



UNWRITTEN RULES IN THE WORKPLACE

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About Catalyst



Our VISION

Changing workplaces.
Changing lives.

Our MISSION

Expanding opportunities
for women and business

Our VALUES

Connect
Engage
Inspire
Impact

CATALYST

Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business.

Today's focus



- Top barriers to women's advancement
- Exploring the unwritten rules – Key findings from Catalyst research
- Learning the unwritten rules
 - What can you do? What can leaders do?
 - What can organizations do?

Pause Point



What do the “unwritten rules” mean to you?

What are some examples of “unwritten rules” in your own organization?

Top Barriers



Whether we cut our data by industry, job function, or over time, the finding is the same: barriers to women's career advancement persist.

Top barriers include:

1. Stereotypes about women as leaders
2. Lack of access to role models
3. Limited access to the right networks

Exclusion from Informal Networks



Relationships impact performance decisions

Advancement comes from:

- “Who you know and who knows you”
- “Poker or basketball on weekends... after a management meeting, a cigar bar”
- “Networking—inside and outside the company”
- “Somebody watching out for you”

Catalyst Studies on Unwritten Rules To Advancement

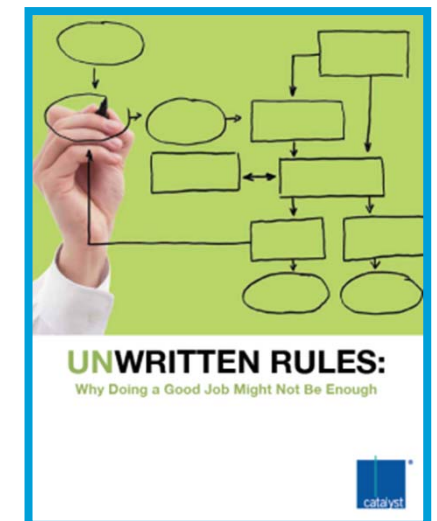
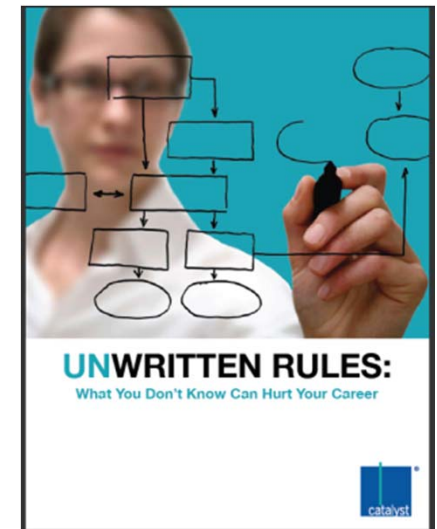


Study 1 - What You Don't Know Can Hurt Your Career

- 65 women and men from different industries and roles
- 30-minute semi-structured phone interviews
- Analyses: Qualitative, theme analyses

Study 2 - Why Doing a Good Job Might Not Be Enough

- 686 women and men from different industries and roles
 - 58% women, 42% men
 - 50% white, 50% people of color
 - 54% U.S. & Canada, 46% Continental Europe, U.K., & Other
- Online questionnaire
- Analyses: Quantitative, group comparisons



Exploring the Unwritten Rules



- Rules to Advancement: Realities
 - Some rules explicit in handbooks, policies, and procedures; others *implicit* (and unwritten) for employees to figure out on their own
 - Employees often learn unwritten rules through informal communication and networks

Exploring the Unwritten Rules



- Rules to Advancement: Challenges
 - Not conveyed as consistently as formalized work competencies
 - Not equally accessible to all employees
 - “Old” unwritten rules difficult to change, even when policies and procedures have

Pause Point



Please think of one specific person who is starting their career at your company—have that person pictured in your head.

What is one point of guidance you would offer to help this person be successful in their career and specifically in your company?

Catalyst Studies:

Participant Responses



We asked participants to identify examples of “unwritten rules”—defined as workplace norms and behaviors that are not communicated in an explicit or formalized way, but that clearly play a role in developing career and advancement opportunities.

Participant Responses



Behaviors and Actions	Individual Skills & Characteristics
Network and build relationships within and outside of the organization (71%)	Articulate, good communicator, influential (52%)
Find ways to become visible (51%)	"Agentic" (42%)
Play politics and lobby for yourself and your work (45%)	A team player, works well with others (37%)
Communicate effectively and ask for lots of feedback (43%)	"Fits in" with the organizational culture (32%)
Perform well, produce results (35%)	Knowledgeable, competent (32%)
Find a mentor, coach, sponsor (32%)	Energetic, works a lot (31%)
Work long hours (29%)	Strategic, savvy (26%)
Develop a good career plan (20%)	"Communal" (22%)

Types of Unwritten Rules: Summary



- Building Relationships
- Communication & Feedback
- Visibility
- Career Development
- Performance & Results
- Time-related Strategies
 - Working long hours
 - Putting in “face time”
 - Expressing the willingness to work long hours

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Building relationships

“Building relationships is key...[connect] with people inside and outside the company, instead of just doing the work.”

- Networks
- Affinity Groups
- Mentors
- Sponsors

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Communication & feedback

“Tell them what you are interested in doing next. Because if you don’t speak up, no one will know.”

- Effectively give and receive feedback
- Proactively ask *the right* questions
- Speak up with what you want

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Make yourself and your work visible

“Seek out more assignments and projects and be there for the company, become involved.”

- Take on a stretch role
- Consider the social side of work
- Vocalize and share your successes

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Career development

“Build on a variety of experiences, including skills that you can transfer.”

- Define your career goals early
- “Do your homework”: Find out what paths and career progressions lead to leadership roles within the organization
- Find out what the “ideal worker” norm is at the organization

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Exceed performance expectations (Performance & Results)
“Execute and deliver, do solid work, and be very productive.”

- Do what you say you are going to do
- Stay away from the “time drains”
- Again and again: Talk about your successes!

Types of Unwritten Rules: Participants' Quotes



Time & Visibility

- **Long hours:** "To succeed, you often have to be available after hours...beyond the regular 8-5 schedule."
- **Face time:** "(I have noticed) that face-to-face meetings and time in the office are still important. If you are not there, you miss out on important information."
- **Availability**
"Make sure your boss knows that you're willing to put in the extra hours if needed."

Pause Point



Reflect on your table discussion question:

Have you ever suffered a consequence and found out about an unwritten rule after the fact?

- How can we learn from our experiences with the unwritten rules?
- What do we need to know to successfully navigate the unwritten rules?

Learning the Unwritten Rules



Communicate with Informal Networks, with Mentors

"I had a couple of excellent mentors....They shared their observations of how I am perceived."

Observe Others and How Things Get Done

"You can learn what to do and what not to do by looking at your boss and peers who get ahead."

Ask Directly, Solicit Feedback

"Discuss the topic [of advancement], ask people if it's the right way....Participate in coaching."

By Trial and Error

"I learned by doing."

Unwritten Rules: What Can *You* Do?



- Build relationships
 - Find a mentor and/or a sponsor
- Ask for feedback
- Make yourself and your work visible
- Observe what goes on in your organization, department, team
- Ask yourself: Do I know the unwritten rules to advancement?

Unwritten Rules: What Can Organizations (and Leaders) Do?



- Support career development
 - e.g., Through well-executed coaching and career development programs
- Increase transparency
 - e.g., Create awareness of organizational culture and unwritten rules
- Provide mentoring and networking opportunities
 - e.g., Through formal and informal programs/events

Pause Point



In reflecting on what we have discussed today regarding the “unwritten rules” of the workplace, would you give different advice? How would your message change?

Interactive Discussion: Q&A



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