



Rules for Living and Working

What Every Civil Servant Needs to Know

or

**How to Find Peace and Sanity in an Otherwise
Dysfunctional World**

November, 2003

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Love what you do.**

Do what you love and become good at it.

- Become better than anyone else at the subjects that interest you.
- These may not be the subjects you learned at school.
- If you become the best at what you do, your skills will be in demand, and you will be able to exert influence as an expert.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Learn to write well.**

- If you speak well you can influence people directly.
- If you write concisely and powerfully, you can influence people at a distance.
- Managers don't have time to read. The higher in the bureaucracy they are, the less time they have to read, so they make decisions based on briefing notes and conversations over coffee. If you can't write a good briefing note, then the coffee conversation will prevail—even if none of the people involved understood the subject.
- It is your job to make sure the manager understands the subject in as few words as possible.
- Download or buy a copy of “The Elements of Style” by William Strunk Jr.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Remember the primary mandate of your organisation.**

- Don't forget who pays your wages—the taxpayer.
- Most government organisations provide an end product or service to the public or to a specific group of stakeholders.
- Does your organisation further this service? Does it create value? Does your part of the organisation contribute to the overall effort, and does it do so effectively?
- Sub-organisations such as Human Resources and Finance are there to support the service or program delivery. During crises some organisations act as if HR and finance are actually an end product or service. Don't get caught in this trap.
- At times large amounts of effort must be directed internally—but only to ensure that the end product is more efficiently delivered.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Remember your ethical responsibilities.**

- It is your job to implement government policies in such a manner as to preserve the public trust.
- Conduct your business in a manner as transparent to the public as your duty of confidentiality will allow.
- Deal responsibly with financial resources.
- Speak Truth to Power. You must advise senior managers honestly including advice they may not want to hear.
- Organisations themselves have no honour. It is up to you and the others in the organisation to practice honour and integrity.
- Be responsible for your own integrity--it will provide an example to others, and will preserve you when others are being toppled.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Do unto others.....**

- Deal respectfully and honourably with employees, co-workers and managers. Treat them as you would be treated yourself, without favouritism or conflict of interest.
- Loyalty and respect are two-way streets. You will not be respected yourself if you don't give respect to others. The same is true for loyalty.
- Give your best efforts to the organisation but don't overly invest your emotions. Doing so will make you vulnerable to disappointment and distress when management decisions affect you or your job. There are no guarantees that your managers will make sensible decisions or even that they will treat you with humanity.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **Don't contribute to the BIG LIE**

- Government departments can foster a Culture of Deceit.
- When confronted with adverse publicity, government organisations tend to “circle the wagons” and put a spin on “the truth”, even when it is counter-productive to do so.
- Even within government there is a tendency to keep secrets when there is no need.
- Preserving the BIG LIES (and little ones too) is not in the best interests of good government nor of you and your clients.
- You may have a duty of confidentiality in regard to certain subjects, but don't let others use you to spread falsehood--be as truthful as possible in your dealings with people.

Rules for Living and Working (continued)

□ **In change there is opportunity.**

- Times of change may be the times when your skills are most needed.
- Times of change may be the times when you can do yourself the most good.
- Greet change cheerfully and seize the opportunities.

Four Rules for Captains and Crews



Captain Kevin says;

1 - Don't sink the ship

2 - Don't kill the crew

**3&4 - Get the job done &
Have fun**

(not necessarily in that order)

- Henry Freeman was the sole survivor of the Whitby Lifeboat disaster of 1861.
- Moral: It is important to be serious about the things that count and not to worry about looking ridiculous when doing so.

Successful living requires a good sense of balance

