

If business is war, think like a general

You may not realize it, but many business owners and managers adopt war principles to lead their companies.

Think about it: Companies declare “war” on competitors. You probably sometimes speak in battlefield metaphors, such as “launching a frontal attack,” “defending our turf” and “penetrating enemy lines.”

Here are some similarities in the way military leaders and business executives operate:

-They focus on the big picture. The general must embrace the entire sweep of events. The fast-charging business owner must think in broad terms to weigh the cost and benefit of decisions, interplay between one division’s strategy and another unit’s efforts, and the ever-changing actions of employees, contractors and customers.

-They must rely on teams. The traditional rigidity of military hierarchies doesn’t negate the importance of teamwork among soldiers. Similarly, you should expect employees at all levels to function in groups.

-They rely on trust. A military commander must establish trust or his troops might hesitate to follow orders in the heat of battle. A business exec who fails to earn his employees’ trust faces a similar danger.

Prepare to ‘attack’

Your success hinges on your ability to solve problems, communicate, and plan and execute your objectives effectively. So, think like a general and use these principles:

- 1. Direct all efforts** toward a clearly defined, decisive goal. You must articulate the actual gains you expect to attain.
- 2. Seize the initiative** in a decisive manner, retain it and exploit it to reach your objective.
- 3. Concentrate your combat power** at the decisive place and time. Successful generals train, rest, equip and position their forces properly before engaging the enemy, so as to deliver the most powerful blow from the outset.
- 4. Allocate essential combat power** to secondary efforts. Make sure every available resource contributes to achieving the main objective.
- 5. Place the enemy at a disadvantage** by using combat power. Generals maintain flexibility in their plans and their forces, so they can outmaneuver their opponents and exploit opportunities that may develop as the battle unfolds.