

LAW 9: The Power of Actions Over Words

Law 9 of *The 48 Laws of Power* highlights the superiority of actions over words in influencing others and securing lasting victories. Engaging in debates or verbal confrontations often leads to resentment, even if one wins the argument, as people rarely appreciate being proven wrong. Instead, demonstrating one's beliefs or skills through tangible results not only silences opposition but also establishes authority without unnecessary conflict.

A well-known historical example illustrating this principle is the story of a vizier falsely accused and sentenced to death. Instead of attempting to plead his case with words, he spent his remaining days befriending the sultan's hunting dogs, feeding and caring for them. When the time of execution arrived, the dogs, instead of attacking, protected him, forcing the sultan to reconsider the verdict and ultimately spare his life, proving that actions often have more persuasive power than arguments.

Similarly, the story of an engineer in a military setting highlights the dangers of insisting on verbal persuasion rather than demonstrating competence. When ordered to reinforce a fortification, he argued relentlessly that his original design was superior instead of showcasing its strength. His defiance led to his execution, reinforcing the lesson that in many situations, proving one's point through action is a far safer and more effective strategy than engaging in fruitless debates.

Michelangelo's encounter with Mayor Soderini offers another compelling case of action triumphing over words. When Soderini criticized the nose of Michelangelo's statue of David, Michelangelo pretended to adjust it by secretly sprinkling dust from his chisel, without actually altering the sculpture. Upon seeing the "change," Soderini was satisfied, proving that actions—sometimes even the illusion of action—can settle disputes more effectively than logical arguments.

Another striking example is the story of Amasis, an Egyptian ruler of humble origins who sought to gain the respect of the aristocracy. Instead of arguing for his legitimacy, he performed a symbolic act by breaking a golden foot basin, which was previously used for washing feet, and then repurposing it into a revered statue. The transformation demonstrated that one's origins do not define their worth, influencing public perception more powerfully than any speech could.

This law applies to modern contexts as well, particularly in business and leadership. Employees who show results rather than debate their capabilities are more likely to gain recognition, while leaders who take decisive action earn trust more than those who merely make promises. In negotiations, allowing outcomes to speak for themselves often carries more weight than lengthy discussions, ensuring that one's credibility remains intact.

In psychological terms, people tend to trust what they see more than what they hear, making visible proof of competence far more influential than persuasive rhetoric. This is why social proof, testimonials, and demonstrations are more effective in convincing audiences than simple claims. The power of action taps into this fundamental aspect of human nature, making it a formidable tool in any sphere of influence.

However, the law acknowledges that in rare cases, arguments may serve a strategic purpose, such as in moments of deception or distraction. Skilled manipulators may use words to divert attention while executing their true intentions elsewhere. Yet, the overarching principle remains that actions carry greater weight, and those who rely on results rather than rhetoric are more likely to achieve lasting power.

Ultimately, Law 9 teaches that power is best secured through demonstration rather than verbal justification. Those who engage in endless debates may feel momentary satisfaction in proving a point, but they often breed animosity and resistance. In contrast, those who act decisively and let their achievements speak for

them gain influence effortlessly, proving that in the pursuit of power, what one does will always matter more than what one says.