LAWYER JOKES ARE NO LAUGHING MATTER

What Lawyer Jokes Reveal About the Profession and Why It Isn’t Funny!

Sean Carter
Humorist at Law
Lawpsided Seminars
3620 N Paseo Del Sol
Mesa, AZ 85207
Phone: (480) 262-2653
sean@lawhumorist.com
www.lawhumorist.com
Sean Carter is the founder of Lawpsided Seminars, a company devoted to solid legal continuing education with a healthy dose of laughter.

Mr. Carter graduated from Harvard Law School in 1992. His ten years of legal practice focused on corporate securities and mergers and acquisitions. During this time, he represented such clients as GNC, Experian, The Boston Beer Company, Homeside Lending, Safelite Auto Glass, J. Crew and many others, before eventually serving as in-house counsel to a publicly-traded finance company.

In 2002, Mr. Carter left the practice of law to pursue a career as the country’s foremost Humorist at Law. Since then, Mr. Carter has crisscrossed the country delivering his Lawpsided Seminars for state and local bar associations, law firms, in-house corporate legal departments and law schools. Each year, he presents more than 100 humorous programs on such topics as legal ethics, stress management, constitutional law, legal marketing and much more.

Mr. Carter is the author of the first-ever comedic legal treatise -- If It Does Not Fit, Must You Acquit?: Your Humorous Guide to the Law. His syndicated legal humor column has appeared in general circulation newspapers in more than 30 states and his weekly humor column for lawyers appeared in the ABA e-Report from 2003 to 2006.

Finally, Sean lives in Mesa, Arizona with his wife and four sons.
LAWYER JOKES

Lawyer jokes prevail in our society. In fact, for a lawyer, they are almost unavoidable. There are a countless number of websites devoted to the topic, links to which our clients, friends and even family are only too willing to share. And even if a lawyer manages to avoid lawyer jokes on the Internet, there is always someone willing to share the latest insult at a networking function, PTA meeting or even at church.

Like ethnic jokes, lawyer jokes tend to play to common stereotypes and misconceptions about attorneys. As a result, it is tempting to dismiss them as just a low form of humor. Yet, perhaps we shouldn’t dismiss them altogether as they do provide an insight into how the legal profession is perceived by the general public. After all, for any joke to be effective, there must be some element of “accepted truth” (no matter how false in reality or grossly exaggerated or unfairly applied across the entire group).

In this regard, lawyer jokes seem to focus on perceived character flaws. And while lawyers do not suffer from these flaws in a greater proportion than the general population, we sometimes act in ways that reinforce these negative stereotypes. In doing so, we not only bring the profession into disrepute but also violate the Rules of Professional Conduct. As a result, it’s important for all lawyers to be mindful of our conduct in regards to these perceived flaws and to use the Rules of Professional Conduct as a standard against which to measure our actions.
Flaw #1: Lust

Some lawyer jokes portray lawyers engaging in romantic relationships with clients, which is generally prohibited under the ethics rules. However, lust encompasses more than just physical lust. In a broader sense, lust is the improper desire for anything to which one is not entitled. Therefore, it’s possible to lust not only after a person’s body, but also their possessions, status, etc. This type of desire may cause a lawyer to breach his/her ethical obligation to avoid conflicts of interest as evidenced by the following jokes:

RULE 1.8: CONFLICT OF INTEREST: PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS

(j) A lawyer shall not have sexual relations with a client unless a consensual sexual relationship existed between them when the client-lawyer relationship commenced.

(2) When the client is an organization, a lawyer for the organization (whether inside counsel or outside counsel) shall not have sexual relations with a constituent of the organization who supervises, directs or regularly consults with that lawyer concerning the organization’s legal matters.

YOU CAN’T TAKE IT WITH YOU

A very old woman called an attorney regarding her will. She was not well enough to visit the office, and asked that the lawyer go to her home to draw up the papers.

“I will have to check my schedule,” the lawyer replied. “What estate size are we talking about?” “About $50,000 all together,” she replied.

“Who do you want to give it to?” the lawyer asked. “I have been alone my whole life,” the woman said. “I don’t have anyone to leave the money to, but I do know that I want to go out with a bang. To that end, I want to spend $40,000 on a funeral people won’t forget.”

“That leaves $10,000. What do you want to do with that?” the lawyer asked.

“This is a bit odd, but throughout my life, I have never known the company of a man, Biblically speaking. I was hoping that perhaps you could find someone to be with me one time for $10,000.”

That night, the attorney related to his wife the events of the day. “Can you imagine, she wants me to be a pimp,” the lawyer said. His wife, however, had dollar signs in her eyes. “Well, it would be doing a
good deed of sorts. I think you should do it yourself.” After some arguing, she got him to agree.

The next morning, the lawyer’s wife drove him over to the woman’s house and waited in the car. After an two hours went by, and fed with waiting, she blew the car horn.

A minute later, the attorney poked his head out of the bedroom window. “Come back tomorrow,” he yelled. “She decided to let the county bury her!”

RULE 1.7:  CONFLICT OF INTEREST: CURRENT CLIENTS

(a)  Except as provided in par. (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if:

(2)  there is a significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyer’s responsibilities to another client, a former client or a third person or by a personal interest of the lawyer.

DEAL OR NO DEAL

After five years of toil at a Wall Street law firm, an associate was burning the midnight oil at his office. Suddenly, there was a flash of light, and a tower of smoke burst from the floor. Satan stepped out of the smoke, and addressed the lawyer:

“I understand you’d give absolutely anything to make partner,” said the devil, “So I’ve come here to make you an offer. I’ll make you a partner, but in return I will take the souls of your wife, your parents, your children, your grandchildren, and all of your friends.”

The lawyer looked strangely puzzled, and thought hard for several minutes. Finally, he turned to Satan and asked, “What’s the catch?”

OPENING NIGHT

In order to get a couple of good seats for a hot Broadway show, a lawyer had to buy the tickets six months in advance. On the night of the show, another theatergoer sitting nearby noticed that the seat next to the lawyer was empty.

“May I ask why you have such a great seat left empty next to you?” she asked.

“Well, I bought tickets for my wife and myself six months ago, but my wife passed away recently.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” the other person said. “But why didn’t you bring a friend or relative?”
“Oh,” said the lawyer. “That’s because they all decided to go to her funeral instead.”

RULE 1.8: CONFLICT OF INTEREST: PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS

(c) A lawyer shall not solicit any substantial gift from a client, including a testamentary gift, nor prepare an instrument giving the lawyer or a person related to the lawyer any substantial gift from a client, including a testamentary gift, except where (1) the client is related to the donee, (2) the donee is a natural object of the bounty of the client, (3) there is no reasonable ground to anticipate a contest, or a claim of undue influence or for the public to lose confidence in the integrity of the bar, and (4) the amount of the gift or bequest is reasonable and natural under the circumstances. For purposes of this paragraph, related persons include a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent or other relative or individual with whom the lawyer or the client maintains a close, familial relationship.

[6] A lawyer may accept a gift from a client, if the transaction meets general standards of fairness. For example, a simple gift such as a present given at a holiday or as a token of appreciation is permitted. If a client offers the lawyer a more substantial gift, paragraph (c) does not prohibit the lawyer from accepting it, although such a gift may be voidable by the client under the doctrine of undue influence, which treats client gifts as presumptively fraudulent. In any event, due to concerns about overreaching and imposition on clients, a lawyer may not suggest that a substantial gift be made to the lawyer or for the lawyer’s benefit, except where the lawyer is related to the client as set forth in paragraph (c).

PAID IN FULL

An old man was on his death bed. He wanted badly to take some of his money with him. He called his priest, his doctor and his lawyer to his bedside. “Here’s $30,000 cash to be held by each of you. I trust you to put this in my coffin when I die so I can take all my money with me.”

At the funeral, each man put an envelope in the coffin. Riding away in a limousine, the priest suddenly broke into tears and confessed, “I had only put $20,000 into the envelope because I needed $10,000 for a new baptistery.”

“Well, since we’re confiding in each other,” said the doctor, “I only put $10,000 in the envelope because we needed a new machine at the hospital which cost $20,000.”

The lawyer was aghast. “I’m ashamed of both of you,” he exclaimed. “I want it known that when I put my envelope in that coffin, it held my personal check for the full $30,000.”
Flaw #2
Gluttony

When we think of gluttony, we usually think solely of consuming too much food, which creates a limited ethical problem with regards to a lawyer’s obligation under Rule 1.16. However, gluttony encompasses more than just consuming food to excess. It encompasses any excess of consumption. Furthermore, it is not just limited to consumption. It can be gluttonous to consume too soon (prematurely), too extravagantly or too ravenously. In that regard, lawyers are often portrayed in jokes as engaging in conduct that violates ethical rules requiring the orderly administration of justice and proper decorum.

RULE 1.16: DECLINING OR TERMINATING REPRESENTATION

a) Except as stated in par. (c), a lawyer shall not represent a client or, where representation has commenced, shall withdraw from the representation of a client if:

(2) the lawyer’s physical or mental condition materially impairs the lawyer’s ability to represent the client; or

RULE 1.3: DILIGENCE

A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

[2] A lawyer’s work load must be controlled so that each matter can be handled competently.

RULE 3.1: MERITORIOUS CLAIMS AND CONTENTIONS

(a) In representing a client, a lawyer shall not:

(1) knowingly advance a claim or defense that is unwarranted under existing law, except that the lawyer may advance such claim or defense if it can be supported by good faith argument for an extension, modification or reversal of existing law;

(2) knowingly advance a factual position unless there is a basis for doing so that is not frivolous; or
file a suit, assert a position, conduct a defense, delay a trial or take other action on behalf of the client when the lawyer knows or when it is obvious that such an action would serve merely to harass or maliciously injure another.

2+2

A housewife, an accountant and a lawyer were asked, “How much is 2+2?”

The housewife replies: “Four!”.

The accountant says: “I think it’s either 3 or 4. Let me run those figures through my spreadsheet one more time.”

The lawyer pulls the drapes, dims the lights and asks in a hushed voice, “How much do you want it to be?”

FORE

A golfer hooked his tee shot over a hill and onto the next fairway. Walking toward his ball, he saw a man lying on the ground, groaning with pain.

"I'm an attorney," the wincing man said, "and this is going to cost you $5000."

"I'm sorry, I'm really sorry," the concerned golfer replied. "But I did yell 'fore'."

"I'll take it," the attorney said.

RULE 3.2 EXPEDITING LITIGATION

A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to expedite litigation consistent with the interests of the client.

GOOD LAWYER v. BAD LAWYER

What’s the difference between a good lawyer and a bad lawyer?

A bad lawyer can let a case drag out for several years. A good lawyer can make it last even longer.

LEARNING A LESSON

A prominent lawyer's son dreamed of following in his father's footsteps. After graduating from college and law school with honors, he returned home to join his father's firm, intent on proving himself to be a skilled and worthy attorney.

At the end of his first day at work he rushed into his father's office, and said, "Father, father! The Smith case, that you always said would go on forever -- the one you have been toiling on for ten years -- in one single day, I settled that case and saved the client a fortune!"
His father frowned, and scolded his son, "I did not say that it would go on forever, son. I said that it could go on forever. When you saw me toiling on that case for days and weeks at a time, didn't it ever occur to you that I was billing by the hour?"

**RULE 4.1 TRUTHFULNESS IN STATEMENTS TO OTHERS**

(a) In the course of representing a client a lawyer shall not knowingly:

(1) make a false statement of a material fact or law to a 3rd person; or

(2) fail to disclose a material fact to a 3rd person when disclosure is necessary to avoid assisting a criminal or fraudulent act by a client, unless disclosure is prohibited by SCR 20:1.6.

(b) Notwithstanding par. (a), SCR 20:5.3(c)(1), and SCR 20:8.4, a lawyer may advise or supervise others with respect to lawful investigative activities.

**GUESS WHO**

A guy walks into a post office one day to see a middle-aged, balding man standing at the counter methodically placing "Love" stamps on bright pink envelopes with hearts all over them. He then takes out a perfume bottle and starts spraying scent all over them.

His curiosity getting the better of him, he goes up to the balding man and asks him what he is doing. The man says "I'm sending out 1,000 Valentine cards signed, 'Guess who?'"

"But why?" asks the man.

"I'm a divorce lawyer," the man replies.
Flaw #3
Greed

Greed inhibits a lawyer’s ability to abide by the ethics rules in a number of ways. Greed causes lawyers to inflate bills to clients, misappropriate client funds, and even commit criminal acts of bribery, theft, fraud and the like. In short, greed may cause an attorney to violate his/her fiduciary duty to clients, as indicated by the following jokes:

RULE 1.5: FEES AND EXPENSES

(a) A lawyer shall not make an agreement for, charge, or collect an unreasonable fee or an unreasonable amount for expenses. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

(1) the time and labor required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, and the skill requisite to perform the legal service properly;

(2) the likelihood, if apparent to the client, that the acceptance of the particular employment will preclude other employment by the lawyer;

(3) the fee customarily charged in the locality for similar legal services;

(4) the amount involved and the results obtained;

(5) the time limitations imposed by the client or by the circumstances;

(6) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client;

(7) the experience, reputation, and ability of the lawyer or lawyers performing the services; and

(8) whether the fee is fixed or contingent.

THREE QUESTIONS

A new client had just come in to see a famous lawyer.

“Can you tell me how much you charge?”, said the client.

“Of course”, the lawyer replied, “I charge $200 to answer three questions!”

“Well that’s a bit steep, isn’t it?”

“Yes it is”, said the lawyer, “And what’s your third question?”
CAR PAYMENT

A lawyer calls his client to tell him about his fee schedule.

"Alright," the lawyer says looking through his papers. "You owe me $1000 down and $417.58 cents each month for the next thirty-six months.

"What! That sounds like a car payment schedule," retorted the client.

"Your right. It's mine."

METHUSELAH

A prominent young attorney died on his way to court, and found himself before the gates of Heaven. When he arrived, a chorus of angels appeared, singing in his honor. St. Peter himself came out to shake his hand. "Mr Jones," said St. Peter, "it is a great honor to have you here at last. You are the first being to break Methuselah’s record for longevity. You have lived 1028 years."

“What are you talking about?” asked the attorney. “I’m 46.”

“46? But aren’t you Steven Jones? The lawyer from Brooklyn”

“Yes,” the attorney answered.

“Let me check the records,” said St Peter. He slapped his hand against his forehead. "Oh, how silly of us. Now I see the mistake! We accidentally calculated your age by adding up the hours you billed to your clients!"

RULE 1.15: SAFEKEEPING PROPERTY; TRUST ACCOUNTS AND FIDUCIARY ACCOUNTS

(b) Segregation of trust property.

(1) Separate account. A lawyer shall hold in trust, separate from the lawyer’s own property, that property of clients and 3rd parties that is in the lawyer’s possession in connection with a representation. All funds of clients and 3rd parties paid to a lawyer or law firm in connection with a representation shall be deposited in one or more identifiable trust accounts.

(2) Identification of account. Each trust account shall be clearly designated as a “Client Account,” a “Trust Account,” or words of similar import. The account shall be identified as such on all account records, including signature cards, monthly statements, checks, and deposit slips. An acronym, such as “IOLTA,” “IOTA,” or “LTAB,” without further elaboration, does not clearly designate the account as a client account or trust account.
(3) **Lawyer funds.** No funds belonging to the lawyer or law firm, except funds reasonably sufficient to pay monthly account service charges, may be deposited or retained in a trust account.

(4) **Unearned fees and cost advances.** Except as provided in par. (4m), unearned fees and advanced payments of fees shall be held in trust until earned by the lawyer, and withdrawn pursuant to sub. (g). Funds advanced by a client or 3rd party for payment of costs shall be held in trust until the costs are incurred.

(6) **Trust property other than funds.** Unless the client otherwise directs in writing, a lawyer shall keep securities in bearer form in a safe deposit box at a financial institution authorized to do business in Wisconsin. The safe deposit box shall be clearly designated as a “Client Account” or “Trust Account.” The lawyer shall clearly identify and appropriately safeguard other property of a client or 3rd party.

**SAFE**

The two partners in a law firm were having lunch when suddenly one of them jumped up and said, "I have to go back to the office – I forgot to lock the safe!"

The other partner replied, "What are you worried about? We're both here."

**RULE 8.4: MISCONDUCT**

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

(b) commit an criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer’s honesty or trustworthiness;

**SELF-STARTER**

A doctor had just bought a villa on the French Riviera, when met an old lawyer friend whom he hadn’t seen in years, and they started talking. The lawyer, as it turned out, owned a nearby villa. They discussed how they came to retire to the Riviera.

“Remember that lousy office complex I bought?” asked the lawyer, “Well, it caught fire, and I retired here with the fire insurance proceeds. What are you doing here?”

The doctor replied, “Remember that real estate I had in Mississippi? Well, the river overflowed, and here I am with the flood insurance proceeds. It’s amazing that we both ended up here in pretty much the same way.”

“It sure is,” the lawyer replied, looking puzzled, “but I’m confused about one thing – how do you start a flood?”
A very successful lawyer parked his brand new Lexus in front of the office. As he opened the door a truck came roaring past and completely tore off the driver’s door of the Lexus. The lawyer immediately grabbed his cell phone and dialed 911. When a policeman arrived, the lawyer was still screaming hysterically. “MY LEXUS! MY LEXUS!”

The cop shook his head in disgust. “I can’t believe how materialistic you lawyers are”, he said. “You are so focused on your possessions that you don’t notice that your left arm is missing from the elbow down!”

The lawyer looked down to his left side and let out a terrible scream: “MY ROLEX! MY ROLEX!”
Flaw #4
Sloth

Some lawyer jokes portray lawyers as being incompetent, or even, unintelligent. This perception is reinforced when lawyers fail to fully carry out the duties owed to the client through willful neglect, over-commitment or not having the necessary experience for the matter at hand. In any case, each of these shortcomings can be classified as “sloth” and is demonstrated by the following jokes:

RULE 1.3: DILIGENCE

A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

[3] Perhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination. A client’s interests often can be adversely affected by the passage of time or the change of conditions; in extreme instances, as when a lawyer overlooks a statute of limitations, the client’s legal position may be destroyed. Even when the client’s interests are not affected in substance, however, unreasonable delay can cause a client needless anxiety and undermine confidence in the lawyer’s trustworthiness. A lawyer’s duty to act with reasonable promptness, however, does not preclude the lawyer from agreeing to a reasonable request for a postponement that will not prejudice the lawyer’s client.

RULE 1.1: COMPETENCE

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

[6] To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, engage in continuing study and education and comply with all continuing legal education requirements to which the lawyer is subject.

BRAIN STORE

A man went to a brain store to get some brain to complete a study. He sees a sign remarking on the quality of professional brain offered at this particular brain store. He begins to question the butcher about the cost of these brains.

“How much does it cost for engineer brain?”

“Three dollars an ounce.”
“How much does it cost for programmer brain?”

“Four dollars an ounce.”

“How much for lawyer brain?”

“$1,000 an ounce.”

“Why is lawyer brain so much more?”

“Do you know how many lawyers we had to kill to get one ounce of brain?”

ON THE WRONG TRACK

Two lawyers were out hunting when they came upon a couple of tracks. After close examination, the first lawyer declared them to be deer tracks. The second lawyer disagreed, insisting they must be elk tracks. They were still arguing when the train hit them.

CROSS EXAMINATION

A defending attorney was cross examining a coroner. The attorney asked, “Before you signed the death certificate had you taken the man’s pulse?”

“No,” the coroner replied.

The attorney then asked, “Did you listen for a heart beat?”

The coroner said, “No.”

“Did you check for breathing?”, asked the attorney.

Again the coroner replied, “No.”

The attorney asked, “So when you signed the death certificate you had not taken any steps to make sure the man was dead, had you?”

The coroner, now tired of the brow beating said, “Well, let me put it this way. The man’s brain was sitting in a jar on my desk, but for all I know he could be out there practicing law somewhere.”
Flaw #5
Wrath

In some cases, lawyers become so emotionally involved in a dispute that they lose their ability to provide objective representation. In other cases, lawyers cross the line from being zealous advocates to outright zealots, engaging in various forms of unethical behavior.

RULE 1.7: CONFLICT OF INTEREST: CURRENT CLIENTS
(a) Except as provided in par. (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if:

(2) there is a significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyer’s responsibilities to another client, a former client or a third person or by a personal interest of the lawyer.

RULE 3.4: FAIRNESS TO OPPOSING PARTY AND COUNSEL
A lawyer shall not:
(a) unlawfully obstruct another party’s access to evidence; unlawfully alter, destroy, or conceal a document or other material having potential evidentiary value; or counsel or assist another person to do any such act;
(c) knowingly disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal, except for an open refusal based on a good faith assertion that no valid obligation exists;
(d) in pretrial procedure, intentionally or habitually make a frivolous motion or discovery request or fail to make reasonably diligent effort to comply with a legally proper discovery request by an opposing party;
(e) in trial, allude to any matter that the lawyer does not reasonably believe is relevant or that will not be supported by admissible evidence or by a good-faith belief that such evidence may exist, assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness, or state a personal opinion as to the justness of a cause, the credibility of a witness, the culpability of a civil litigant, or the guilt or innocence of an accused;
RULE 3.5: IMPARTIALITY AND DECORUM OF THE TRIBUNAL

A lawyer shall not:

(d) engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

[4] The advocate’s function is to present evidence and argument so that the cause may be decided according to law. Refraining from abusive or obstreperous conduct is a corollary of the advocate’s right to speak on behalf of litigants. A lawyer may stand firm against abuse by a judge but should avoid reciprocation; the judge’s default is no justification for similar dereliction by an advocate. An advocate can present the cause, protect the record for subsequent review, and preserve professional integrity by patient firmness no less effectively than by belligerence or theatrics.

[5] The duty to refrain from disruptive conduct applies to any proceeding of a tribunal, including a deposition.

RULE 4.4: RESPECT FOR RIGHTS OF 3RD PERSONS

(a) In representing a client, a lawyer shall not use means that have no substantial purpose other than to embarrass, delay, or burden a 3rd person, or use methods of obtaining evidence that violate the legal rights of such a person.

RULE 8.4: MISCONDUCT

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

(i) harass a person on the basis of sex, race, age, creed, religion, color, national origin, disability, sexual preference or marital status in connection with the lawyer’s professional activities. Legitimate advocacy respecting the foregoing factors does not violate par. (i).
Flaw #6
Envy

Some jokes portray lawyers as being particularly envious. In truth, the competitive nature of the practice of law makes attorneys particularly susceptible to feelings of envy, whether this envy is directed towards judges, colleagues, opposing counsel or even clients. In some cases, envy will cause a lawyer to become uncivil or uncooperative with opposing counsel and even the judge. In other cases, a lawyer who is envious of a client’s superior wealth or status may attempt to “even the scales” by engaging in self-serving transactions with the client. And finally, the lawyer who is jealous of another lawyer may attempt to emulate such lawyer’s success without the requisite skills or knowledge to do so. The following jokes demonstrate some of these tendencies:

RULE 1.8: CONFLICT OF INTEREST: PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS

(b) A lawyer shall not use information relating to representation of a client to the disadvantage of the client unless the client gives informed consent, except as permitted or required by these rules.

GET LOST

A Mexican bandit made a specialty of crossing the Rio Grande from time to time and robbing banks in Texas. Finally, a reward was offered for his capture, and an enterprising Texas ranger decided to track him down.

After a lengthy search, he traced the bandit to his favorite cantina, snuck up behind him, put his trusty six-shooter to the bandit’s head, and said, “You’re under arrest. Tell me where you hid the loot or I’ll blow your brains out.”

But the bandit didn’t speak English, and the Ranger didn’t speak Spanish. Fortunately, a bilingual lawyer was in the saloon and translated the Ranger’s message. The terrified bandit blurted out, in Spanish, that the loot was buried under the oak tree in back of the cantina.

“What did he say?” asked the Ranger.

The lawyer answered, “He said ‘Get lost, you turkey. You wouldn’t dare shoot me.’”
THE LUNCH HOUR

A paralegal, an associate and a partner of a large law firm are walking through a city park, when they spotted an antique oil lamp.

The paralegal picked it up, but both the associate and partner grabbed for it, arguing that they found it first. Their tussling had the effect of rubbing the lamp, and to their shock a Genie emerged in a great cloud of smoke.

The Genie announced, “In gratitude of your freeing me from the lamp, I grant you three wishes. As there are three of you, you each get one wish.”

The paralegal blurts out, “I want to be in the Barbados, sipping cocktails with a gorgeous movie star.” Poof! The paralegal was gone.

The associate, excited by the events, stammers, “I want to be in Hawaii, relaxing on the beach with a professional hula dancer on one side and a Mai Tai on the other.” Poof! The associate was gone.

“You’re last,” the Genie says to the partner, “What is your wish?”

The partner replied, “I want those two back in the office after lunch.”

RULE 1.1: COMPETENCE

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

[1] In determining whether a lawyer employs the requisite knowledge and skill in a particular matter, relevant factors include the relative complexity and specialized nature of the matter, the lawyer’s general experience, the lawyer’s training and experience in the field in question, the preparation and study the lawyer is able to give the matter and whether it is feasible to refer the matter to, or associate or consult with, a lawyer of established competence in the field in question. In many instances, the required proficiency is that of a general practitioner. Expertise in a particular field of law may be required in some circumstances.
Flaw #7
Pride

Lawyers are often portrayed as arrogant. And due to the status and income enjoyed by many in the profession, lawyers are susceptible pride, which can result in various ethical breaches. For one, a bragging lawyer may violate client confidences in his/her zeal for recognition. Similarly, a prideful lawyer may be tempted to boast about his/her services in ways that violate the obligation to provide truthful information about such services. Finally, pride may cause a lawyer to attempt to conceal errors from clients and even bar authorities.

RULE 1.6  CONFIDENTIALITY

(a) A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to the representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent, except for disclosures that are impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation, and except as stated in pars. (b) and (c).

[4] Paragraph (a) prohibits a lawyer from revealing information relating to the representation of a client. This prohibition also applies to disclosures by a lawyer that do not in themselves reveal protected information but could reasonably lead to the discovery of such information by a third person. A lawyer’s use of a hypothetical to discuss issues relating to the representation is permissible so long as there is no reasonable likelihood that the listener will be able to ascertain the identity of the client or the situation involved.

RULE 1.1:  COMPETENCE

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

ON THE WRONG TRACK

Two lawyers were out hunting when they came upon a couple of tracks. After close examination, the first lawyer declared them to be deer tracks. The second lawyer disagreed, insisting they must be elk tracks. They were still arguing when the train hit them.
CROSS EXAMINATION

A defending attorney was cross examining a coroner. The attorney asked, "Before you signed the death certificate had you taken the man’s pulse?"

“No,” the coroner replied.

The attorney then asked, “Did you listen for a heart beat?”

The coroner said, “No.”

“Did you check for breathing?”, asked the attorney.

Again the coroner replied, “No.”

The attorney asked, “So when you signed the death certificate you had not taken any steps to make sure the man was dead, had you?”

The coroner, now tired of the brow beating said, “Well, let me put it this way. The man’s brain was sitting in a jar on my desk, but for all I know he could be out there practicing law somewhere.”

RULE 7.4 COMMUNICATION OF FIELDS OF PRACTICE

(d) A lawyer shall not state or imply that a lawyer is certified as a specialist in a particular field of law, unless:

(1) the lawyer has been certified as a specialist by an organization that has been approved by an appropriate state authority or that has been accredited by the American Bar Association; and

(2) the name of the certifying organization is clearly identified in the communication.

LAWYER JURY

A trial had been scheduled in a small town, but the court clerk had forgotten to call in a jury panel. Rather than adjourning what he thought was an exceptionally simple case, the judge ordered his bailiff to go through the courthouse and round up enough people to form a jury. The bailiff returned with a group of lawyers.

The prosecutor felt that it would be an interesting experiment to try a case before a jury of lawyers, and the defense counsel had no objection, so a jury was impaneled. And the trial went very quickly -- after only an hour of testimony, and very short closing arguments, both sides rested. The jury was then instructed by the judge, and was sent back to the jury room to deliberate.

After nearly six hours, the trial court was concerned that the jury had not returned with a verdict. The case had in fact turned out to be every bit as simple as he had expected, and it seemed to him that they
should have been back in minutes. He sent the bailiff to the jury room, to see if they needed anything.

The bailiff returned, and the judge asked, “Are they close to reaching a verdict?” The bailiff shook his head, and replied, “You’re honor, they’re still doing nomination speeches for the position of foreman.”

PHONE COMPANY

A young lawyer, starting up his private practice, was very anxious to impress potential clients. When he saw the first visitor to his office come through the door, he immediately picked up his phone and spoke into it," I'm sorry, but my caseload is so tremendous that I'm not going to be able to look into your problem for at least a month. I'll have to get back to you then." He then turned to the man who had just walked in, and said, "Now, what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," replied the man. "I'm here to hook up your phone."

RULE 1.4: COMMUNICATION

(a) A lawyer shall:

(1) Promptly inform the client of any decision or circumstance with respect to which the client’s informed consent, as defined in SCR 20:1.0(f), is required by these rules;

(2) reasonably consult with the client about the means by which the client’s objectives are to be accomplished;

(3) keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter;

(4) promptly comply with reasonable requests by the client for information; and

(5) consult with the client about any relevant limitation on the lawyer’s conduct when the lawyer knows that the client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

[4] A lawyer’s regular communication with clients will minimize the occasions on which a client will need to request information concerning the representation. When a client makes a reasonable request for information, however, paragraph (a)(4) requires prompt compliance with the request, or if a prompt response is not feasible, that the lawyer, or a member of the lawyer’s staff, acknowledge receipt of the request and advise the client when a response may be expected. Client telephone calls should be promptly returned or acknowledged.
RULE 8.1: BAR ADMISSION AND DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

An applicant for admission to the bar, or a lawyer in connection with a bar admission application or in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not:

(a) knowingly make a false statement of material fact; or

(b) fail to disclose a fact necessary to correct a misapprehension known by the person to have arisen in the matter, or knowingly fail to respond to a lawful demand for information from an admissions or disciplinary authority, except that this Rule does not require disclosure of information otherwise protected by SCR 20:1.6.

CAR ACCIDENT

A doctor and a lawyer got into a car accident, on a small country road. The lawyer had figured that nobody else would be on the road, and had raced through a stop sign. The doctor, on a cross street, had no time to react and couldn't have missed the lawyer if he had tried. Fortunately, neither driver was hurt.

The lawyer, seeing that the doctor was a little shaken up, helped him from his battered car and offered him a drink from a hip flask. The doctor accepted, took a deep drink, and handed the flask back to the lawyer. The lawyer held the flask for a minute or two, and gave it to the doctor again. The doctor took another swig. He again returned the flask to the lawyer, who closed it and put it away.

"Aren't you going to have a drink yourself?" asked the doctor.

"Not now," answered the lawyer. "I'll have something after the police leave."

CONFESSIONS

A woman wrote to Dear Abby: "I have a dilemma. I am about to get married, but I haven’t been totally honest with my fiance. My mother is a well-known madam, my father is a convict, and my sister sells heroin to the children at the school down the street. Also, I’m wanted in three states for embezzlement. Taking all that into consideration, this is my question, how do I tell my fiance that my brother is a lawyer?"
PUBLIC OPINION

A final group of these jokes focuses on the disdain of lawyers among the general public. Of course, the level of disdain is exaggerated to the point of ridiculousness (thus, making it comical). However, to the extent that there is an underlying truth to this public sentiment, it’s important for lawyers to be even more committed to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and fidelity set forth in the Rules of Professional Conduct.

SKID MARKS

What’s the difference between a dead dog in the road and a dead lawyer in the road?

There are skid marks in front of the dog.

TOXIC CHOICE

Why does New York have so many lawyers and New Jersey have so many toxic waste dumps? New Jersey got first choice.

GOOD NEWS

A guy phones a law firm and says, “I want to speak to my lawyer”.

The receptionist says, “I’m sorry, but your lawyer died last week”.

The next day the same guy phones the law firm and says, “I want to speak to my lawyer”. Once again the receptionist replies, “I’m sorry, but your lawyer died last week”.

The next day the guy makes his regular call to the law firm and say, “I want to speak to my lawyer”.

“Excuse me sir, “the receptionist says, “but this is third time I’ve had to tell you that your lawyer died last week. Why do you keep calling?”

The guy replies, “Because I love hearing it!”

OBJECTION!

An irate man at a bar says loudly, “Lawyers are jerks!”

The man two seats down proclaims just as loudly, “I object!”

“Why?” asks the first man. “Are you a lawyer?”

“No,” the other replies. “I’m a jerk.”
THREE WISHES

A young man, shipwrecked on a small, deserted island, found an old oil lamp sticking out of the sand. He picked it up, and rubbed it. To his amazement, a Genie emerged from the lamp in a cloud of smoke. The Genie announced, “I am both a lawyer and a Genie. You should be aware that, for every wish you make, I will not only grant your wish but will grant every attorney in the world double what you wish for.”

The man didn’t care much for attorneys, and he wasn’t sure what to make of the Genie, but what was the worst that could happen? He decided to take the Genie’s offer, and make his wishes.

“I wish for fifty million dollars,” he said. As money poured down around him, the Genie reminded him that every attorney in the world had just received one hundred million dollars.

“My second wish is for a luxurious mansion.” The ground rumbled, and a mansion slowly rose from the earth. It was astonishingly beautiful. A butler approached him with a tray of fine food. He ate hungrily, thinking, “It really can’t get any better than this.”

But then the Genie reminded him, “Every attorney in the world just received a mansion twice as nice as this one.”

The man thought carefully about his last wish. “I really want to give something back to society,” the man said. “I wish to donate one of my kidneys for transplant.”

NEAR MISS

A truck driver used to amuse himself by running over lawyers he saw walking down the side of the road. Every time he saw a lawyer walking along the road, he swerved to hit him and there would be a loud “THUMP”. Then he would swerve back on the road.

One day, as the truck driver was driving along the road he saw a priest hitchhiking. He thought he would do a good deed and pulled the truck over. The happy priest climbed into the passenger seat and the truck driver continued down the road. Suddenly, the truck driver saw a lawyer walking down the road.

Instinctively he swerved to hit him. At the last moment he remembered there was a priest in the truck with him, so he swerved back to the road and narrowly missed the lawyer.

Certain he should’ve missed the lawyer, the truck driver was very surprised and immediately uneasy when he heard a loud “THUMP”. He felt really guilty about his actions and so turned to the priest and said, “I’m really sorry Father. I almost hit that lawyer.”

“That’s okay,” replied the priest. “I got him with the door.”
OBJECTION!

An irate man at a bar says loudly, “Lawyers are jerks!”

The man two seats down proclaims just as loudly, “I object!”

“Why?” asks the first man. “Are you a lawyer?”

“No,” the other replies. “I’m a jerk.”

JUST ONE?

A lawyer, known more for his drinking at the bar than for his practice before it, died in poverty.

The other attorneys from the city, feeling sorry for his family, started a fund to cover his funeral expenses.

A local businessman was asked to make a contribution.

“Will you please donate a dollar, so we can bury a lawyer?”

“Only a dollar to bury a lawyer?” asked the businessman, “Here’s $100 — go and bury 99 more of them.”

LAST WISH

The old man was critically ill. Feeling that death was near, he called his lawyer.

“I want to become a lawyer. How much is it for that express degree you told me about?”

“It’s $50,000”, the lawyer said, “But why? You’ll be dead soon, why do you want to become a lawyer?”

“That’s my business! Get me the course!”

Four days later, the old man got his law degree. His lawyer was at his bedside making sure his bill would be paid. Suddenly the old man was racked with fits of coughing, and it was clear that this would be the end.

Still curious, the lawyer leaned over and said, “Please, before it’s too late, tell me why you wanted to get a law degree so badly before you died?”

In a faint whisper, as he breathed his last, the old man said, “One less lawyer.”