

## Eastern Military Insights: Some Words of Wisdom for Organizational Effectiveness

Military units are some of the oldest existing formal organizational structures. As such, they have many time-tested, long-standing practices and techniques that have proven successful over thousands of years. Eastern military strategies have particularly interesting and unique lessons that can be applied to modern day organizational issues such as performance enhancement, measurement schema, making the complex simple and managing emerging threats and opportunities within the environmental landscape. This research will focus on the lessons from Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese philosopher who penned the treatise The Art of War in approximately 500 B.C. Managers around the world know this work as one that can lead to winning strategies in the world of business. Numerous synopses and commentaries on this major work have been published across the globe. However, the manuscript has additional lessons that can be utilized to better comprehend and manage the issues of complexity, emergence and classification. These are less well-known and not as obvious from a first glance. These relationships will be discussed herein.

One of the great tenets of Sun Tzu was to “know your enemy.” In the marketplace or the battleground, those areas external to the organization, this is an obvious strategy. But it can also be applied internally. Managers should try to identify any “enemies” within, such as inefficiency, lackluster performance, poor morale, the grapevine, and other items that prevent an organization from accomplishing its goals. Thus the emergence of problems can be classified and managed more accurately. Another alternate but equally important premise of the great philosopher was to “know your craft.” Knowing both individual and organizational talents and capabilities can allow managers to better acknowledge and respond to emerging opponents. “Knowing thyself” in a systematic and routine way can better enable managers to deal with increasing levels of complexity that encase the organization as it grows and changes. “Thoroughly assess conditions” is another motto that can facilitate better the categorization of operational issues and roadblocks to success. Again, this can be applied internally but is more often used as an external mechanism by managers. Assessment can also be a great companion to benchmarking, standardization and performance measurement. The mandate to “look for strategic turns” also can help managers navigate timely issues. “Fighting only the battles you can win” serves to keep managers focused on their ultimate objective, winning. By judiciously marshalling resources to only the most important and critical battles, organizations will avoid unnecessary resource expenditures and untimely actions. In order to choose which battles are appropriate, a multilayered framework that incorporates the interrelationships of subsequent actions

The paper will cover these and other principles from Sun Tzu’s work in order to address the complexities of modern organizational life that challenge today’s managers, executives and working professionals. Ironically, the simple directives born of Eastern philosophy over two thousand years ago are applicable in today’s fast-paced, ever-changing, technologically advanced society.