The 48 Laws of Power for Virtuous Leaders

The Power Moves | 16 August, 2019 | by Lucio Buffalmano

I am somewhat at odds with "The 48 Laws of Power".

To begin with, I am not a fan of total amorality and power purely for power's sake.

Why?

Because **power purely for power's sake makes for toxic personalities**, <u>toxic relationships</u>, and a toxic world.

And, unless you're totally amoral and unemotional, it makes for a poorer quality of life for yourself, too.

If you aspire to be a leader and a <u>high-quality man</u>, I also find it hard to separate power and leadership from ethics, morals, and virtues.

When you're a leader, it's not just about you, but also about what your followers think of you.

And from a social science point of view, I can tell you that **people prefer leaders with strong values and ethics**. These are the types of leaders that they look up to.

Hence, ethics and morals are embedded in strong leadership.

So let's review the new "48 Laws of Leadership":

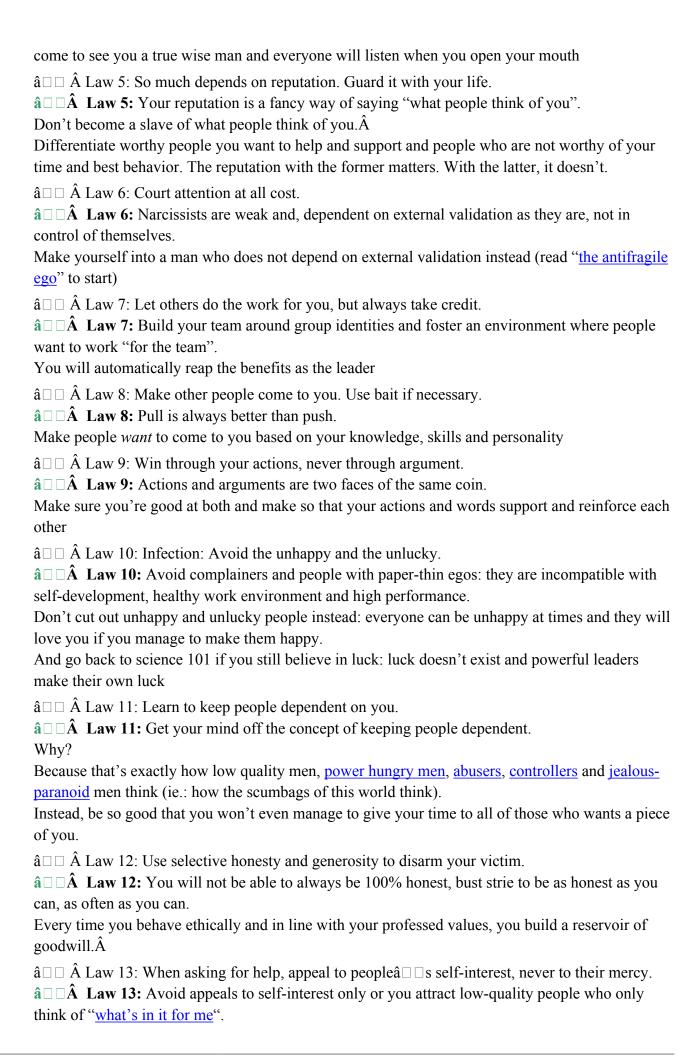
Contents

- The Updated 48 Laws of Power for Ethical Leaders
- Is Moral Leadership Less Effective?
- SUMMARY

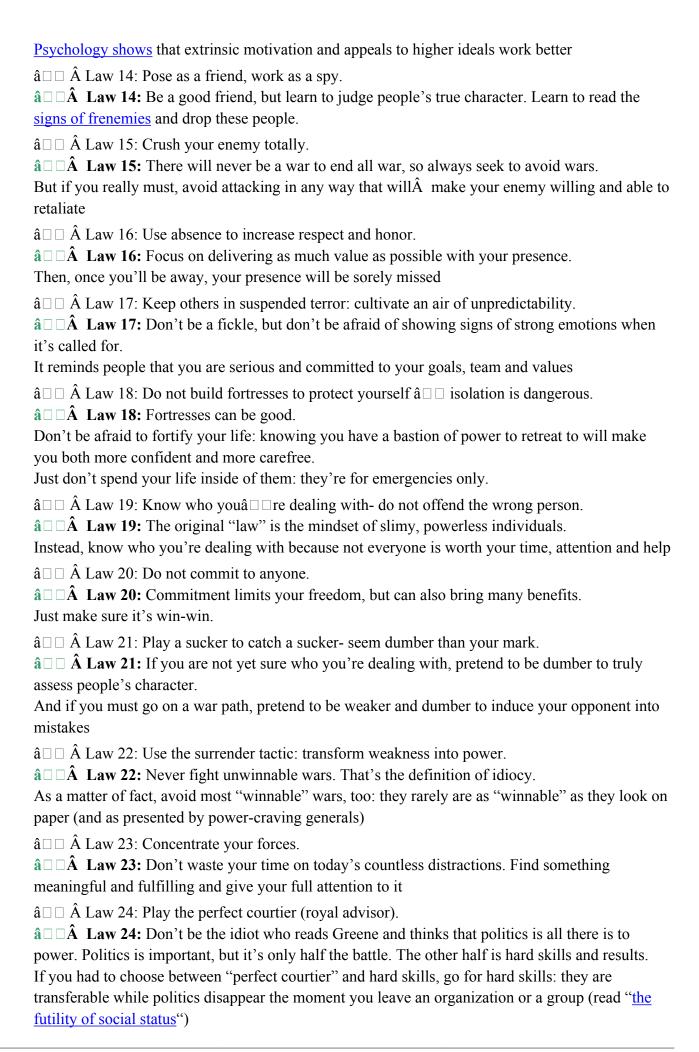
The Updated 48 Laws of Power for Ethical Leaders

â □ □ A Law 1: Never outshine the master
$\hat{\mathbf{a}} \square \hat{\mathbf{A}}$ Law 1: Respect your mentors and stick with them as long as you are learning from them
and they are great role models.Â
If you're not learning and if they're not role models, move past because you're wasting your life
working for poor leaders.
â□□ Â Law 2: Never put too much trust in friends, learn to use enemies.
$\hat{\mathbf{a}} \square \hat{\mathbf{A}}$ Law 2: Give enough trust to people that they feel empowered, but not enough that they could take you and your team down.
Most of all, learn to tell apart trustworthy individuals from <u>toxic ones</u> and make sure you only have trustworthy ones around
 â□□ Â Law 3: Conceal your intentions. â□□Â Law 3: You will rarely be able to be honest 100% of the times, but that's not an excuse not to try to be as honest as possible.
Most people can smell fakeness and lies anyway.
Solution?
Strive to align your values, words and actions so that you can act, be and slowly become a man of
honor
â□□ Â Law 4: Always say less than necessary.
$\hat{\mathbf{a}} \square \hat{\mathbf{A}}$ Law 4: Speak only when needed and when you can add real value. That way, people will

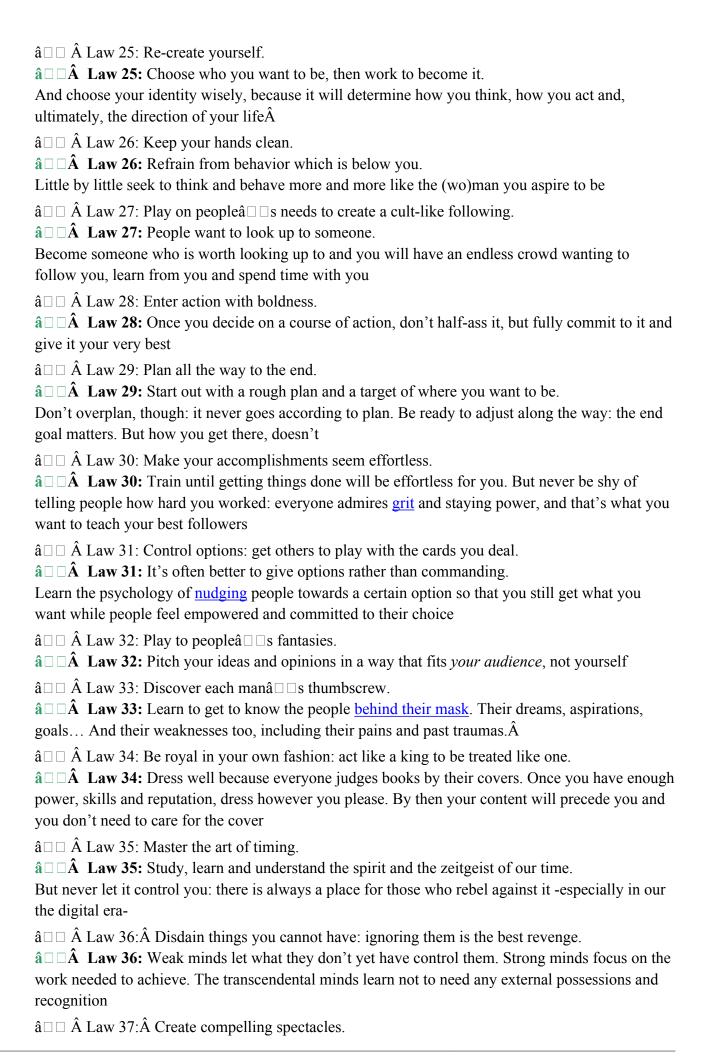
<u>www.TheRedArchive.com</u> Page 1 of 7



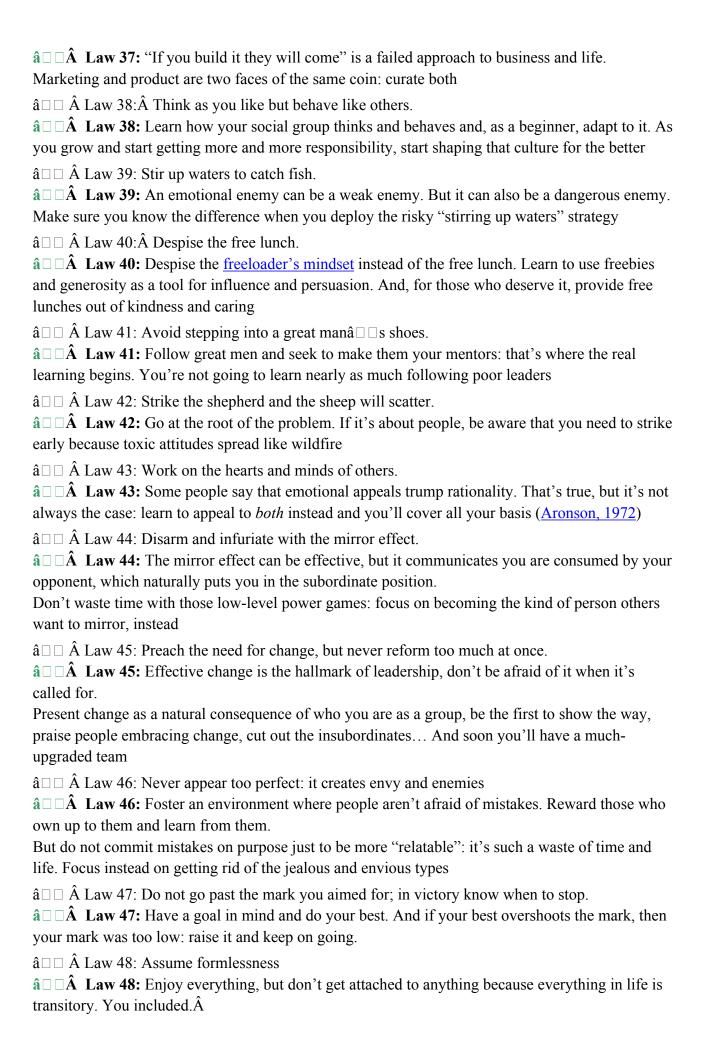
<u>www.TheRedArchive.com</u> Page 2 of 7



<u>www.TheRedArchive.com</u> Page 3 of 7



www.TheRedArchive.com Page 4 of 7



www.TheRedArchive.com Page 5 of 7

Is Moral Leadership Less Effective?

Let me preface this:

It's difficult to answer such a general question in a short format.

And this is not the place for moralism, so let me also say this right away: sometimes, amoral leadership might provide an edge (.

However, contrary to what many readers of "The 48 Laws of Power" or "The Prince" might think, it's not true that amoral leadership is always superior.

<u>Frans de Waal</u>'s research among chimpanzees shows that alpha male ape Yeroen remained in power, not through aggression and strength, but thanks to his social intelligence and *his ability to foster peace and harmony*.

What was remarkable is that in peacekeeping and breaking fights, Yeroen didn't let his own friendships get in the way.Â

And that's exactly what gave him a superior moral edge: he was a true impartial judge working for the good of the group, not in support of his cronies.

Chimpanzees are also more combative and aggressive than humans, so that is likely even more true among humans than among chipanzees.

Indeed, as Miller says in "<u>The Mating Mind</u>": "Status based on moral leadership is a legacy of the great apes", and we only must look at ourselves to know it's true: we all admire and love an impartial leader who works for the group.

So yes: moral leadership can work great.

No leader has any excuse to be an ahole.

SUMMARY

"The 48 Laws of Power" is a good text to learn more about power.

But it deals mostly with micro-level expressions of power and its laws are not generalizable.

Furthermore, it boasts its amorality as proof of being "real-world".

But that's how cynics think, and it's not necessarily how real life works.

Indeed cynics often fail in their quest for power and they never make for great leaders.

If you want to become a better person, including a more powerful person, then ethics and morals should be part of the mix.

And even if you want to do completely without ethics and morals, "The 48 Laws of Power" is a poor text for leadership. Especially for leadership in democratic environments where people have a choice and can vote you out of power with their ballots, or with their feet.

This article quickly revisits the laws not only adding more ethics, but also adding more real-world wisdom.

Also read:

- The 13 laws of leadership
- How to be a great manager
- The updated 48 Laws of Power (Part II & Part III)

<u>www.TheRedArchive.com</u> Page 6 of 7

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<u>www.TheRedArchive.com</u> Page 7 of 7