

The Globalization of Law Practice

The firm of TILLEKE & GIBBINS of Bangkok, Thailand has been in existence for more than 100 years: The firm currently has more than 10,000 business and corporate clients from more than 100 nations.

In 1951 the firm was acquired by an American, Mr. Albert Lyman, who was joined by his wife, also an American lawyer.

In 1967 their son David Lyman joined the firm and has functioned as its managing partner, with offices throughout Southeast Asia and with a truly Global Practice.

In 1991 Mr. David Lyman codified his 11 rules for success (Lyman's Laws). These 11 rules follow:

1. Never, never, never assume. Verify. Check it, everything, every time.
2. Clients and bosses don't like surprises.
3. Communicate-clearly, completely, often.
4. You have a mind-use it. Think. Be logical. Be thorough. Relate together all known details and facts.
5. If you don't know, ask. If you do have to guess, remember it's just a guess, not fact or truth.
6. Errors are forgivable but carelessness is not. Would you trust your life to a careless doctor or pilot or driver? Would you trust your business to a careless banker or accountant or manager?
7. It's unpardonable to misspell a client's name.
8. Clients want solutions and options, not just "No, it can't be done."
9. Clients want assigned tasks done right and done quickly.
10. A lawyer's life is dedicated to the law, to clients, to the firm, to the community, to family. A lawyer's time is rarely his own.
11. Protect yourself and the firm at all times.

Note how these 11 rules focused on the handling of the legal matter at hand.

In November of 1999, Mr. David Lyman revised his rules into a new code of 18 rules as follows:

12. The law is about people. The practice of the law is based on personal relationships.
13. Client care, personal attention and reliability are your most important assignments.
14. Learn as much about the law and its application to clients' needs as your brain can hold, and then learn more.

15. Clients do not have endless patience or bottomless pockets. Be attentive to clients' objectives and time schedules. Clients have limited resources for legal fees and expenses.
16. Clients always need hope of achieving their objectives. Be encouraging but honest with them in your assessments.
17. Communicate with clients more than just frequently. Lack of or delays in communications from lawyers are the major complaints of clients.
18. Make your clients full members of your legal team.
19. Keep your word.
20. Meet all deadlines, ahead of time.
21. Date all papers-upper right hand corner.
22. Teamwork usually produces better results than doing a task alone.
23. Be creative and innovative in your solutions.
24. Keep an open and inquiring mind.
25. Have personal and professional goals, and do what must be done to achieve them.
26. Always search for wisdom.
27. Lawyers live by the rule of law-uphold this principle.
28. A lawyer without integrity and ethical behavior dishonors both the individual and the profession.
29. When the practice of the law stops being fun, it's time to seek a new line of work.

Note how the new rules focus on the relationship between the lawyer and the client and trying to understand the clients' needs. Only slight mention is made of the legal matter at hand. The focus has changed from the legal matter to satisfying the client.

Also note how these requirements are universal in scope. They apply regardless of color, race or national origin. They are truly universal and they will work for you and your law firm!!!

Adapted from copyrighted materials prepared by Jay Foonberg, Santa Monica, CA