

Unit 14
Reading C

Fighting Your Business Battles: 6 Lasting Lessons from The Art of War

《商战兵法：从〈孙子兵法〉中汲取的六个持久经验》

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1 Business has always been tough, but it has gotten even more difficult as competition has become more global, faster-paced and increasingly technology-dependent. So, in the 21st century, would it make sense to look to The Art of War by Sun Tzu for business advice, a book on ancient warfare written centuries before the birth of Christ?

商业一直都很艰难，但随着竞争变得更加全球化、节奏更快以及日益依赖技术，商业变得更加困难。那么，在 21 世纪，从孙子所著的《孙子兵法》——一本在基督诞生前几个世纪写成的关于古代战争的书籍——中寻找商业建议是否有意义呢？

2 The answer is that The Art of War lays out a brilliant strategic philosophy that has proven itself over the millennia in all types of competitive endeavors. Of course, it's been applied by the military: former U. S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell relied upon it and has many translations of it in his home. It's been said that New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick utilizes it to help his team continue its winning traditions. And many business strategists have used it to gain competitive advantage. It has even moved into our popular culture, appearing in the classic movie Wall Street, in which Gordon Gekko states, "I don't throw darts at a board. I bet on sure things. Read Sun Tzu, The Art of War. Every battle is won before it is fought."

答案是，《孙子兵法》阐述了一种卓越的战略哲学，在数千年的各种竞争活动中都已证明了自身的价值。当然，它被军队所应用：美国前参谋长联席会议主席科林·鲍威尔依靠它，在他的家中有许多不同的译本。据说新英格兰爱国者队教练比尔·贝利奇克利用它来帮助他的球队延续其胜利传统。许多商业战略家也用它来获得竞争优势。它甚至进入了我们的流行文化，出现在经典电影《华尔街》中，在电影里戈登·盖柯说：“我不会向板子上扔飞镖碰运气。我赌有把握的事。读一读《孙子兵法》。每场战斗在打响之前就已经获胜了。”

3 So to make Sun Tzu's concepts easier to understand and more applicable to modern business people, I've developed Six Principles from The Art of War that apply to business. Here they are:

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4 “Generally in war, the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this . . . For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”—Sun Tzu

为了使孙子的理念更容易被理解，并且更适用于现代的商业人士，我从《孙子兵法》中总结出了适用于商业的六条原则。如下所示：

5 Too often businesses fight over market share and start price wars, only to find when it's all over, that they've won a Pyrrhic victory; they have captured the market but left it devoid of profits. The

airline industry illustrates this as price cutting has produced many money-losing airlines and terrible customer service.

企业常常为争夺市场份额而展开价格战，结果却发现，当一切结束时，他们赢得的只是一场惨胜；他们占领了市场，却使市场没有了利润。航空业就是一个例子，价格战导致了许多亏损的航空公司和糟糕的客户服务。

6 Instead, to prosper you must capture your market in a manner that leaves the industry healthy. This can be done in numerous ways; developing new ways to serve the market or by using subtle, indirect, and low-key approaches that will not draw a competitor's attention or response. Amazon did this in the book retailing industry, capturing much of that market and then expanding to serve others. More recently, Netflix overcame Blockbuster with a different business model that the latter ignored and now Red Box has been able to find yet one more way to serve and win in the home video market.

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相反，要想繁荣发展，你必须以一种使行业保持健康的方式占领市场。这可以通过多种方式实现，比如开发服务市场的新方法，或者采用微妙、间接和低调的方式，这样不会引起竞争对手的注意或回应。亚马逊在图书零售行业就是这样做的，占领了很大一部分市场，然后扩展到为其他领域服务。最近，网飞（Netflix）以一种百视达（Blockbuster）忽视的不同商业模式战胜了它，而现在红盒子（Red Box）又找到了另一种在家庭视频市场服务并获胜的方法。

7 “An army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness.”—Sun Tzu
“兵形象水，水之形，避高而趋下，兵之形，避实而击虚。”——孙子。

8 Many times businesses will launch direct attacks on the competitors in the hope of profit. Yet direct, unsubtle and heads-down assaults on a competitor's strengths rarely work. Instead they drain a firm's resources and rouse the other company to fight back strongly.

很多时候，企业会对竞争对手发动直接攻击，希望从中获利。然而，直接、不巧妙且一味蛮干地攻击竞争对手的优势很少奏效。相反，这样做会耗尽企业的资源，并激起对方公司的强烈反击。

9 What one must do instead is find the competitor's weaknesses and capitalize on attacking those. For example, instead of directly taking on the big retailers in cities, Walmart started out in small towns. In this way the company was able to eliminate weaker local competitors while simultaneously growing stronger. Then, when Kmart later launched a direct price war against Walmart, it was unable to win against Walmart's strength, a low-cost model.

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相反，人们必须做的是找到竞争对手的弱点，并利用这些弱点进行攻击。例如，沃尔玛没有直接在城市中与大型零售商竞争，而是从小城镇起步。通过这种方式，该公司能够在不断发展壮大的同时淘汰实力较弱的当地竞争对手。后来，当凯马特（Kmart）对沃尔玛发动直接价格战时，它无法战胜沃尔玛的优势——低成本模式。

10 “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”—Sun

Tzu

“知己知彼，百战不殆。”——孙子。

11 Business intelligence is crucial to learning the competitor's strengths and weaknesses and understanding one's own capabilities. One case in point hails from the burger wars between McDonald's and Burger King. The latter had decided to attack McDonald's and its renowned French fries by making its own better and touting them to buyers. Apprised of this, McDonald's CEO sent an urgent letter to all restaurants, telling them that “Burger King will launch a full frontal assault on one of our greatest assets —our fries.” In the letter he then laid out detailed instructions on how to ensure only high-quality fries would get served. Through smart intelligence about its competitor's plans McDonald's won that round of the fight.

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商业情报对于了解竞争对手的优势和劣势以及了解自身的能力至关重要。一个恰当的例子来自麦当劳和汉堡王之间的汉堡大战。后者决定通过制作更好的薯条并向消费者推销来攻击麦当劳及其著名的薯条。得知此事后，麦当劳的首席执行官向所有餐厅发出了一封紧急信件，告诉他们“汉堡王将对我们最伟大的资产之一——我们的薯条发起全面正面攻击”。在信中，他随后详细说明了如何确保只提供高质量薯条的具体指示。通过对竞争对手计划的明智情报收集，麦当劳在那一轮竞争中获胜。

12 “Speed is the essence of war. Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; travel by unexpected routes and strike him where he has taken no precautions.”—Sun Tzu

“兵之情主速。乘人之不及，由不虞之道，攻其所不戒也。”——孙子。

13 In business, as in war, speed is essential. The changes companies face, whether social, technological, political or economic, are only accelerating. If a firm cannot move rapidly to respond to market changes it will not survive. Speed is instrumental in being the first to market, enabling a company to take advantage of fleeting opportunities and keeping the competition off balance. Companies such as Coca-Cola are continually bringing new products to market or finding new ways to deliver choice and convenience to customers via innovations like the multi-product Freestyle soda dispenser.

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在商业中，如同在战争中一样，速度至关重要。公司所面临的变化，无论是社会、技术、政治还是经济方面的，都在不断加速。如果一家公司不能迅速行动以应对市场变化，它就无法生存。速度在率先进入市场方面起着重要作用，使公司能够利用稍纵即逝的机会，并让竞争对手失去平衡。像可口可乐这样的公司不断将新产品推向市场，或者通过诸如多产品的“自由式”汽水机等创新方式为客户提供更多选择和便利。

14 “Therefore, those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are not brought there by him.”—Sun Tzu

“故善战者，致人而不致于人。”——孙子。

15 By forming alliances with other companies one can acquire new capabilities and access new markets. Even allying with competitors (competition) can be a smart strategy as well. The NFL determined that this was the way to go when it gave up its feud with the old American Football

League to join it, form a larger league and create the Super Bowl. The latter is now broadcast every year.

通过与其他公司结成联盟，人们可以获得新的能力并进入新的市场。即使与竞争对手结盟也可以是一种明智的策略。美国国家橄榄球联盟（NFL）认定这是正确的做法，当时它放弃了与旧的美国橄榄球联盟（American Football League）的争斗，与之合并，组成一个更大的联盟，并创建了超级碗（Super Bowl）。后者现在每年都会进行转播。

16 Controlling strategic positions is another way to compete successfully. Owning critical patents, seats on standards boards, a powerful brand or the direct relationship with the customer all can lead to gaining the lion's share of the industry profits. One need only look at Google in web search or Apple in the smartphone and tablet markets to see how holding a strategic stronghold can pay off.

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控制战略位置是另一种成功竞争的方式。拥有关键专利、在标准委员会中的席位、强大的品牌或与客户的直接关系，都可以带来行业利润的最大份额。人们只需看看网络搜索领域的谷歌或智能手机和平板电脑市场的苹果，就能明白占据战略要地会带来多大的回报。

17 “When one treats people with benevolence, justice and righteousness, and reposes confidence in them, the army will be united in mind and all will be happy to serve their leaders.”—Sun Tzu

“将帅对待士卒能像对待婴儿一样，士卒就可以同将帅共赴患难；将帅对待士卒能像对待自己的儿子一样，士卒就可以跟将帅同生共死。如果对士卒厚待却不能使用，溺爱却不能指挥，违法而不能惩治，那就如同骄惯了的子女，是不可以用来同敌作战的。”—— 孙子。

（注：17 段英文内容与这句孙子的话在意思上相近，但不完全对应。如果严格按照英文直译，应为“当一个人以仁爱、正义和正直对待人们，并对他们寄予信任时，军队将在思想上团结一致，所有人都将乐于为他们的领导者服务。”—— 孙子。）

18 For a leader to successfully execute Sun Tzu's strategic philosophy requires not just intelligence; character is critical as well. One cannot align the team on the right path and deliver real value to customers in the long term without having sufficient character, a sense of self-awareness and an understanding and empathy for others (i. e. emotional intelligence). We know this from studying great leaders in history, the people we work with every day and the science of leadership.

对于一位领导者来说，要成功执行孙子的战略哲学，不仅需要智慧，品格也至关重要。如果没有足够的品格、自我意识以及对他人的理解和同理心（即情商），就无法让团队走上正确的道路并长期为客户提供真正的价值。我们从研究历史上的伟大领导者、我们每天一起工作的人以及领导学的科学中了解到这一点。

19 If one follows these six principles one can be successful. Winning the business battles of the future can be helped by using the wisdom of the past.

如果遵循这六条原则，就能够取得成功。运用过去的智慧可以帮助我们在未来的商业竞争中获胜。