

Excerpted from:

The Unwritten Laws of Engineering, W.J. King, 1944

- 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 your work. No one likes a grump except another grump!
- 26: Treat the name of your 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!