

Deception and Secrets

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1) Preamble:

"Courtiers are like magicians. They deceptively play with appearances, only letting those around them see what they want them to see. With so much deception and manipulation afoot, it is essential to keep people from seeing your tricks and glimpsing your sleight of hand. Never risk being caught in your maneuvers; never let people see your devices. If that happens you instantly pass in people's perceptions from a courtier of great manners to a loathsome rogue. It is a delicate game you play; apply the utmost attention to covering your tracks...Our good name and reputation depend more on what is concealed than on what is revealed." -48 Laws

Everyone has secrets, and everyone is living a double life to some degree.

The world is held up by lies; if everyone's secrets were to all be revealed tomorrow morning, civilization might collapse.

On a micro level, every person has things that must be concealed because if they were to be revealed their reputation would be damaged; they would be disliked and at risk of ostracism.

Nobody on the planet has a reputation that would still be good if all their secrets were to be revealed. Generally speaking those who have sterling reputations for honesty and virtue are those who are most competent at concealing their sins.

2) Catastrophic Consequences:

Having one of your deceptions fall apart because one of your secrets is unveiled is a catastrophe. The catastrophe a businessman must avoid is bankruptcy; the catastrophe a machiavellian must avoid is having someone see through one of their deceptions.

It only takes one failed deception to make people distrust you; one deception falling apart is enough to destroy a lifelong reputation for honesty.

3) 2 Vulnerabilities:

There are only 2 ways a secret can be discovered; physical evidence and loose lips.

You must carefully hide or eliminate any physical evidence of your secrets; the specific actions that must be taken for the sake of this will vary from one secret to another.

For all secrets, you must keep your lips sealed and the specific action that must be taken for the sake of this is the same for every secret; *say nothing*.

Keeping one's lips sealed is a critical skill, and a surprisingly rare one. Most people feel a need to reveal their secrets to someone so that they can 'get it off their chest'. If this is you, don't bother with playing the game of power; you stand no chance of winning.

Beware of the grapevine; if you tell one person a secret, they will inevitably tell others and before you know it the whole world knows.

4) Limit Your Deceptions:

The more secrets you have the more points of vulnerability you have, since the more different ways there are that you could be discovered.

To do a thing is difficult, to do it and keep it secret is even more difficult; every secret you keep costs valuable time and energy that are spent on concealing evidence of the secret.

More secrets means more vulnerability, and less energy; as such keep the number of secrets you have down to the bare minimum that are absolutely necessary.

The more lies you tell, the greater the level of complexity your deception is, and the more difficult it is to keep up the charade. The more lies you tell, the more opportunities there are for you to get caught lying. As such keep the number of lies you tell to a minimum; never lie unnecessarily.

This may sound obvious, but it is critical; *as the number of lies you tell and secrets you have increases linearly, the complexity of the deceptions you must maintain increases exponentially, and thereby the probability of you failing to keep up the deception increases exponentially.* Concealing 3 secrets is exponentially more difficult than concealing 2.

The ideal number of secrets and lies would be zero. Sadly, for those who are contenders in the game of power this is not feasible.

Only lie if there is *real benefit* gained by lying, *and* you have good reason to believe the lie either cannot or will not be investigated.

5) Conscious Awareness of Secrets:

Most people subconsciously keep a list of secrets they must conceal, but as a contender in the game of power you must consciously keep such a list.

You must mentally map out all your secrets and the precise evidence you must either hide or destroy for the sake of concealing them.

In the highly likely event you one day attain a position of power (high status in the macro dominance hierarchy), *you will have enemies*. They will put significant effort into uncovering your secrets either to destroy your reputation, or to blackmail you into cooperating with their wishes.

6) Damage Control:

If it is inevitable that a secret will be discovered or revealed, it is probably better that you reveal it yourself. By doing this, you can make yourself seem honest and forthcoming (see Law 12).

You can also make it so that the secret is revealed at a time and place of your choosing; an environment that you can set up in advance and control. Better that, than it being revealed at a time you did not choose and in an environment that is entirely out of your control.

7) Appear Transparent:

"The secretiveness of privacy drives people mad, even if there is nothing to hide, the reluctance to reveal creates suspicion. To ensure the safety of a secret, the existence of the secret must be kept secret. As soon as somebody becomes aware of a secret they know not the nature of, they will be compelled to unearth it at any cost, thus threatening the secret." - Illimitable Man

The degree of thoroughness required to hide or destroy all evidence that would reveal your secret is far greater than you think. Why? Because if a tiny piece of evidence is discovered that does not directly tell *what* the secret is, but it tells *that* there is a secret of some sort, the party who discovers it may have their curiosity sparked and eagerly dive into further investigation to discover precisely *what* the secret is.

Essentially, not only must your secrets be concealed, but the very fact *that* you have secrets must be concealed; if people suspect you have something to hide, it motivates them to dig deeper into your affairs to discover precisely what you are hiding.

It is both ludicrous and necessary; you must appear to have nothing to hide, while having something to hide, and while living in a world where 100% of people have something to hide.

8) Timeline for Secrets:

Some secrets need to be concealed forever, others do not.

There are those who will tell you “The truth will always come out eventually”.

They are wrong. It is possible to keep the truth a secret forever, or at least until after you are already dead and buried. Throughout history there have been millions of women who kept the true paternity of their children secret forever.

You should mentally categorize your secrets into *Forever* secrets (those that can be kept secret forever) and *Temporary* secrets (those that will inevitably be discovered, sooner or later).

You might think that having a 'Temporary' secret is tactical suicide; if your secret is at some point revealed, won't this inevitably cause people to view you as dishonest, and never trust you again?

Not really. Or at least, in many cases it doesn't matter. If you work as an employee at corporation Alpha, and are interviewing for a position at corporation Beta, you must keep the fact that you are engaged in job interviews at Beta a secret from everyone at Alpha, or you might get fired.

Maintaining this secret *forever* is both impossible and undesirable; if you get a job offer from Beta and accept it, you will intentionally announce it on your LinkedIn profile.

With every deception you enact, you must know what the timeline is. How long does this deception need to be maintained for, before the truth comes out? How long *can* this deception be maintained for; months, years, forever?

With 'Temporary' secrets, it is inevitable that the secret will be unveiled sooner or later; your impetus is to ensure nobody suspects a thing until it's already too late.

9) Common Secrets:

What follows is a list of secrets that are common, at least in modern America.

9A) Politically Incorrect Opinions

If you have any opinions (or facts) in your mind that contradict the dominant ideology of the society you live in, you must keep them secret.

If you publicly say anything that goes against the dominant ideology of your society, you will be disliked and ostracized.

In the case of modern America, if you say anything that contradicts Blank Slate Theory Egalitarianism, you may be fired from your job. See the fate of James DaMore (Google's Ideological Echo Chamber).

In Medieval Europe if you pointed out that believing in Jesus is as ludicrous as believing in Santa Clause, you could be imprisoned or executed (blasphemy laws).

9B) Side Business

If you have a side business, you must keep it secret from your employer.

Why?

Because employers want wage slaves who are completely financially dependent on them; if your employer knew you had income that was independent of them they would view you as a worker who does not take their corporate career seriously and fire you, or at best keep you around but never promote you up the hierarchy.

9C) Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)

At the elite level of every profession, the use of performance enhancing drugs is common.

That said, any performance enhancing drugs you use must be kept secret. If it were made public knowledge that you use PEDs it could easily lead to you being fired from your job.

10) You Don't Know Your Friends:

You don't know those closest to you nearly as well as you think you do.

Think of all the things you have kept secret from those closest to you; understand that they have kept just as much secret from you.

In the words of Baltasar Gracian, **"We belong to none and none to us, entirely. Neither relationship nor friendship nor the most intimate connection is sufficient to effect this. To give one's whole confidence is quite different from giving one's regard. The closest intimacy has its exceptions, without which the laws of friendship would be broken. The friend always keeps one secret to himself, and even the son always hides something from his father. Some things are kept from one that are revealed to another and vice-versa. In this way one reveals all and conceals all, by making a distinction among the persons with whom we are connected."**

Often a person will reveal all their secrets, but different secrets to different people. They tell a third of their secrets to their lover, a third to their friend, and a third to a stranger on a plane who they will never see again. Nobody ever reveals *all* their secrets to one person.

There is a significant difference between the version of you that your closest friend see's and the version of you that your spouse see's. There is a difference between the version of you that your spouse see's, and the version of you that your boss and subordinates see.

In the words of Frank Underwood, "There is so little she'll ever reveal to me, or I to her...**We are nothing more or less than what we choose to reveal**....what I am to Claire is not what I am to Zoey, just as Zoey is not to me what she is to her father."