

# The Secrets of Consulting – Listing of Laws, Rules and Principles

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## The Secrets of Consulting

**The Number One Secret** Consulting ain't as easy as it looks. (page 3)

**The First Law of Consulting** In spite of what your client may tell you, there's always a problem. (page 5)

**The Second Law of Consulting** No matter how it looks at first, it's always a people problem. (page 5)

**The Third Law of Consulting** Never forget they're paying you by the hour, not by the solution. (page 5)

**The Ten Percent Promise Law** Never promise more than ten percent improvement. (page 6)

**The Ten Percent Solution Law** If you happen to achieve more than ten percent improvement, make sure it isn't noticed. (page 6)

**The Lone Ranger Fantasy** When the clients don't show their appreciation, pretend that they're stunned by your performance - but never forget that it's your fantasy, not theirs. (page 8)

**The Fourth Law of Consulting** If they didn't hire you, don't solve their problem. (page 9)

**The Credit Rule** You'll never accomplish anything if you care who gets the credit. (page 8)

**The Law of Raspberry Jam** The wider you spread it, the thinner it gets. (page 11) Influence or affluence; take your choice. (page 11)

**Weinbergs' Law of Twins** Most of the time, for most of the world, no matter how hard people work at it, nothing of any significance happens. (page 13)

**Rudy's Rutabaga Rule** Once you eliminate your number one problem, number two gets a promotion. (page 15)

**The Hard Law** If you can't accept failure, you'll never succeed as a consultant. (page 16)

**The Hard Law, Inverted** Some people do succeed as consultants, so it must be possible to deal with failure. (page 16)

**The Harder Law** Once you eliminate your number one problem, YOU promote number two. (page 17)

**The Hardest Law** Helping myself is even harder than helping others. (page 18)

**The Tradeoff Treatment** You don't get nothin' for nothin'. (page 24) Moving in one direction incurs a cost in the other. (page 27)

**Fisher's Fundamental Theorem** The better adapted you are, the less adaptable you tend to be. (page 30)

**The Third-Time Charm** Consultants tend to be the most effective on the third problem you give them. (page 32)

**The Orange Juice Test** "We can do it - and this is how much it will cost." (page 33)

**The First Law of Engineering** If it ain't broke, don't fix it. (page 39)

**Marvin's First Great Secret** Ninety percent of all illness cures itself - with absolutely no intervention from the doctor. (page 38) Deal gently with systems that should be able to cure themselves. (page 39)

**Marvin's Second Great Secret** Repeatedly curing a system that can cure itself will eventually create a system that can't. (page 41)

**Marvin's Third Great Secret** Every prescription has two parts: the medicine and the method of ensuring correct use. (page 40)

**Marvin's Fourth Great Secret** Whatever the client is doing, advise something else. (page 7) If what they've been doing hasn't solved the problem, tell them to do something else. (page 41)

**Marvin's Fifth Great Secret** Make sure they pay you enough so they'll do what you say. (page 41) The most important act in consulting is setting the right fee. (page 41)

**Marvin's Sixth Great Secret** Know-how pay much less than know-when. (page 42)

**The Bolden Rule** If you can't fix it, feature it. (page 43)

**The Gilded Rule** If you can't feature it, fake it. (page 48)

**The Inverse Gilded Rule** If something's faked, it must need fixing. (page 49)

**The Law of the Hammer** The child who receives a hammer for Christmas will discover that everything needs pounding. (page 53)

**The White Bread Warning** If you use the same recipe, you get the same bread. (page 56)

**Boulding's Backward Basis** Things are the way they are because they got that way. (page 58)

**Spark's Law of Problem Solution** The chances of solving a problem decline the closer you get to finding out who was the cause of the problem. (page 58)

**Study guides** Keep it simple and not too detailed; you're a consultant, not a district attorney. (page 58) Study for understanding, not for criticism. (page 59) Look for what you like in the present situation, and comment on it. (page 59)

**The Why Whammy** We may run out of energy, or air, or water, or food, but we'll never run out of reasons. (page 62)

**The Label Law** Most of us buy the label, not the merchandise. (page 64) The name of the thing is not the thing. (page 64)

**The Three-Finder Rule** When you point a finger at someone, notice where the other three fingers are pointing. (page 66)

**The Five-Minute Rule** Clients always know how to solve their problems, and always tell the solution in the first five minutes. (page 67)

**The Level Law** Effective problem-solvers may have many problems, but rarely have a single, dominant problem. (page 72)

**Weinberg's Law of Fetch** Sometimes farfetched is only shortsighted. (page 80)

**The Rule of Three** If you can't think of three things that might go wrong with your plans, then there's something wrong with your thinking. (page 81)

**The Incongruence Insight** When words and music don't go together, they point to a missing element. (page 84)

**Brown's Brilliant Bequest** Words are often useful, but it always pays to listen to the music (especially your own internal music). (page 85)

**The Main Maxim** What you don't know may not hurt you, but what you don't remember always does. (page 92)

**The Potato Chip Principle** If you know your audience, it's easy to set triggers. (page 93)

**The Titanic Effect** The thought that disaster is impossible often leads to an unthinkable disaster. (page 95)

**The Law of the Jiggle** Less is more. (page 113)

**Weinbergs' Law of Twins, Inverted** Some of the time, in some places, significant change happens - especially when people aren't working hard at it. (page 123)

**Prescott's Pickle Principle** Cucumbers get more pickled than brine gets cucumbered. (page 125) A small system that tries to change a big system through long and continued contact is more likely to be changed itself. (page 125)

**Roamer's Rule** Struggling to stay at home can make you a wanderer. (page 127)

**Romer's Rule** The best way to lose something is to struggle to keep it. (page 128)

**Homer's Rule** Struggling to travel can make you a stay-at-home. (page 128)

**The Fast-Food Fallacy** No difference plus no difference plus no difference plus... eventually equals a clear difference. (page 131)

**Halstead's variation** The biggest and longest lasting changes usually originate in attempts to preserve the very thing that ultimately changes most. (page 132)

**Ford's Fundamental Feedback Formula** People can take any amount of water from any stream to use for any purpose desired. People must return an equal amount of water upstream from the point from which they took it. (page 133)

**The Weinberg Test** Would you place your own life in the hands of this system? (page 135)

**The New Law** Nothing new ever works. (page 141)

**Pandora's Pox** Nothing new ever works, but there's always hope that this time will be different. (page 142)

**The Dealer's Choice** Let them try whatever they like, but teach them how to protect themselves. (page 143) Always trust your client – and cut the cards. (page 200)

**The Edsel Edict** If you must have something new, take one, not two. (page 145)

**The Volkswagen Verity** If you can't refuse it, defuse it. (page 146)

**The Time Bomb** Time wounds all heels. (page 147) The surest way to waste time is to throw caution to the winds. (page 147)

**Rhonda's First Revelation** It may look like a crisis, but it's only the end of an illusion. (page 149)

**Rhonda's Second Revelation** When change is inevitable, we struggle most to keep what we value most. (page 150)

**Rhonda's Third Revelation** When you create an illusion, to prevent or soften change, the change becomes more likely - and harder to take. (page 151)

**The Buffalo Bridle** You can make buffalo go anywhere just so long as they want to go there. (page 160)

**The First Law of Marketing** A consultant can exist in one of two states: State I (idle) and State B (busy). (page 170)

**The Second Law of Marketing** The best way to get clients is to have clients. (page 170)

**The Third Law of Marketing** Spend at least one day a week getting exposure. (page 171)

**The Fourth Law of Marketing** Clients are more important to you than you can ever be to them. (page 172)

**The Fifth Law of Marketing** Never let a single client have more than one-fourth of your business. (page 173)

**The Sixth Law of Marketing** The best marketing tool is a satisfied client. (page 170)

**The Seventh Law of Marketing** Give away your best ideas. (page 176)

**The Eighth Law of Marketing** It tastes better when you add your own egg. (page 177)

**The Ninth Law of Marketing** Spend at least one-fourth of your time doing nothing. (page 177)

**The Tenth Law of Marketing** Market for quality, not quantity. (page 179)

**Lynne's Law of Life** To be able to say yes to yourself as a consultant, be able to say no to any of your clients. (page 174)

**The Duncan Hines Difference** It tastes better when you add your own egg. (page 177)

**Charlotte's Law** Market for quality, not quantity. (page 179)

**The First Law of Pricing** Pricing has many functions, only one of which is the exchange of money. (page 184)

**The Second Law of Pricing** The more they pay you, the more they love you. (page 184)  
The less they pay you, the less they respect you. (page 184)

**The Third Law of Pricing** The money is usually the smallest part of the price. (page 185)

**The Fourth Law of Pricing** Pricing is not a zero-sum game. (page 186)

**The Fifth Law of Pricing** If you need the money, don't take the job. (page 187)

**The Sixth Law of Pricing** If they don't like your work, don't take their money. (page 188)

**The Seventh Law of Pricing** Money is more than price. (page 188)

**The Eighth Law of Pricing** Price is not a thing, it's a negotiated relationship. (page 189)

**The Ninth Law of Pricing** Set the price so you won't regret it either way. (page 190); see also *The Principle of Least Regret*.

**The Tenth Law of Pricing** All prices are ultimately based on feelings, both yours and theirs. (page 191)

**The Principle of Least Regret** Set the price so you won't regret it either way. (page 190); see also *The Ninth Law of Pricing*

**The First Law of Trust** Nobody but you cares about the reason you let them down. (page 196)

**The Second Law of Trust** Trust takes years to win, moments to lose. (page 197)

**The Third Law of Trust** People don't tell you when they stop trusting you. (page 197)

**The Fourth Law of Trust** The trick of earning trust is to avoid all tricks. (page 198)

**The Fifth Law of Trust** People are never liars – in their own eyes. (page 200)

**The Sixth Law of Trust** Always trust your client - and cut the cards. (page 200)

**The Seventh Law of Trust** Never be dishonest, even if the client requests it. (page 202)

**The Eighth Law of Trust** Never promise anything. (page 203)

**The Ninth Law of Trust** Always keep your promise. (page 203)

**The Tenth Law of Trust** Get it in writing, but depend on trust. (page 204)

**Lessons from the Farm** Never use cheap seed. (page 209) A prepared soil is the secret of all gardening. (page 209) Timing is critical. (page 209) The plants that hold firmest are the ones that develop their own roots. (page 210) Excessive watering produces weakness, not strength. (page 210) In spite of your best efforts, some plants will die. (page 210)

## More Secrets of Consulting

**The Law of Raspberry Jam** The wider you spread it, the thinner it gets. (page 2)

**The Law of Strawberry Jam** As long as it has lumps, you can never spread it too thin. (page 3)

**The Law of Grape Jelly** Nobody ever bothers to complain about grape jelly. If you don't expect too much, you'll never be disappointed. (page 4)

**The Lump Law** If we want to learn anything, we mustn't try to learn everything. (page 4)

**Redding's Reading Rule** Never read anything that isn't worth reading. (page 12)

**Cary's Crap Caution** Anything not worth doing is not worth doing right, or, Never gift wrap garbage. (page 13)

**Freeble's Feeling Filter** Anything I shouldn't be doing, I shouldn't be doing. Period. (page 14)

**The Rule of Restrained Rationality** Don't be rational; be reasonable. Not everything that sounds wise is wise. (page 16)

**The Antiseptic Absurdity** If it hurts, it must be good for you. Good food takes time. If they tell you it *must* be good for you because it hurts, get yourself a different consultant. (page 17)

**The Mercenary Maxim** One of the best ways to lose lots of money is to do something only for the money. (page 18)

**The Sucker Syndrome** It's easiest to fool the people who know everything. (page 18)

**The Main Maxim** What you don't know may not hurt you, but what you don't remember always does. (page 19)

**The Fast-Food Fallacy** No difference plus no difference plus no difference plus... eventually equals a clear difference. (page 19)

**Polanski's Pointer** If they're *absolutely sure* it's not there, it's probably there. (page 24)

**Polanski's Personal Pointer** Whenever you believe that a subject has nothing for you, it probably has something for you. (page 25)

**The Golden Lock** I'd like to learn something new, but what I already know pays too well. (page 25)

**Dani's Decider** When you stop learning new things, it's time to move on. (page 26)

**The Coward's Credo** Courage is not a feeling, but an outer appearance. (page 35)

**The Fraidycat Formula** If your fear of doing A is greater than your fear of doing B, then you do B. (page 37)

**Loftus' Law** Some people manage by the book, even though they don't know who wrote the book or even which book it is. (page 40)

**Marvin's Fourth Great Secret** Whatever the client is doing, advise something else. (page 41)

**The Dismal Theorem of Middlemen** Negotiating the heck out of a deal with middlemen is unlikely to improve your situation, because *they're professionals and you're an amateur*. (page 51)

- The Utterly Dismal Theorem of Middlemen** The harder you try to improve your contract by getting a good negotiator as your middlemen, the worse it gets. (page 51)
- The Happy Theorem** Regardless of the agency's cut, if you're unhappy, they're impoverished. (page 52)
- The Ultimately Dismal Theorem** If you don't know what you want, you're not very likely to get it. (page 55)
- The Railroad Paradox** Because the service is bad, the request for better service is denied. (page 60)
- The Railroad Counter-Paradox** When service is too good, the suppliers may never hear about it, and thus they drop the service. (page 60)
- The Housewife Assumption** Don't assume that your clients have nothing better to do than wait by the phone for your call. (page 61)
- The Hypotenuse Hypothesis** When a triangle separates you from your data, choose the hypotenuse. (pages 63, 88)
- The Law of the Hammer** The child who receives a hammer for Christmas will discover that everything needs pounding. (page 63)
- Weiner's Law of Libraries** There are no answers, only cross-references. (page 64)
- LeGuin's Law** When action grows unprofitable, gather information. When information grows unprofitable, sleep. (page 64)
- Crisis Bias** When in danger or in doubt, run in circles, scream, and shout. (page 64)
- The Detective's First Rule** When you're looking for problems, don't be mesmerized by the first one you find. (page 66)
- The Detective's Second Rule** If you're shot dead and stabbed dead, you're no more dead than if you're just shot dead. (page 67)
- The Nedlog Rule** As they do unto others, they will eventually do unto you. (page 67)
- The Detective's Third Rule** Get the information you need from the questions they ask you. (page 68)
- The Detective's Fourth Rule** If you can't understand where the questions are coming from, they're probably coming from an agenda someone doesn't want you to know about. (page 69)
- Sherby's Fourth Law** If you're using anything more than fourth-grade arithmetic, you're probably doing it wrong! (page 71)



**The Ted Williams Principle** If you don't think too good, don't think too much. (page 71)

**The Detective's Fifth Rule** Confusion favors the established order, so use your confusion to find the culprit. (page 72)

**Satir's Soft Spurn** (page 77)

1. Show genuine appreciation, in words, tone, and body language.
2. Give a regretful, but clear, no, without excuses.
3. Indicate an opening to some other relationship in the future.

**Gordon's Law of First Consulting** Don't say yes to a client's first offer, but never say no. (page 78)

**Matthew's Yea/Nay Signal** Honest, reliable people don't need to qualify their yeas and nays with declarations of their honesty and reliability, and everyone instinctively knows this. (page 79)

**The Goody Goody Guide** If you must have everyone like you, get out of the consulting business. (page 81)

**The Human Hypotenuse Hypothesis** When one person, C, separates your heart, A, from another's, B, choose the shortest path between A and B. (page 88)

**The As-If Technique** If you *did* have feelings, what would they be like? What kinds of feelings do you think other people have? (pages 90-91)

**The Parallel Paradox** If you're too much like your clients, you don't attract them; if you're too different, you frighten them away. (page 91)

**The Heart Test** If you don't care about them or their problems, don't consult for them. (page 94)

**The Life Law** Better to live succeeding than to die trying. (page 94)

**The Informed Heart Test** If someone requires you to die trying to help them, you don't want to help them. (page 94)

**The Three-Finger Rule** When you point a finger at someone, notice where the other three fingers are pointing. (page 96)

**Monica's Marvelous Mirror** Negotiating a contract is a marvelous opportunity for both parties to take a good look at themselves. (page 98)

**Sweeny's Teeny Weeny Signature Statute** If you want a meaningful commitment, don't whine, sign. (page 100)

**The Helpful Model** No matter how it looks, everyone is trying to be helpful. (page 101)

**Carl's Constructive Corollary** Use feedback as a reminder, not a reproach. (page 101)

**Secret Number One** There are no secrets. Everyone can observe human behavior. (page 103)

**Satir's Three Universal Questions** (page 104)

- How do I happen to be here? (Past)
- How do I feel about being here? (Present)
- What would I like to have happen? (Future)

**Kenny's Law of Auto Repair** The part requiring the most consistent repair or replacement will be housed in the most inaccessible location. (page 102)

**The Response Pattern** Center, enter, turn. (page 112)

**The Telescope Focusing List** (pages 113-114)

1. Centering
2. Environment
3. Recording
4. Resemblance
5. Projecting
6. Pigeonhole
7. Mind Reading
8. History
9. Hearsay
10. Sharing

**The Data Question** What specifically did I see or hear that gave me that impression of this person? (page 114)

**Isabelle's Initial Indication** You never start with a blank slate. (page 117)

**The Law of Unavoidably Messy Peculiarity** One person's help is another's hardship. One person's lump is another person's lumps. (page 118)

**The First Law of Bad Management** When something isn't working, do more of it. (page 121)

**The First Law of Bad Consulting** When something isn't working, do more of it. (page 121)

**The First Law of Good Consulting** When something isn't working, do something else. (page 121)

**Don's Deviance Derivation** If it's too regular, it's not an observation; it's a formulation. (page 122)

**Sparks's Law of Problem Solution** The chances of solving a problem decline the closer you get to finding out who was the cause of the problem. (page 124)

**The Background Blindfold** The fish is always the last to see the water. (page 125)

**The Foreground Fantasy** The fish is always the first to notice the air. (page 126)

**Boulding's Backward Basis** Things are the way they are because they got that way. (page 127)

**The Five-Minute Rule** Clients always know how to solve their problems, and always tell the solution in the first five minutes. (page 127)

**Brown's Brilliant Bequest** Words are often useful, but it always pays to listen to the music (especially your own internal music). (page 128)

**The Incongruence Insight** When words and music don't go together, they point to a missing element. (page 130)

**The Inverse Gilded Rule** If something's faked, it must need fixing. (page 131)

**The Crooked Channel Cleanser** When you're having trouble understanding what you're receiving, first check that your channel is congruent. (page 132)

**The Perfect Poise Paradox** If you want to stay incongruent, try to be perfectly congruent. (page 137)

**The Body-Brain Behest** Trust your body, then your brain. (page 140)

**Parson's Peculiarity Principle** If they're acting peculiarly, maybe they're reacting to something peculiar; maybe it's me. (page 141)

**Satir's Win/Lose/Learn Principle** If you're congruent, you might win, or you might lose, but you can always learn. (page 147)

**Mana Model** Certain people have big magic (mana) and certain people don't. (page 147)

**The Qualified-but-Quiet Quandary** The more congruent you become, the more you have to watch what you say. (page 147)

**Starr's Surrogate Syndrome** No matter how much you or they would like it, you can't be congruent for someone else. (page 148)

**Knaomi's Knowledge Knockout** Experience is not just the best teacher, it's the only teacher. Experience may be the only teacher, but it doesn't necessarily teach anything. (page 149)

**Clarke's Third Law** Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. (page 154)

**The Magic Double Bind** If its indistinguishable from magic, how do I know it won't go away next time? (page 154)

**The Choice Charm** People are there because they have chosen to be there. (page 156)

**Fanny's Frowning Fatalism** In the end, nothing matters. (page 159)

**Felicity's Feather Philosophy** Since nothing matters in the end, it doesn't matter if I pretend that it does matter. Since nothing matters in the end, it doesn't even matter if I pretend I'm not pretending. (page 160)

**Pandora's Pox** Nothing new ever works, but there's always hope that this time will be different. (page 163)

**The Time Wasters** (pages 163-166)

- Confusion wastes time.
- Haste wastes time. Trust is a substitute for time. So is money, if used properly.
- Jumping to conclusions wastes time; so does blame.
- Computers can waste time; backups can save it.
- It's not the time off that wastes time; it's the lack of planning.
- Slack saves time; so does depending on dependable others.
- Indoctrinating new people takes time, but it's not wasted time.
- Testing may seem costly in terms of time, but if done well, and early, it saves more than it costs.
- Training is another one of those activities that seems to cost time, but actually saves time - if done early.
- Errors waste time.
- Impatience wastes time; so does failure to accept reality.
- It's not that the project doesn't fit the plan, it's that the plan doesn't fit the project.
- Poor structures waste time; so do unreasonable expectations.
- Time saved by failing to live up to your principles is not time saved at all; in fact, it leads to a wasted life.
- Reasonableness saves enormous amounts of time.
- Money may not be able to buy happiness, but it can buy reliability, which can buy time.

**Jerry's Iron Rule of Project Life** It always takes longer. (page 167)

**The Time Bomb** Time wounds all heels. (page 168)

**Norie's Neat Nostrum** There's no such thing as quick and dirty; if you want a quick job, make it a neat job. (page 168)

**Leo's Lazy Law** Never do today what might not have to be done tomorrow; in fact never even think about doing it. (page 170)

**Getting the Most Out of Chaos** (pages 180-181)

- Value yourself, your beliefs, and your ideas.
- Trust yourself.
- Know yourself and your personal style and preferences.
- Practice self-care.
- Take a break.
- Actively seek the support you need from others.
- Respect your need for meaningful, appropriate, and nourishing reinforcement.
- Remind yourself of your successes.
- Recognize your boredom as Old Status Quo - and then move on.
- Ask for emotional support when you need it.
- Cultivate and cherish the Chaos in which you find yourself.
- Seek out new ideas - the wilder the better.
- Learn something new, add it to all the other things you know, and try it with a client.