



THE SUN TZU BRIEF

**SURVEY
WAGING
OFFENSIVE
FORMATION
FORCE
ADAPTATION
MANEUVER
VARIABLES
MARCHES
TERRAIN
NINE
FIRE
ESPIONAGE**



INTRODUCTION

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

Many of our most “forward” thinkers in business and academia reject military thought in contemporary business - which is to be expected. At face value, military thought invokes bloodshed and violence. But is unfortunate because there is much contemporary business might learn from traditional military disciplines. And ironic, because in the case of Sun Tzu winning is not defined by bloodshed or annihilation, but by winning without fighting. Which is a lesson every business can profit from. Sun Tzu is the father of modern day maneuver theory.

The Sun Tzu Brief is a synopsis of nine different translations of Sun Tzu's Art of War. The synopsis is organized according to the thirteen chapters of the Art of War and provides a summary of the content found in each chapter. Additionally, the title of each chapter *as translated* by the various “editors” is provided.

The brief is designed as an introduction to Sun Tzu's Art of War as is not meant to be a replacement for the actual text. The first version of this brief was written in 1989 and continues to evolve as of this writing. A bibliography of the nine translations can be found at the end of the briefing.

Mike Smock 2003

www.vsente.com



01 SURVEY

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: On Assessments

CLAVELL :: Laying Plans

WING :: The Calculations

HANZHANG :: Estimates

SAWYER :: Initial Estimates

KRAUSE :: Planning

HUANG :: Surveying

GRIFFITH :: Estimates

CLEARY :: Strategic Estimates

War is a vital matter of state and as such the commanders ability to survey, assess, calculate, plan and lead is of the highest importance. There is no substitute for leadership. The commander is supreme.

“Therefore use these assessments for comparison, to find out what the conditions are. That is to say, which political leadership has the Way? Which general has ability? Who has the better climate and terrain? Whose discipline is effective? Whose troops are the stronger? Whose officers and soldiers are the better trained? Whose system of rewards and punishments is clearer? This is how you can know who will win.” CLEARY

“Warfare is the art (Tao) of deceit. Therefore, when able seem to be unable; when ready, seem unready; when nearby, seem far away; and when far away, seem near. If the enemy seeks some advantage, entice him with it. If he is in disorder, attach him and take him. If he is formidable, prepare against him. If he is strong, evade him. If he is incensed, provoke him. If he is humble encourage his arrogance. If he is rested, wear him down. If he is internally harmonious, sow divisiveness in his ranks. Attack where he is not prepared: go by way of places where it would never occur to him you would go. These are the military strategist’s calculations for victory they cannot be settled in advance.” AMES

“If you say which ruler possesses moral influence, which commander is the more able, which army obtains the advantages of nature and the terrain, in which regulation an instructions are better carried out, which troops are the stronger; attach they are happy and when they hear the gongs sound the retirement they are enraged. He who is like this is strong.” GRIFFITH



WAGING

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: On Waging Battle

CLAVELL :: On Waging War

WING :: The Challenge

HANZHANG :: Waging War

SAWYER :: Waging War

KRAUSE :: Competitive Actions

HUANG :: Mobilizing For Armed Conflict

GRIFFITH :: Waging War

CLEARY :: Doing Battle

Waging war is expensive. Always leverage and exploit. Prolonged conflict even when you are winning is failing. A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week. A rapid fire series of small containable conflicts is preferable over a single large conflict.

"A thousand pieces of gold will be spent each day. Crude yet quick Strategies have been known. Therefore, clever leaders endeavor to use their opponent's food. One container of the opponent's food is the same as twenty containers of their own; and one unit of fodder is the same as twenty units of their own. The best triumph is a swift one." WING

"When you do battle, even if you are winning, if you continue for a long time it will dull your forces and blunt your edge; if you besiege a citadel, your strength will be exhausted. If you keep your armies out in the field for a long time, your supplies will be insufficient." CLEARY

"Those who are near the army sell at high prices. Because of high prices, the wealth of the common people is exhausted....When resources are exhausted, then levies are made under pressure. When power and resources are exhausted, then the homeland is drained. The common people are deprived of seventy percent of their budget, while the government+s expenses for equipment amount to sixty percent of its budget...Therefore a wise general strives to feed off the enemy. Each pound of food taken from the enemy is equivalent to twenty pounds you provide by yourself." CLEARY



OFFENSIVE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Planning the Attack

CLAVELL :: The Sheathed Sword

WING :: The Plan of Attack

HANZHANG :: Offensive Strategy

SAWYER :: Planning Offensives

KRAUSE :: Competitive Strategy

HUANG :: Planning an Offense

GRIFFITH :: Offensive Strategy

CLEARY :: Planning a Siege

When planning an offensive, direct conflict with the enemy is avoided. Instead offensive strategy driven by foreknowledge and focused on exploiting strategy is preferred. "So to win a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the highest excellence; the highest excellence is to subdue the enemy's army without fighting at all." AMES

Best Military policy is to attack strategies; the next to attack alliances; the next to attack soldiers; and the worst to assault walled cities." AMES

"So it is said that if you know others and now yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know others but know yourself, you win one and lose one; if you do not know others and do not know yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle." CLEARY

"To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence. Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. Next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. And the worst policy is to attack cities. Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chance of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle." HANZHANG

"So the rule for use of the military is that if you outnumber the opponent ten to one, then surround them; five to one, attack; two to one, divide. If you are equal, then fight if you are able. If you are fewer, then keep away if you are able. If you are not as good, then flee if you are able. Therefore, if the smaller side is stubborn, it becomes the captive of the larger side." CLEARY



FORMATION

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Strategic Positions

CLAVELL :: Tactics

WING :: Positioning

HANZHANG :: Dispositions

SAWYER :: Military Disposition

KRAUSE :: Positioning

HUANG :: Control

GRIFFITH :: Dispositions

CLEARY :: Formation

Prepare. Enter only those battles having first won the victory. Never allow yourself to be drawn into a battle that you are unprepared for. Adopt only those formations which allow you to become invincible.

Those skilled in defense hide in the deepest depths of the earth, those skilled in attack maneuver in the highest heights of the sky. Therefore they can preserve themselves and achieve complete victory. " CLEARY

"...The rules of the military are five: measurement, assessment, calculation, comparison, and victory. The ground gives rise to measurements, measurements give rise to assessments, assessments give rise to calculations, calculations give rise to comparisons, comparisons give rise to victories." CLEARY

"Anciently the skillful warriors first made themselves invincible and awaited the enemy's moment of vulnerability." GRIFFITH

"For this reason, the victorious army only enters battle after having first won the victory, while the defeated army only seeks victory after having first entered the fray." AMES



05
FORCE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Strategic Advantage

CLAVELL :: Energy

WING :: Directing

HANZHANG :: Posture of Army

SAWYER :: Strategic Military Power

KRAUSE :: Opportunity and Timing

HUANG :: Combat Power

GRIFFITH :: Energy

CLEARY :: Force

Formations which project force can have infinite variations. Compelling the opponent to move to their disadvantage and while generating momentum to your advantage is necessary in order to achieve victory.

There are no more than five cardinal notes, yet in combination, they produce more sounds than could possibly be heard; there are no more than five cardinal colors, yet in combination, they produce more shades and hues than could possibly be seen; there are no more than five cardinal tastes, yet in combination, they produce more flavors than could possibly be tasted. For gaining strategic advantage (shih) in battle, there are no more than "surprise" and "straightforward" operations, yet in combination, they produce inexhaustible possibilities. "Surprise" and "straightforward" operations give rise to each other endlessly just as a ring is without a beginning or an end. And who can exhaust their possibilities?" AMES

"...The ideal strategy during conflict is to move opponents here and there, until they are perfectly positioned to their own disadvantage. This strategy, which he called Directing, is the art of compelling the opponent to react to whatever information is presented. It is a skill that is used by leaders who are gifted with creative, insightful minds... tactics could be used, in endless variations, to orchestrate surprise, skillful leaders create the appearance of confusion, fear or vulnerability, causing the opponent to perceive a false weakness. The opponent is helplessly drawn toward this illusion of advantage. "Through the promise of gain, an opponent is moved about while the team lies in wait." WING

Getting people to fight by letting the force of momentum work is like rolling logs and rocks. Logs and rock are still when in a secure place, but roll on an incline; they remain stationary if square, they roll if round. Therefore, when people are skillfully led into battle, the momentum is like that of round rocks rolling down a high mountain this is force. CLEARY



ADAPTATION

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Weak Points and Strong Points

CLAVELL :: Weak Points and Strong

WING :: Illusion and Reality

HANZHANG :: Void and Actuality

SAWYER :: Vacuity and Substance

KRAUSE :: Control

HUANG :: Superiority and Inferiority

GRIFFITH :: Weaknesses and Strength

CLEARY :: Emptiness and Fullness

The ability to change and adapt according to threats and opportunities is strategic genius.

“Brilliant leaders use creative Illusion in all of their strategies. Illusions that cause the opponent to lose perspective and make mistakes. Moreover, they build spontaneity into their strategy so that they continually force their opponents to readjust.” WING

“When the control of forces approaches its zenith, evolve into imperceptible control. With imperceptible control, no deeply hidden agents can penetrate and no ingenious men can scheme. So, our victories in battles will not be repeated and our responsive control will be unlimited.” HUANG

“So a military force has no constant formation, water has no constant shape: the ability to gain victory by changing and adapting according to the opponent is called genius.”
CLEARY

“Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent’s fate.”
CLEARY



MANEUVER

07

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Armed Contest

CLAVELL :: Maneuvering

WING :: Engaging the Force

HANZHANG :: Maneuvering

SAWYER :: Military Combat

KRAUSE :: Managing Direct Conflict

HUANG :: Armed Contention

GRIFFITH :: Manoeuvre

CLEARY :: Armed Struggle

The ability to systematically convert strategic vision into global action faster than the opponent is necessary in order to successfully shape and maneuver.

“Hence, during swiftness, be like the wind. During stillness, be like the forest. During aggression, be like fire. During immobility, be like a mountain. Be as unknowable as the dark. Move like a thunderbolt.” WING

“On the field of battle, the spoken word does not carry far enough; hence the institution of gongs & Drums. Nor can ordinary objects be seen clearly enough; hence the institution of banners and flags. Gongs and drums, banners and flags are means whereby the ears and eyes of the most may be focused on one particular point. The host thus forming a single united body, it is impossible either for the brave to advance alone or the commander to retreat alone.” CLAVELL

“The secret of deception is knowing how to manipulate the enemy’s perception”
KRAUSE

“So if you travel light, no stopping day or night, doubling your usual pace, struggling for an advantage a hundred miles away, your military leaders will be captured. Strong soldiers will get there first, the weary later on, as a rule, one in ten make it. Struggling for an advantage fifty miles away will thwart the forward leadership, and as a rule only fifty percent of the soldiers make it. Struggle for an advantage thirty miles away, and two out of three get there. So an army perishes if it has no equipment, it perishes if it has no food, and it perishes if it has no money.” CLEARY



VARIABLES

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Adapting to the Nine Contingencies

CLAVELL :: Variation of Tactics

WING :: The Nine Variations

HANZHANG :: The Nine Variables

SAWYER :: The Nine Variables

KRAUSE :: Flexibility

HUANG :: The Nine Adaptations

GRIFFITH :: The Nine Variables

CLEARY :: Adaptations

Know all variables and adaptations. Know terrain, ritual and culture. Know strengths and weaknesses. Knowledge prevents surprise and assures victory.

“He should not make camp on difficult terrain; he should join with his allies on strategically vital intersections; he should not linger on cutoff terrain; he should have contingency plans on terrain vulnerable to ambush; and he should take the fight to the enemy on terrain from which there is no way out. There are roadways not to be traveled, armies not to be attacked, walled cities not to be assaulted, territory not to be contested, and commands from the ruler not to be obeyed.” AMES

“There are five qualities which are fatal in the character of a general: If reckless, he can be killed; if cowardly, captured; if quick-tempered, he can be provoked to rage and make a fool of himself; if he has too delicate a sense of honor, he can be easily insulted; if he is of a compassionate nature, you can harass him.” HANZHANG

“Therefore generals who know all possible adaptations to take advantage of the ground know how to use military forces. If generals do not know how to adapt advantageously, even if they know the lay of the land they cannot take advantage of it. If they rule armies without knowing the arts of complete adaptivity, even if they know what there is to gain, they cannot get people to work for them.” CLEARY

“So the rule of military operations is not to count on opponents not coming, but to rely on having ways of dealing with them; not to count on opponents not attacking, but to rely on having what cannot be attacked.” CLEARY



MARCHES

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Deploying the Army

CLAVELL :: The Army on the March

WING :: Moving the Force

HANZHANG :: On the March

SAWYER :: Maneuvering the Army

KRAUSE :: Maneuvering

HUANG :: Troop Maneuvers

GRIFFITH :: Marches

CLEARY :: Maneuvering

Marches require supreme vigilance and experienced judgement. Prime intelligence is necessary to respond accurately to changing terrain and evolving situations.

“If the enemy is close and yet quiet, He occupies a strategic position; If he is at a distance and yet acts provocatively, He wants us to advance, Where He has positioned himself on level ground, He is harboring some advantage; If there is movement in the trees, He is coming. If there are many blinds in the bushes, He is looking to confuse us; If birds take to flight, He is lying in ambush; If animals stampede in fear, He is mounting a surprise attack; If the dust peaks up high, His chariots are coming; If the dust spreads out low to the ground, His infantry is coming; If the dust reaches our to scattered ribbons, His firewood details have been dispatched; If a few clouds of dust come and go, He is making camp. If his envoys are modest of word yet he continues to increase his readiness for war, He will advance; If His language is belligerent and he advances aggressively, He will withdraw; If His light chariots move out first And take up position in the flanks He is moving into formation; If He has suffered no setback and yet sues for peace, he is plotting; If He moves rapidly with his troops in formation, He is setting the time for battle; If some of his troops advance and some retreat, He is seeking to lure us forward. If the enemy soldiers lean on their weapons, They are hungry; If those sent for water first drink themselves, They are thirsty; If there is an advantage to be had yet they do not advance to secure it, They are weary; Where birds gather, The enemy position is unoccupied; Where there are shouts in the night, The enemy is frightened; Where there are disturbances in the ranks, The enemy commander is not respected; Where their flags and pennants are shifted about, The enemy is in disorder; Where his officers are easily angered, The enemy is exhausted. Where the enemy feeds his horses grain and his men meat, And where His men no longer bother to hang up their water vessels, Or return to camp, The now-desperate enemy is ready to fight to the death. Where, hemming and hawing, The enemy commander speaks to his subordinates in a meek and halting voice, He has lost his men. Meting out too many reward Means the enemy is in trouble, And meting out too many punishments Means he is in dire straits. The commander who erupts violently at his subordinates, Only then to fear them, Is totally inept. When the enemy's emissary comes with conciliatory words He wants to end hostilities.” SAWYER



TERRAIN

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: The Terrain

CLAVELL :: Terrain

WING :: Situational Positioning

HANZHANG :: Terrain

SAWYER :: Configurations of Terrain

KRAUSE :: Competitive Situations

HUANG :: Terrain

GRIFFITH :: Terrain

CLEARY :: Terrain

The ability to prosecute campaigns on varying terrain is of utmost importance. The ability to maneuver adversaries to terrain least advantageous to their strengths and most exploitative of their weaknesses allows the commander to win with little or no conflict.

“If you know your soldiers are capable of striking, but do not know whether the enemy is invulnerable to a strike, you have half a chance of winning. If you know the enemy is vulnerable to a strike, but do not know if your soldiers are incapable of making such a strike, you have half a chance of winning. If you know the enemy is vulnerable to a strike, and know your soldiers can make the strike, but do not know if the lay of the land makes it unsuitable for battle, you have half a chance of winning.” CLEARY

“The contour of the land is an aid to an army; sizing up opponents to determine victory assessing dangers and distances, is the proper course of action for military leaders. Those who do battle knowing these will win, those who do battle without knowing these will lose.” CLEARY

“Know the other, know yourself, And the victory will not be at risk; Know the ground, know the natural conditions, And the victory can be total.” AMES

“By perceiving the geographical factors and perceiving the cyclic natural occurrences, victory thereby is complete.” HUANG



11 NINE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: The Nine Kinds of Terrain

CLAVELL :: The Nine Situations

WING :: The Nine Varieties of Ground

HANZHANG :: The Nine Situations

SAWYER :: Nine Terrains

KRAUSE :: Competitive Conditions

HUANG :: The Nine Zones

GRIFFITH :: Nine Varieties of Ground

CLEARY :: Nine Grounds

When conflict is inevitable, and fighting unavoidable, then the terrain upon which the conflict is prosecuted and the motivation and bearing of the troops is of utmost importance. Effective leaders create hope from despair and convert fear into action.

"Therefore, on terrain where the troops are easily scattered, I would work to make them one of purpose; on marginal terrain, I would keep the troops together; on contested terrain, I would pick up the pace of our rear divisions; on intermediate terrain, I would pay particular attention to defense; at a strategically vital intersection, I would make sure of my alliances; on critical terrain, I would maintain a continuous line of provisions; on difficult terrain, I would continue the advance along the road; on terrain vulnerable to ambush, I would block off the paths of access and retreat; on terrain from which there is no way out, I would show our troops my resolve to fight to the death." AMES

"When officers and men care only for worldly riches they will cherish life at all costs. Now the troops of those adept in war are used like the Simultaneously Responding snake of Mount Chang. When struck on the head its tail attacked; when struck on the tail its head attacks, when struck in the centre both head and tail attack." GRIFFITH

"He changes his methods and alters his plans so that people have no knowledge of what he is doing. He alters his camp-sites and marches by devious routes, and thus makes it impossible for others to anticipate his purpose. To assemble the army and throw it into a desperate position is the business of the general. He leads the army deep into hostile territory and there releases the trigger." GRIFFITH

"Speed is the essence of war." GRIFFITH



FIRE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Incendiary Attack

CLAVELL :: Attack by Fire

WING :: The Fiery Attack

HANZHANG :: Attack by Fire

SAWYER :: Incendiary Attack

KRAUSE :: Destroying Reputation

HUANG :: Attacks Using Fire

GRIFFITH :: Attack by Fire

CLEARY :: Fire Attack

UTILIZE EXTREME POSITIONING. When fighting, the incendiary attack is effective in its ability to quickly and decisively alter the terrain by converting a difficult situation into an advantaged situation. Fire accompanied by surprise is the most effective tactic.

The use of fire must have a basis, and requires certain tools. There are appropriate times for setting fires, namely when the weather is dry and windy. **CLEARY**

There are five kinds of fire attack; burning people, burning supplies, burning equipment, burning storehouses, and burning weapons. **CLEARY**

A government should not mobilize an army out of anger, military leaders should not provoke war out of wrath. **CLEARY**



ESPIONAGE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

AMES :: Using Spies

CLAVELL :: The Use of Spies

WING :: The Use of Intelligence

HANZHANG :: Use of Spies

SAWYER :: Employing Spies

KRAUSE :: Gathering Intelligence

HUANG :: Espionage

GRIFFITH :: Employment of Secret Agents

CLEARY :: On the Use of Spies

Foreknowledge is the ultimate competitive advantage.

“A major military operation is a severe drain on the nation, and may be kept up for years in the struggle for one day’s victory. So to fail to know the conditions of opponents because of reluctance to give rewards for intelligence is extremely inhumane, uncharacteristic of a true military leader, uncharacteristic of an assistant of the government, uncharacteristic of a victorious chief. So what enables an intelligent government and a wise military leadership to overcome others and achieve extraordinary accomplishments is foreknowledge.” **CLEARY**

“Thus the reason the farsighted ruler and his superior commander conquer the enemy at every move, is foreknowledge. Such foreknowledge cannot be had from ghosts and spirits, deduced by comparison with past events, or verified by astrological calculations. It must come from people-people who know the enemy’s situation.” **AMES**

“What is called foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analog with past events, nor from calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation.” **GRIFFITH**

“Generally in the case of armies you wish to strike, cities you wish to attack, and people you wish to assassinate, you must know the names of the garrison commander, the staff officers, the ushers, gate keepers, and the bodyguards. You must instruct your agents to inquire into these matters in minute detail.” **GRIFFITH**



BOOKS

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

Ames, Roger T. *The Art of Warfare*. Translated With an Introduction and Commentary. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.

Clavell, James. *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.

Cleary, Thomas. *The Art of War*. Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1988.

Griffith, Samuel B. *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*. . Oxford University Press. Oxford. 1963.

Hanzhang, General Tao. *Sun Tzu's Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1990

Huang, J.H. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. New York. Quill - William Morrow.1993

Krause, Donald G. *The Art of War For Executives*. New York, NY: A Pedigree Book. The Berkley Publishing Group, 1995.

Sawyer, Ralph D. *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993.

Wing, R.L. *The Art of Strategy*. New York. Doubleday. 1988



vSENTE

THE SUN TZU BRIEF

What is vSente? We're campaigners. We battle for market share. We launch products, defend share, attack competition and reposition weak offerings. We are a cross between an advertising agency and a management consulting group. We impact the entire revenue mix and our compensation is determined largely by the success of the campaign. We campaign via a proprietary, battle proven methodology called FIRSTmaneuver. FIRSTmaneuver has delivered 50% revenue increases and 20% reductions in sales and marketing budgets for many campaigns. FIRSTmaneuver has evolved out of strategies and tactics utilized in more than 500 campaigns over a 25 year time frame. Our methodology, described in a 350 page manual, is based upon the application of Boyd Cycles and maneuver theory to generate competitive advantage. Visit www.v sente.com for more information.

