

About *Planning*

Sun Tzu's system for competition is methodical. The first chapter of *The Art of War* is most commonly entitled "*Planning*," but today we think of planning as putting together a list of tasks. Sun Tzu's "planning" is an objective analysis of the competitive situation. This planning takes place long before we start laying out even the most basic competitive actions.

In this performing this analysis, we start with the basics. What roles does competition play in life? Why is competition important? We then go on to analyze the components that make up a competitive system. What components determine success in competition? What are the characteristics of these components? How do they affect our chances of success?

We judge more than our own situation from this type of analysis. We can judge the quality of competitors by whether *they* perform this type of analysis. How well do we think they understand their competitive situation?

Sun Tzu identifies success in competition as the control of information. Our analysis or planning is based on information. Our competition's planning is also based on information. Given the critical value of information, what information do we want our competitors to have? How do we want to control our competitors' perceptions of the situation? What do we want our competitors to know about the competitive universe?

Sun Tzu's chapter on planning provides the basics of identifying winning situations. Our goal is to predict where we can win and where we cannot.

About *Planning*

Lesson 1: The Role of Competition

What role does competition play in a life?

- A. It is one of the most basic, natural skills in life.**
- B. It is a necessary but unpleasant part of life.**
- C. Competition creates most of the problems in life.**
- D. The ability to compete is the most important skill in life.**

This is war.

It is the most important skill in the nation.

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- D. The ability to compete is the most important skill in life.

Sun Tzu begins by putting the importance of competition into perspective. Competition is natural in the sense that we are all the products of evolutionary competition, but skill in competition is not inborn. Competition creates problems, but only in the sense that, if we don't compete well, life is unnecessarily difficult. We earn our livelihood, our loves, and all else through competition.

When we say that competition is the most important skill in life, we are saying that competition *is* a skill. It isn't natural. It must be learned. We develop skills by working at them. Some people are more comfortable competing than others are, but to become successful at any level of competition, we all have to work.

Competition brings out the best in us. It enriches the world in which we live. It replaces less effective methods with more effective methods. The business world competes for our buying dollar. In doing so, business competitors constantly improve our buying choices and decrease product costs. Competition eliminates poorly run businesses and nations and leaves only the best in each category.

Today, we see this competition most clearly on the Internet. Thousands of web sites compete for our attention. In the end, only those that provide value will survive and grow.

The Warrior Class

Lesson 2: The Need for Competitive Skills

Why should you want to develop your competitive skills?

- A. So you can better enjoy competition.**
- B. So you can make money more easily.**
- C. So you can survive.**
- D. So you can get more control of your time.**

It is the basis of life and death.

It is the philosophy of survival or destruction.

You must know it well.

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- C. So you can survive.

Competition is the strategy of survival. Our lives, our ideas, the existence of our organizations, the survival of our nation, the continuation of our way of life all depend upon the outcome of life's competitions.

The success of human society makes it easy to take our personal survival for granted. This is always a mistake. We could all die tomorrow if we don't take the personal responsibility for making the right decisions. Nuclear war, a genetic plague, or an errant meteor could wipe out our entire race.

Success is totally dependent on competition. The big fallacy is that success depends on luck, hard work, or intelligence. These factors play a role, but when luck, hard work, and even intelligence come up against competitive skill, skill wins

Competition never ends. One cycle of competition simply leads to another. Yesterday's winner can be tomorrow's loser. AOL, Yahoo, Amazon, and Ebay may be the big Internet winners today. Tomorrow, they can and all will be replaced. Economists call this "creative destruction." Progress marches on. Winners and losers change places. We can be among tomorrow's winners. To do so, we must master the skills of competition.

About *Planning*

Lesson 3: The Factors of Success

How many factors determine your success in competition?

- A. There is only one primary skill you need to master.**
- B. There are five factors that determine your success.**
- C. There are hundreds of different factors that determine success.**
- D. Every situation is different in what factors determine success.**

Your skill comes from five factors.

Study these factors when you plan war.

You must insist on knowing the nature of:

- 1. Military philosophy,*
- 2. The weather,*
- 3. The ground,*
- 4. The commander,*
- 5. And military methods.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

B. Five factors determine success.

These five factors are the components of our competitive situation. For modern competition, we can think of them as our competition philosophy, the trend of the times, the battleground we compete on, our competitive talent, and the processes we use. These five factors determine the eventual outcome of any competition. Planning, or more precisely, analysis, depends on our evaluation of these five factors.

All five of these factors are important. We have to question each of them in order to analyze our situation. In a given situation, one may be more important than the rest, but together these five factors determine our success or failure.

When we judge our competitive situation, we don't have to analyze hundreds of issues. People often fail to do the proper analysis because they think that it is too complex. Successful analysis depends on only a handful of relevant factors.

The Warrior Class

Lesson 4: The Competitive Philosophy

What is the right competitive philosophy?

- A. You must always fight no matter what the costs.**
- B. You must always have a clear-cut goal.**
- C. You must always consider the needs of others.**
- D. You must always use any means to succeed.**

It starts with your military philosophy.

Command your people in a way that gives them a higher shared purpose.

You can lead them to death.

You can lead them to life.

They must never fear danger or dishonesty.

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- C. Always consider the needs of others.

This answer surprises most people. They expect the most successful military philosophy of all time to be fierce and bloodthirsty. In reality, it is just the opposite. Sun Tzu's teaching is complex, but at its heart, it is a philosophy that puts people first.

Sun Tzu realized that in any human endeavor, we find success through our interactions with others. Only other people can make us successful. They support us only if we satisfy their needs. This means that we must have a higher purpose that we share with them. We all want our lives to mean something. In business, politics or religion, we must help people see the value and purpose of what they do.

At Clearbridge, for example, our mission is to bring the wisdom of *The Art of War* to the modern business world. By helping everyone become better competitors, we can make the world more productive and enrich everyone's lives. We sell books to do this, but the books are just the start. We have already added on-line training, video, and audio seminars. In the future, we plan to extend this training in every way that we can.