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RULES  
OF  
WORK**

RICHARD TEMPLAR

THE  
RULES  
OF  
WORK



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THE  
RULES  
OF  
WORK

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personal success

RICHARD TEMPLAR



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Web: www.pearson.com/uk

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First edition published 2003 (print) 2008 (electronic)

Second edition published 2010 (print)

Third edition published 2013 (print and electronic)

Fourth edition published 2013 (print and electronic)

**Fifth edition published 2022** (print and electronic)

© Pearson Education Limited 2003 (print), 2008 (electronic), 2010 (print and electronic), 2013 (print and electronic)

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ISBN: 978-1-292-43967-9 (print)

978-1-292-43969-3 (PDF)

978-1-292-43968-6 (ePub)

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for the print edition is available from the British Library

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for the print edition is available from the Library of Congress

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

26 25 24 23 22

Cover design by Nick Redeyoff

Print edition typeset in 11/13pt ITC Berkeley Oldstyle Std by Straive

Printed in the UK by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow

NOTE THAT ANY PAGE CROSS REFERENCES REFER TO THE PRINT EDITION

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



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# Acknowledgements

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 Grace Maganja

David Grigor

Frank Hull

Hubert Rau

Pawan Singh

Tina Steel

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# 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 any more).

Of course we have to do our jobs really well. There's no future for the bungler, the layabout 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 organisation. 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 organisation work. If people think you have it in you to solve the problems of the organisation 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 realised 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 organisation. 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 organisation; what it needs, and how its needs are changing, and what the organisation 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 got 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 organisation. You can't be a successful chief executive if you're surrounded by embittered, resentful and demoralised 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 organisation itself: the great danger is fossilisation, 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 of Yes Minister and Yes, Prime Minister, and*  
founder of Video Arts

# Preface

Little did I guess in 2002, when I first sat down to write *The Rules of Work*, where it would lead. It just seemed like a good idea – to set out all those unspoken Rules it takes years to learn at work, so I could give other people a short cut. Pass on what I'd picked up over many years of watching successful people negotiate their way through the obstacle courses of their careers, and make clear what it was that helped people get further, faster. I reckoned a couple of pages on each topic was all that was needed – and wanted.

I had no idea back then just how useful this would turn out to be for so many people. The book took off in a way I never imagined, becoming a bestseller across the world. Encouraged by the response to *Rules of Work*, I went on to apply the same approach to *Management*, *Life*, *Wealth*, *Love*, *Parenting*, *People*, *Thinking* and *Living Well*, and got a similar reaction. So here we are. Millions of people now own a Rules book or seven, and they've been translated into languages I didn't even know existed. Turns out that distilling down what really matters and offering a reminder, not a revelation, has proved pretty helpful to a lot of people.

How do I know this? Because readers tell me so. And that's been one of the joys of writing the Rules books – the feedback I get from people who have read them. Readers contact me with comments, suggestions, ideas, anecdotes, criticisms (yes, of course some of those, and very helpful they are too), even confessions. Not to mention tales of how the books have made a difference to them. That's been the best bit about the whole thing – finding out how people's lives have changed for the better. Hats off to anyone who can change their lives; it's harder than it sounds. But my books seem to attract a pretty amazing bunch of readers, I'm pleased to say. (Yes, I know that's blatant flattery, but it also happens to be true.)

I'd like to thank the people who made this all possible – you know who you are. Thanks also to Mike, the visionary retailer who knew what would happen before it did. Finally, my warmest thanks to all the readers who have taken the time and trouble to share their stories.

The Rules haven't changed very much over the years – though I review them regularly, it's mostly timeless wisdom that has held true for many decades before and will do so for many more. I'm looking forward to many more years of hearing from people as they discover the Rules for themselves. If you'd like to join in and post your very own Rules on my Facebook page, please do so, at [www.facebook.com/richardtemplar](http://www.facebook.com/richardtemplar)

And thank you for reading.

*Richard Templar*

# 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 practise the walk.

## Looking the part

As I spent a lot of time watching the walk I realised that there was also a manager’s style of attire, of speaking, of behaviour. 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 amongst the managers there were some who had mastered the walk, but there were others who were practising, 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 amongst the general managers there were some who were going to stay right where they were for a long time. But there were others already practising for their next step ahead – the regional director's walk. And style and image.

I switched from practising 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 cock-ups 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 afterwards 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 practising 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 per cent more work but only 20 per cent 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 practise the Rules. I formulated my plan.

What the company didn't have was a roving trouble shooter – a sort of general manager's general manager. I put Rule 4 (Carve out a niche for yourself) into play. I suggested to the company Chair 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 Chair 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 (Look after yourself: Rules 45–57). 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 on 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 pull them up on some aspect of their job. I added a new category 'If you can't say anything nice – shut up' and learnt Rules 80–88 in the section 'Cultivate diplomacy'.

## Knowing the people who count

And I quickly learnt 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 cleaners, the receptionists, the cashiers, the lift 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 university these days?'

*The Rules of Work* took shape. Over the next few years I watched them grow up, 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 behaviour 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 practising one Rule is better than none at all.
- *Is it easy to spot others doing them?* Yes, sometimes, although the really good Rules Player 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 Rules 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 utilising 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 blaggers or poseurs or bullshitters or charlatans or coasters. 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 must do if you want to read the Rules, and want to be going onwards and upwards. 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 practise 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 practising them – instinctively and intuitively. Now you will do them consciously. If you do you will:

- get promoted
- get on 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 co-operation 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.

# How to use the Rules

It can be a bit daunting to read a book with 100 Rules for a happier more successful life. I mean, where do you start? You'll probably find you follow a few of them already, but how can you be expected to learn dozens of new Rules all at once and start putting them all into practice? Don't panic, you don't have to. Remember, you don't *have* to do anything – you're doing this because you want to. Let's keep it at a manageable level so you go on wanting to.

You can go about this any way you like, but if you want advice, here's what I recommend. Go through the book and pick out three or four Rules that you feel would make a big difference to you, or that jumped out at you when you first read them, or that seem like a good starting point for you. Write them down here:

Just work on these for a couple of weeks until they've become ingrained and you don't have to try so hard with them. They've become a habit. Great stuff, well done. Now you can repeat the exercise with a few more Rules you'd like to tackle next. Write them here:

Excellent. Now you're really making progress. Keep working through the Rules at your own pace – there's no rush. And remember, I'm not the only one who can observe other people and see what works for them that could work for me too. So when you identify a Rule I haven't included here, you can include it yourself. Keep a list of additional Rules you want to emulate and write them down:

It seems a shame to keep these new Rules to yourself, so please feel free to share them with other people. If you'd like to share them on my Facebook page I'd love to hear from you: [www.facebook.com/richardtemplar](http://www.facebook.com/richardtemplar).