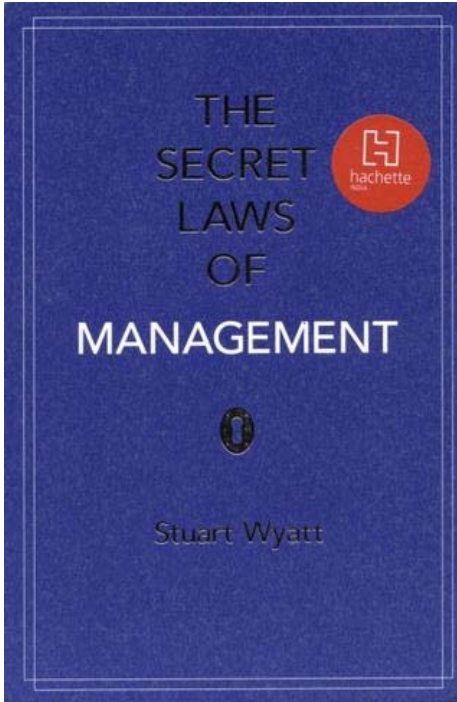


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### A ready toolkit for managers

D. Murali



*The Hindu* Title: The Secrets Laws of Management, 40 Essentials truth for Managers. Author: Stuart Wyati. Photo: Special Arrangement  
 Sample these statements: Work expands to fill the time available. Most people hate being organised. Productivity is a natural trait. All bullies eventually suffer their just rewards. The team does not judge you by your best or worst performances. Energy levels rise and fall with expectation. There is often an unfair time delay between effort and reward...

These are some of the '40 essential truths for managers' that Stuart Wyatt discusses in "The Secret Laws of Management" (Hachette). Each law presents a common or inescapable challenge that managers must face, the author notes in the intro. Failing to recognise and handle the challenge would lead to one or more problems, including reduced productivity, discord among team members and the manager's life at work becoming most disagreeable, he cautions.

Take for instance 'law 8' that says, 'People are outrageously optimistic when they estimate time,' especially in the case of unfamiliar tasks. A simple thumb-rule for managers, therefore, is to double the most pessimistic time estimate when the team is on a job for the first time.

#### **First fifteen minutes**

Another time-related law is that inertia sets in after only 15 minutes. "Observe that when the team arrives each day to commence work, the first 15 minutes make a big impact upon the mood for the entire morning, perhaps even the whole day," reads a do-able exercise for managers.

So, how does the first quarter of an hour go, in most office settings? Over a leisurely coffee while swapping pleasant social banter, such as, 'Did you see so-and-so on TV last night?' or short discussion about sport, movies, the commute and so on.

Well, what is wrong with starting the day in a relaxed frame of mind, you may protest? Unfortunately, this relaxed atmosphere fosters a low productivity situation that lingers on, rues Wyatt. Once the mood is set, it requires a blast of incoming phone calls, or an immediate crisis, or someone displaying effervescent enthusiasm to break the inertia and set a new tempo, he reasons. "On the other hand, if the team uses the first few minutes of the day to move quickly from polite chat to productive action, then this day inevitably proves to be a great day for getting things done."

#### **Say NO to interruptions**

If, at the end of a typical work day, you feel that it was one long series of interruptions so much so that the bulk of the work planned for the day remains uncompleted, 'law 3' offers assistance by stating, 'People don't say NO to interruptions often enough.' While some interruptions can be urgent and important situations that you need to deal with immediately, watch out for situations where people are relying on easy access to your knowledge, too lazy to

invest time in learning, the author guides.

“Many interruptions will be downright time-wasters. Occasionally, team members will interrupt you to seek your approval before they act, rather than have the confidence to make their own decision, or take personal responsibility.”

But why is it that many of us accept interruptions without first pausing to think? Because we often feel the rapidity of the day’s events prevents us from pausing long enough to take time to consider how we should react, explains Wyatt.

“It seems quicker to accept the interruption and quickly deal with it, and then we find ourselves dragged into countless minor issues, all eating up our day until we have achieved very little.”

When faced with an interruption, pause for a split second and ask yourself if you need to act now, act later, or act never, he advises. The first category demands that you accept the interruption; the second category calls for scheduling the task; and the ‘NO’ has to come up for the final category.

Saying NO wisely can teach your team members to be more independent and more productive, and it can be the most effective response, too, the author instructs.

Imperative study.

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