine installed and up and running, then say three.

This isn't dishonest, merely prudent. If it gets spotted that this is what you do, then openly and honestly admit it and say you always build a contingency percentage into your calculations. They can't kill you for that.

That's the first bit. Under promise. And just because you have said Friday or two weeks or whatever doesn't mean you can coast and use up that allowance. Oh, no. What you have to do is make sure you deliver early, on budget, and better than promised. And that's the second part. Over deliver. This means if you promised to have the report finished by Monday first thing, it is finished, but not only is it a report it also contains the full implementation plans for the new premises. Or if you said you'd have the exhibition stand up and running by Sunday night with only two extra members of staff, you have—and you've managed to get your major competitor to pull out of the show. Or if you said you'd have a rough proposal written for the new company brochure by the next meeting, you not only have this but also a full color mock-up, the complete text written and proofread, all the photos taken, and full printing costs and quotes for distribution. Obviously, you've got to be careful that you don't overstep the mark and assume responsibilities you haven't been given, but I'm sure you get the idea.

## RULE 5

Again, it might be stating the obvious, but don't be too blatant when you do this or your boss will get to expect it—it should be a pleasant surprise, not a frequently used tactic.

It also helps sometimes to act dumb. You can pretend you don't really understand some new technique or software when in reality you know it back to front. Then when you suddenly do all the budgets on the spreadsheets that no one else could, you look good. If, in advance, you had said “Oh, yes, I know that, I worked with these spreadsheets at my last place,” there is no surprise, and you've given the game away—and your advantage.

When you under promise and over deliver, you have to have a bottom line—in your case, as a Rules Player, it is simply that you will *never* deliver late or deliver short. That's it. If you have to sweat blood and work all night, then so be it. You will deliver when you said you would—or earlier if you can—without exception. It is better to negotiate a longer delivery time in the first place than to have to let someone down. A lot of people are so keen to be liked, or approved of, or praised that they will agree to the first delivery time offered to them—“Oh yes, I can do that,” and then they fail. They look like pushovers in the first place and incompetent in the last.



YOU WILL *NEVER* DELIVER  
LATE OR DELIVER SHORT.