THE THIRTY-SIX STRATAGEMS

A MODERN INTERPRETATION OF
A STRATEGY CLASSIC

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THE THIRTY-SIX STRATAGEMS

A MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION OF A STRATEGY CLASSIC

BY PETER TAYLOR

Introduction

The *Thirty-Six Stratagems* is a Chinese essay used to illustrate a series of stratagems used in politics and in war, as well as in civilian life, often through unorthodox means. Approximately 300 years ago, either towards the end of the Ming or the beginning of the Qing Dynasties, an unknown scholar compiled these 36 military stratagems. One of the things that makes this classic unique and strangely seductive is its use of deception throughout.

The use of the word 'stratagem' needs to be understood, this is not a 'strategy' (being a long-term plan or outline of activity over a period of time) but something that can be considered a plan, scheme, or trick for surprising or deceiving an enemy or in fact any ruse, or trick devised or used to attain a goal or to gain an advantage over an adversary or competitor. A strategy can comprise of a number of stratagems: a series of manoeuvres or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result: a strategy for getting ahead in the world.

The *Thirty-Six Stratagems* have variably been attributed to Sun Tzu[1] from the Spring and Autumn Period of China, or Zhuge Liang[2] of the Three Kingdoms Period, but neither are regarded as the true author by most historians. Instead, the prevailing view is that the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* may have originated in both written and oral history, with many different versions compiled by different authors throughout Chinese history.

Typically the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* are grouped under six main categories. Each category contains 6 stratagems and these 6 categories in turn can be used in two types of situations.

The three categories 'Advantageous Stratagems', the 'Opportunistic Stratagems' and the 'Attacking Stratagems' are used when you are in a Winning situation. The other three categories, the 'Confusion Stratagems', the 'Deception Stratagems' and the 'Desperate Stratagems' are used when you are in a disadvantageous or Losing situation.

However, the application and usage of these strategies can be combined in various ways as they are not intended to be used alone, nor are they only applicable in purely a winning or purely a losing situation. The possible combination and application of these stratagems are limited only by the imagination and creativity of the

person applying them. In fact Stratagem 35, 'chain stratagems', recommends the multiple (and non-repetitive) application of a number of stratagems in order to achieve your goal.

It should be noted that actually, other than Stratagem 36 'If else fails, retreat', nobody can be certain of the content of the *Thirty-Six Stratagems*. The most commonly used version comes from an original hand-copied paperback that was believed to have been discovered in China's Shaanxi province, of an unknown date and author, and then put into print by a local publisher in 1941. Nevertheless, over the years, the stratagems have been commonly cited and used by many generals as well businessmen.

The *Thirty-Six Stratagems* only came to the general public's attention after a review of it was published in the Chinese Communist Party's *Guangming Daily* newspaper in 1961. It was subsequently reprinted and distributed with ever-growing popularity.

It should also be noted that the number 36 is meant to denote numerous stratagems instead of any specific number, again an indication that the modern format and content of the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* is something that has evolved over the years.

Although the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* is a summary of some of the war techniques used by the ancient Chinese warriors, the name may have actually derived from Yi Jing's 'Yin Yang Theory'3 where 6 is the number of Yin that shared many characteristics with the dark schemes involved in military strategy. As 36 is the square of six, it therefore acted as a metaphor for numerous stratagems.

In this book the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* are used to identify ways in which you can apply them in your own life but this comes with a serious word of caution. Applying them in an over-enthusiastic way can lead to some real trouble if you are not careful, remember these stratagems are designed to 'win' and by winning that means the 'defeat' of others, or at least their submission to your will.

I will take you through each stratagem explaining the original concept and bringing it all up to date with some modern examples together with suggestions for ways that you can use it to your own personal advantage.

But remember, in the aggressive world of the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* there is no such concept as 'win-win', you don't walk away best friends at the end of all this, you either win or they win. Your

conscience will tell you how far you personally wish to take this journey.

1 Sun Tzu was an ancient Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher who is traditionally believed to be the author of *The Art of War*, an influential ancient Chinese book on military strategy.

2 Zhuge Liang was a chancellor of the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms Period of Chinese history. He is often recognised as the greatest and most accomplished strategist of his era.

3 The *Yi Jing* is the most ancient of the five prime Confucian classics of China. The earliest extant version was found in 1973 in the Mawangdui tombs in Hunan province. That version dates to the second century BCE, but the book is doubtless much older. At the root of the Yi Jing is the binary system known as yin/yang. According to Taoist cosmology, in the beginning there was only undifferentiated qi (energy), which separated into yin (female) and yang (male). The interaction of these opposing forces gives birth to eternal change. This is expressed in the taiqi symbol, in which yin (dark) and yang (light) are represented as constantly changing into the other; each, moreover, contains within itself the seed of the other.

Stratagems for when you are winning

The following three categories of stratagems, the ‘Advantageous Stratagems’, the ‘Opportunistic Stratagems’ and the ‘Attacking Stratagems’ are to be used when you consider that you are in a winning situation.

These are to be used when winning is just not enough for you; when you would want to push home any advantage that you have to better increase the disadvantage that your opponent is experiencing.

‘Whoever is winning at the moment will always seem to be invincible’

George Orwell

Stratagems for advantageous situations

'To every disadvantage there is a corresponding advantage'

W. Clement Stone

1. Sneak across the ocean in broad daylight

What you see often you do not doubt and what is familiar becomes uninteresting and a perfect cloak for the unusual and unexpected.

This is often referred to as the ‘fool the emperor and cross the sea’ stratagem.

The story goes that a certain Emperor Taizong of Tang, balked from crossing the sea to a military campaign against Koguryo due to a personal fear of seasickness. His general Xue Rengui thought of a stratagem to get the emperor across and allay his fear and so, on a clear day, the emperor was invited to meet a wise man. They entered through a dark tunnel into a hall where they feasted. After feasting for several days, the emperor heard the sound of waves and realised that he had been lured onto a ship. General Xue drew aside the curtains to reveal the ocean and confessed that they were already crossing the sea. The emperor, on discovering this, decided to carry on anyway, since their journey was well progressed by now, and later completed a very successful campaign.

This stratagem means that you can mask your real purpose by using the ruse of a fake target that everyone takes for granted. Tactically, this is known as the ‘open feint’; in front of everyone, you point west, when your goal is actually in the east. For example a goalkeeper, when facing a penalty shot, will often stand to one side or the other effectively inviting the opposing player to aim towards an ‘open’ space when in fact the goalkeeper reacts and moves to this exact space the moment when the shot is taken, thus saving the goal.

This stratagem makes use of the human failing to become unaware of common everyday activities, or events that appear normal and often repetitious. The best secrets are carried out in broad daylight. The best bluff is to repeat it so often that people are convinced that the next move will also be a hoax. When this happens, it is the best moment to carry out one’s previously hidden true objective.

One of the most successful deceptions of the modern war era was Robert Baden-Powell’s defence of Mafeking during the Second Boer War. Baden-Powell had been dispatched to the North West Province of South Africa shortly before the outbreak of war with orders to raise a small force and conduct a harrying war against the Boer flanks to

draw their forces away from a number of key British positions.

The Boers sent 8,000 men to besiege Mafeking which contained Baden-Powell's full force which amounted to less than 1,500 men and officers. He swiftly realised that deceit would be the key to holding the town.

As the Boers advanced Baden-Powell sent a letter to a friend inside Transvaal warning of the imminent approach of more British troops. He knew the friend was dead and hoped the letter would fall into Boer hands – it did, and 1,200 troops sat uselessly watching the Southern approaches for this fictional force.

At Mafeking Baden-Powell set up fake forts at some distance from the town and one, marked as his own headquarters, soon drew enemy attention. These fortifications held up the Boers allowing Baden-Powell to improve Mafeking's real defences.

Here he put locals to work carrying boxes of 'mines' around the town. In actual fact all they contained was sand but nonetheless information about these 'mines' soon leaked to the enemy. When 'minefield' signs sprang up around Mafeking a short while later the Boers took it for granted they were real.

Sometimes, all you have to do is ask, as twenty-six year old New Yorker Craig Rowin apparently proved when he took to the Internet in November 2010 with a simple request posted through a number of YouTube videos in which he asked, 'Please give me one million dollars.'

Rowin then announced in 2011, again via YouTube, that a millionaire called Benjamin had responded. He said, 'He will give me one million dollars and I will owe him nothing in return' adding that this would take place live on stage at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre where Rowin, a comedian, often performs.

Despite the trade taking place Rowin did in fact later admit that the whole thing was hoax but he had the last laugh with a high profile media blast and significant profile and career boost. Maybe not yet a millionaire, but a lot closer than he was when he came up with the campaign idea.

Here's an idea for you

Sometimes just asking for something outright can result in a shocked 'yes', wrap that up in a situation where the recipient is just not

expecting you to ask for anything at all then you have the ultimate 'upper hand' and surprise.

Here's an idea for you

Think about hiding surprise inside familiarity by creating a routine of behaviour that makes others believe that you are a creature of habit, perhaps even boring, at which point – you make the change and achieve your purpose.

2. Besiege Wèi to rescue Zhào

When the enemy is too strong to be attacked directly, then attack something that they hold close to them or value dearly. Take the indirect approach and find their Achilles heel.

The origin of this proverb is apparently from the Warring States Period4 when the state of Wèi attacked Zhao and laid siege to its capital Handan. Zhào turned to Qí for help, but the Qí general Sun Bin determined it would be unwise to meet the army of Wèi head on, so he instead attacked their capital at Daliang. On hearing this news the army of Wèi retreated in haste and the tired troops were then ambushed and defeated at the Battle of Guiling.

The idea here is to avoid a head- on battle with a strong enemy, and instead strike at his weakness elsewhere.

In Greek mythology, when Achilles was a baby, it was foretold that he would die in battle. To prevent his death, his mother, Thetis, took Achilles to the River Styx which was supposed to offer powers of invincibility and here she dipped his body into the powerful water. But as Thetis held Achilles by the heel, his heel was not washed over by the water of the magical river and so left this one place of weakness and vulnerability. Achilles grew up to be a mighty man of war who survived many great battles but one day a poisonous arrow shot at him struck his heel resulting in his death.

Children are skilful at this avoidance of direct conflict by using one parent against the other when trying to get their own way. And in advertising there is the concept of indirect persuasion that uses transfer and diversion to persuade consumers to ‘buy’ by creating an association between a situation and a product. For example an advertisement for a clothing detergent might attempt to create the idea that family life will be wonderful if this product is used. But of course this can only be indirectly implied because in fact there is no such connection.

In 1937 the process, based on electrostatic energy, called Xerography was invented by an American law student Chester Carlson. Xerography (from the Greek for ‘dry writing’) became commercially available in 1950 by the Xerox Corporation.

By the end of the 1970s Xerox dominated the UK photocopier market

but the Japanese company Canon were determined to enter this lucrative market and so they employed a business consultant by the name of Nobuo Taoka. A The First World War general called Frederick W. Lanchester had a set of laws that Nobuo said could be applied to a business in order to build a strategy to seize new overseas markets and so this was applied in the UK.

Using these laws Canon established a 'revolutionary base' by focusing all of its sales force into a single geographical area, Scotland, which then became a stronghold from where they could then advance to the rest of the UK. At first Xerox either did not notice and/or did not care about Canon's arrival who built up momentum slowly, moving south into England area by area. Each time they would take in their best teams to create a sales force of overwhelming strength. Sales grew faster and faster as the dominance grew through the reputation of previous sales and customer satisfaction.

Recognition of this strategy came far too late for Xerox as Canon launched a final push into London and the South East. Empowered by a sales force, now more than equal to the task of taking on Xerox in their home stronghold, they ended Xerox's UK domination.

Here's an idea for you

If you are faced with opposition to something that you want, then direct your persuasion to someone close to that of your opposition. Use this influence to help you, whether through real support for you or just through creating some form of distraction or noise.

Here's an idea for you

There is also the 'divide and conquer' approach where you create weakness in any opposition by splitting them through a disagreement within their ranks, put it another way – feel free to stir it up.

4 The Era of Warring States is a period in ancient China following the Spring and Autumn period and concluding with the victory of the state of Qin in 221 BCE, creating a unified China under the Qin Dynasty. Different scholars use dates for the beginning of the period ranging between 481 BCE and 403 BCE, but Sima Qian's date of 475 BCE is most often cited.

3. Kill with a borrowed knife

Attack using the strength of another in a situation where using one's own strength is not favourable. Trick an ally into attacking him or bribe an official to turn traitor in your favour, or use the enemy's own strength against him.

Borrowing a knife to kill may seem rather too devious but fundamentally it is making use of others' resources for your own gain and sometimes without your opponents knowing it.

The story is told of Huan, the Count of Zheng who planned to conquer the state of Kuai. He published a document announcing that in case Kuai should fall into the hands of Zheng, ministers and generals of Kuai mentioned in the paper would be granted 'special status' in the state of Zheng. In addition, the entire captured territory of Kuai would be distributed among them. When the ruler of Kuai heard of this he immediately suspected high treason and had many of his ministers and generals executed. With the elite of Kuai now gone, by the orders of their own ruler, the conquest of Kuai was then a fairly simple task for Count Huan of Zheng to complete. The Count of Zheng, through such deception, had set the foundations for this win by his enemy.

The idea here is to cause damage to your enemy by getting a third party to do the deed, in fact it can be said that 'your enemy's enemy is your friend'.

A communication sent to the Nazis during The Second World War by one of their most trusted spies in Britain, Juan Pujol Garcia, gave deceptive information about the Allies' D-Day landing plans in 1944. Pujol was involved as part of an elaborate British wartime plot aimed at convincing Hitler that the Allies were about to stage the bulk of the D-Day landings in Pas de Calais rather than on the Normandy coast – a diversion that proved crucial in guaranteeing the invasion's success. The double agent was so completely trusted at the top level of the Nazi high command that he was honoured for his services to Germany and awarded the Iron Cross.

Here the enemy becomes their own worst enemy by acting in belief of the duplicitous information, to their detriment and to the advantage of the opposition.

The launch of Red Bull has been the most successful beverage launch

of the last decade with sales in the last year of some 4.5 billion cans.

Its success is due to positioning the drink as a premium offering, up to six times more expensive than a ‘coke’ for example, and supported by a strong marketing strategy: ‘Red Bull gives you wings’, and sold in a tall and slim blue-silver can which was unique to the shop shelves at that time.

But there was nothing new about Red Bull since it was inspired by a pre-existing energy drink called Krating Daeng (in Thai ‘daeng’ means red, and ‘krating’ is a reddish-brown animal slightly larger than the bison), which was first invented and sold in Thailand, and was very popular with truck drivers there.

Austrian entrepreneur Dietrich Mateschitz took this idea, modified the ingredients to suit the tastes of Westerners and, in partnership with Chaleo Yoovidhya, founded Red Bull GmbH in Austria. Both are now said to be worth some $5 billion each.

Here’s an idea for you

Don’t expend physical energy on arguing with an opponent but just say something that will plain worry them, enough that they will waste valuable time, money and effort in checking out what you say .

Here’s an idea for you

Create competition between your adversary and another competitor by helping that competitor in some way in order to distract your opponent.

4. Wait at leisure while the enemy labours

It is an advantage to choose the time and place for battle. In this way you know when and where the battle will take place, while your enemy does not. Encourage your enemy to expend his energy in futile quests while you conserve your strength. When he is exhausted and confused, you attack with energy and purpose.

In the Spring and Autumn Period, the King of Ci appointed Bao Shu Ya as the general of his army with instructions to invade the country of Lu. The King of Lu was very frightened when he heard this and took advice from his minister Shih Bo who recommended a certain hermit by the name of Cao Suei as the best person to lead the defence of Lu. It took a lot of effort to persuade both the King of Lu to take this step and for Cao Suei to accept the post, but he did eventually agree to work as a military adviser.

On the day of battle, the sound of drums and battle cries from the side of the Ci army was deafening as they quickly charged the Lu army. At this time Cao Suei counselled the King of Lu from giving the signal to beat the drums that would order the Lu soldiers to engage the Ci army. Cao Suei advised that they should just wait a while as right now the morale of the enemy was very high. But he went on to suggest that they only needed to defend themselves for the time being.

The advancing Ci army tried in vain to breach the defensive line of the Lu army twice over, but both times the Lu army failed to engage the charging Ci army and this led Bao Shu Ya to believe that the Lu army must be too scared to fight and so he thought a third attack would surely break through and he would be victorious.

But this time Cao Suei said to the King of Lu that now was the time to beat the drums and fight back and so the Lu army attacked and the Ci army's lines soon collapsed under the charge. Cao Suei summed up his advice by telling the King of Lu, 'After the third drumming the morale of the enemy was not as high as the first time. Instead the morale of our soldiers was just at its peak because we were beating our drums for the first time. Also, we took the enemy by surprise because after what had happened after their first two charges they expected us to just stand our ground instead of charge back at them and this element of surprise is what guaranteed us a victory.'

The idea is to have your troops well-prepared for battle when you are ready for that battle, and not when your enemy decides.

The Battle of Yorktown in 1781 is considered the climax of the American Revolution and directly led to the independence of the United States of America from the British. There were many larger and more dramatic battles but it can be considered that no other battle in history has been more influential.

The idea that a group of poorly armed and mostly disorganised colonists would have the audacity to challenge the massive, experienced army and navy of their British rulers seemed impossible when the revolution's first shots rang out at Lexington and Concord in 1775. The rebels' chances of success seemed even more remote when the American colonies formally declared their independence from Great Britain on 4 July 1776.

But despite the huge imbalance of power, the Americans understood that time was actually on their side. As long as George Washington and his army remained in the combat field, the newly declared republic survived. Washington did not have to actually defeat the British, or at least he didn't have to immediately defeat the British, he simply had to avoid having the British defeat him. And the longer the war lasted, the greater the odds that the British would become involved in wars that threatened their homeland or other territories, and that they would tire of the war and its enormous costs.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Time was on Washington's side and he used this to the great advantage of the 'American' forces to eventually win the freedom of his nation.

Muhammad Ali's famous 'rope-a-dope' strategy against his powerful opponent George Foreman in 1974 was a brilliant implementation of such a method. Ali, unable to get the better of Foreman by normal means taunted him with typical cockiness into hammering him with a barrage of blows as Ali leaned back on the rope and took a breather; well not a breather in our minds I suspect, but a breather in the mind of perhaps the best boxer of all time. Anyway, after Foreman exhausted himself with this assault Ali came off the ropes and started to return blows, with the result that Foreman went down and the boxing match was won.

This stratagem is often used in business to ground down a would-be

supplier by keeping them busy with more and more ‘one final request’ actions for information, revised prices, updated proposals, completion of formal tender documents and incrementally more favourable discounts. Their desire for a ‘sale’ progresses to a point of desperation to win and recoup cost of sale.

Here’s an idea for you

You can slowly gain control through setting ever more stringent and demanding conditions on some form of involvement they desire, or by ‘changing the goalposts’ of success.

Here’s an idea for you

Change, at the last minute, meeting locations or times or agenda or attendees to upset others in order to stay in charge and be the one person ‘in the know’.

5. Loot a burning house

When a country is beset by internal conflicts, or when disease and famine ravages the population, or when corruption and crime are rampant, then it will be unable to deal with an outside threat. This then is the best time to attack.

The countries of Wu and Yue were at war with each other for many years. In the beginning, it was Gou Jian, the King of Yue, who was defeated by Fu Chai, the King of Wu, which meant that Gou Jian had to bow to Fu Chai and offer himself as Fu Chai's loyal vassal. But Gou Jian was not defeated in spirit and daily reminded himself of the bitter taste of defeat and reaffirmed his desire for eventual revenge. After twenty years Gou Jian was finally ready for war again and by this time Wu was governed by corrupt officials and its king, Fu Chai, had grown arrogant and ineffective. In addition Wu was plagued by a severe drought that caused widespread suffering.

Fu Chai was arrogant enough to believe that he should be the leader of all the countries and so he led his army to the central plains of China to meet the other kings. As a result Wu was left with a small army to defend itself. Gou Jian saw this as a golden opportunity and launched his attack on Wu and destroyed it, finally avenging his defeat twenty years ago.

This is also known at the 'Vulture Stratagem' and a modern- day equivalent of this might be the notorious occupation of 'Ambulance Chaser'. This term refers to a lawyer using an event as a way to source clients. The original term comes from the stereotype of lawyers who follow ambulances to the emergency room or A&E in order to find clients.

Another example is linked to the world recession. As we all know every crisis also brings opportunities to some and so it is not surprising that the credit crisis has provided an opportunity for an alternative credit industry. While very few new businesses are opening there is a significant growth in payday and short-term/easy credit loan companies as people struggle paying bills and keeping their head above water. The payday loan sector is now worth some £1.7 billion having expanded five-fold in recent years.

'Loot a burning house' means making personal gain from bad situations that your enemies are facing. While a house is ablaze or

during any major disturbance there will be enough confusion to make it easy and accessible to steal or take advantage of the situation.

When your enemy is in a state of confusion and chaos, it presents the perfect opportunity to wipe them out or seize them. Demands will easily be met by the enemy. Enemies can be defeated if they are weakened from internal and external affairs. Make your enemy bend to your will when they are weakened.

When your enemy is in a state of chaos, you can either choose to make it worse for them in order to destroy them or to force major concessions from them to secure yourself a trouble- free future and to keep them weak.

On 7 April 1986 Amstrad, through its chairman Alan Sugar, announced it had bought from Sinclair Research 'the worldwide rights to sell and manufacture all existing and future Sinclair computers and computer products, together with the Sinclair brand name and those intellectual property rights where they relate to computers and computer related products'. Amstrad did this for a price of just £5 million, a figure that the company recouped very quickly through the sale of the Sinclair stock of Sinclair QLs and Spectrums that were part of the deal.

In the early 1980s, after a successful history of invention and development of such things as the Scientific Pocket Calculator and the Black 'digital' watch, Clive Sinclair launched into the market a home computer, the ZX80. This was followed by the improved ZX81 which sold a million units and was, in turn, followed by the Spectrum. But by 1985 his company was in trouble. The latest home PC, the QL, was facing technical issues and his competitors in the marketplace were increasingly offering better options to consumers; better builds, better specification, better prices, better marketed. Sinclair was also distracted by other inventions such as the C5, which while innovative, did not sell well. And so, Amstrad, a company that thrived on margin, volume and strong marketing, made the move to acquire Sinclair – effectively for free.

Here's an idea for you

Try to understand the potential negative from any situation in order to understand the consequences, or fear of such consequences, that your competition might face. What is it that worries them and what price would they pay to avoid that happening?

Here's an idea for you

Once you understand the fears of others then you can work to make their worst nightmare come true and then exploit the situation to gain your advantage.

6. Make a sound in the east, then strike in the west

In any battle the element of surprise can provide an overwhelming advantage. Even when face to face with an enemy, surprise can still be employed by attacking where he least expects it.

The idea here is to get the enemy to focus his forces on one location, and then attack a weakly defended spot. In boxing feinting is a body movement or an incomplete attack used primarily to create a certain reaction from the opponent. The idea is to create an opening or to draw the opponent into responding so you may anticipate and counter with a prepared attack. In order for feints to be successful they must make the opponent believe that a real punch is coming.

In 205 BCE Wei Bao, the King of Wei suddenly rose in revolt against Liou Bang despite the fact that he had surrendered earlier. As a result Liou Bang sent his general Han Sin to put down the revolt in Wei.

Wei Bao appointed Bo Jhih as the general of his army and moved his elite troops to Pu Ban, a town on the east bank of the Yellow River to keep Han Sin's army under surveillance. Han Sin camped on the west bank of the Yellow River where he assembled hundreds of ships alongside the river in preparation for a river crossing. When night fell torches could be seen all across the west bank and it appeared that Han Sin's army was readying to cross the river at any moment.

Seeing this Bo Jhih ordered his troops to guard the west bank of the river and to destroy any ship that tried to cross. However, unknown to Bo Jhih, Han Sin had already sent the bulk of his forces to Sia Yang, a place which was 80 kilometres up the Yellow River. There the army set up a temporary bridge across the river by using empty bottles and barrels and while the Wei army stayed put at Pu Ban for days to defend against a river crossing, Han Sin's army had long crossed the Yellow River and had already launched an attack on the capital of Wei. By the time Bo Jhih heard the news it was too late.

In military terms there can be two types of feint. An attack feint is designed to draw defensive forces towards the point under attack. It is usually used as a diversion to force the enemy to concentrate more manpower into a given area, so that the opposing force is then weaker in another area. Second a retreat feint is performed by briefly engaging the enemy, then falsely retreating to a pre-prepared location.

It is typically intended to draw the enemy into a prepared ambush.

The Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE is a milestone in Roman history as it was perhaps Hannibal's finest hour. As Hannibal moved into Italy, without any of his famed elephants, the Roman army put a massive and highly disciplined force into the field against him. Some 50,000 men faced Hannibal's troops which numbered less than 40,000 and were a mix of Gauls, Spaniards, Numidians and Carthaginians.

The Roman generals made one huge mistake, they relied on the superiority of their legionaries' discipline and ordered them to steadily advance. No use had been made of the superior numbers the Romans had at their disposal other than to simply add more ranks onto the back of the advancing columns. In response the Carthaginian units fought and then feigned a slow collapse in the middle section of the battle lines, thus drawing the Romans into a crescent shaped battle field. This was a planned manoeuvre that then allowed the Romans to be eventually encircled by the enemy.

So just as the Romans believed that they were on the brink of crushing the enemy the Carthaginian flanks were brought to bear and the pressure pinned in the Roman advance. Then the opposing cavalry completed the circle by forcing the rear of the Roman line to turn back and form a square. All around, the massive bulk of the Roman army was forced into confined space. Hannibal then brought in his archers and slingers and the result in the confines was devastating.

In late 2003, Harvard sophomore Mark Zuckerberg asked another student named Eduardo Saverin to deposit $15,000 in a bank account to go towards the servers needed to host a site that Mark wanted to develop. The site would be called thefacebook.com.

Six months after thefacebook.com launched Mark and the third partner, Dustin Moskovitz, moved to California where they planned to work on the site while Eduardo went to New York to set up the company, get funding and make a business model. Almost immediately after this the relationship between the cofounders deteriorated.

When Mark met Sean Parker, an Internet start-up champion best known for cofounding Napster, he was soon invited to join the team and Sean's first task was to do one of things Eduardo was supposed to do – help the company find money. He quickly proved himself capable using his Napster- gained knowledge of Silicon Valley and this reinforced the idea for Mark that Eduardo was expendable.

So now the problem was how would Mark remove the third-biggest stakeholder and cofounder from the company? In 2004 thefacebook.com was incorporated in Delaware and in September the investor Sean secured, Peter Thiel, formally acquired 9% of the new company with a convertible note worth $500,000. The new company was divided between Zuckerberg with 40%, Saverin with 24%, Moskovitz with 16%, and Thiel with 9%. The balance went to an options pool for future employees, out of which a significant slice of equity went to the new COO, Sean Parker.

In October Eduardo signed a shareholder agreement that secured him 3 million shares of common stock in the new company. In the agreement he handed over all relevant intellectual property and turned over his voting rights to Mark who then became the sole director.

In January 2005 the final step of a plan to remove Eduardo took place when Mark issued 9 million shares of common stock in the new company. He took 3.3 million shares for himself, gave 2 million to Sean Parker and 2 million to Dustin Moskovitz. This share issuance instantly diluted Eduardo's stake in the company to below 10%.

And Mark's plan had succeeded. Eduardo was, for all intents and purposes, gone.

That said, Eduardo was no loser in the long run since his small initial $15,000 investment is now worth more than $1 billion.

Here's an idea for you

Deceive your rival and show an interest in another person (or product or service) and then, when they react with concern, turn and demand some concession or reward for just staying loyal.

Here's an idea for you

Act as though you no longer have an interest in what you are actually after, convince your opponent that you have given up chasing after this and, when they relax, go for it!

Stratagems for opportunistic situations

'If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles'

Sun Tzu

7. Create something from nothing

Make somebody believe there was something when there is in fact nothing – or simply put, lie.

One method of using this stratagem is to create an illusion of something's existence, when in fact it does not exist. Another method is to create an illusion that something does not exist, while in fact it does.

The city of Yong Ciou was under siege by Ling Hu Chao, a general of An Lu Shan. The general in charge of defending the city was Jhang Syun. At that time Yong Ciou's situation was precarious because Jhang Syun did not have enough men or sufficient weapons to defend the city against the siege. Jhang Syun thought of a plan and ordered his men to make 1,000 life-size straw dummies and dress them in black. Against a dim moonlit night the dummies were lowered over the city walls by ropes. When the enemy lookouts saw the dummies, they warned of an immediate attack. The army of Ling Hu Chao showered the straw dummies with hundreds of arrows. Once this assault was over the dummies were hoisted back up into the city and there were enough arrows to replenish the supply for Jhang's defending garrison.

A few nights later, on a similar dull night, the enemy lookouts noticed again that there were movements along the city wall but Ling Hu Chao thought that his enemy must be up to the same trick once again and so he ordered his men to ignore it. By the time Ling Hu Chao realised that it was a real attack by 500 raiders it was too late and Jhang Syun defeated Ling Hu Chao and rescued the city of Yong Ciou.

As an example of creating something where in fact nothing existed then Operation Fortitude is a good example. It was the code name for a The Second World War military deception employed by the Allies as part of an overall deception strategy code named 'Bodyguard' during the build-up to the Normandy landings. Operation Fortitude was divided into two sections with the aim of misleading the German high command as to the location of the expected and imminent invasion.

Both plans involved the creation of fake field armies (based in Edinburgh and the south of England) which threatened Norway and Pas de Calais. The operation was intended to divert attention away from the real landings planned for Normandy and to delay any reinforcements by convincing the Germans that the real landings were

purely a diversionary attack.

The operation was one of the most successful military deceptions employed during the war.

And for an example of something that doesn't exist when it does let's look at the swashbuckling world of piracy. In fact, while the various versions of the 'Jolly Roger'5 were flown by all of the legendary pirates, many would disguise their ship by flying friendly flags (known as 'flying false colours') and making the ship look more like a cargo voyager than a fighting vessel, in order to allow them to get close to their prey before revealing the truth and hoisting their version of the 'skull and crossbones'; then the fighting would begin.

In nature such deception is common, as with the hoverfly that relies on mimicry to protect itself from predators. The hoverfly resemble dangerous insects such as bees and wasps and they even hover and buzz like them. Their mimicry is so good that predators mistake them for something really dangerous and leave them alone.

On 14 July 2005 Kyle MacDonald made a trade, a red paper clip, for a fish-shaped pen. On 5 July 2006, he made a final trade for a two-storey farmhouse in Kipling, Saskatchewan.

The website 'One red paperclip' was created by Kyle, a Canadian blogger, with the following statement:

'This red paperclip is currently sitting on my desk next to my computer. I want to trade this paperclip with you for something bigger or better, maybe a pen, a spoon, or perhaps a boot. If you promise to make the trade I will come and visit you, wherever you are, to trade. Hope to trade with you soon! Kyle'

Oh and there was a 'PS' at the end: 'I'm going to make a continuous chain of 'up trades' until I get a house. Or an island. Or a house on an island. You get the idea.' And so he did.

MacDonald was inspired to this action by the childhood game 'Bigger, Better' – and through a series of trades , such as a generator, a snowmobile, an afternoon with Alice Cooper, he achieved his goal.

He was also made mayor for the day of Kipling, received a Guinness World Record for Most Successful Internet Trade, and his new home of Kipling erected the World's Largest Red Paperclip, another Guinness record.

Here's an idea for you

Make yourself seem bigger, more important, part of a larger group or with more influence to intimidate others. For example, putting yourself forward as a larger business than you actually are is relatively easy with the front of a website and meetings off premises, etc.

Here's an idea for you

You can make yourself appear smaller, less of a threat and with lower influence. I am saying 'appear' as the reality is that, at the right moment, you will indeed show your true colours and take the upper hand through your real strength.

5 That infamous black flag, the Jolly Roger struck fear into the hearts of pirates' prey and is today an essential part of any pirate movie. There are several possible origins of the name 'Jolly Roger' with one theory being that it derived from the French 'jolie rouge' describing the red flag used by some of the early privateers. Another theory has the name 'Roger' connected to the word 'rogue' since Old Roger was a slang term for the devil. The first example of a skull above crossed bones is probably that of the Caribbean pirate Edward England.

8. Openly repair the gallery roads, but sneak through the passage of Chencang

Deceive the enemy with an obvious approach that will take a very long time, while surprising him by taking a shortcut and sneaking up on him.

The phrase originated from the Chu-Han Contention6 where Liu Bang, the Han ruler and emperor, retreated to the lands of Sichuan to prepare for a confrontation with his opposing Chu leader, Xiang Yu. Once he was fully prepared Liu Bang sent his men to openly repair the gallery roads he had destroyed earlier, while at the same time secretly moving his troops towards Guanzhong through the small town of Chencang instead. When Xiang Yu received the news of the repairs he dismissed the situation as he saw no threat because the repairs would take years to complete. This allowed Liu Bang to retake Guanzhong by surprise, and eventually led to his victory.

There is a further story about Liu Bang's use of this stratagem.

Again, during the Chu-Han Contention at a time when the military force of Xiang Yu had a significant advantage over that of Liu Bang, a banquet was arranged. Xiang Yu invited Liu Bang to this banquet with the sole purpose of killing him. However, during the meal, Xiang became increasingly arrogant at Liu's modest and flattering words about his process as a leader and strength as a warlord. This caused Xiang to hesitate in carrying out his planned assassination and Liu, with the assistance and protection of a number of other lords took this opportunity to escape from the military base of Xiang Yu, thereby giving him the opportunity to not only fight another day, but to win another day.

This stratagem is sometimes known as the 'Trojan Horse' stratagem which comes from the tale of the Greeks attempting to breech the walls of the mighty fortress of Troy.

For ten long years, the Greeks had been trying to conquer Troy and the Trojans had been trying to repel the Greeks but no side prevailed.

Eventually a Greek general called Odysseus had an idea. He proposed that the Greeks would fool the Trojans by pretending to sail away as if they had finally given up the fight and gone home, but they would

leave behind a gift, which was the custom in those days. They built a wooden horse that was hollow and which allowed them to secure thirty of their best fighters inside, then they left the horse outside the city walls.

When the Trojans saw the Greeks leaving they were delighted and rushed out to drag the horse inside the city and begin the victory celebrations.

That night while the Trojan people slept soundly, exhausted from their celebrations, the Greek warriors, hidden inside the wooden horse, climbed out, opened the gates of Troy and let the now secretly returned Greek army inside. That was the end of Troy as the city was burned and its people killed.

There is a saying 'Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!'

Magic is all about appearing to break the laws of nature such as making solid objects appear or disappear, sawing women (and men) in half, and reading people's minds.

The laws of nature cannot be broken which is why magicians target the brain instead to create the illusion of doing something that we all know is impossible.

Misdirection lies at the heart of magic. It is the art of diverting the audience's attention away from what the magician is really up to.

In neuroscience terms, misdirection relies on the fact that the brain has a very limited attention span. Over the past decade or so it has become clear just how limited our attention is: focusing on one thing can make you oblivious to other things that would otherwise be obvious.

This phenomenon is called 'inattention blindness' and it was demonstrated in impressive style in 1999 by two psychologists, Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris. They made a video of six people in a circle bouncing two basketballs around. They then invited other people to come and watch the video with the instruction that they had to count the number of bounces the balls made during the video. As a result around half of the people who watched the video, and tried to count the bounces, failed to notice a man in gorilla suit walking through the middle of the game and beating his chest.

Here's an idea for you

You can confuse others by pretending to follow one path of action when in fact your real plan is to take another path – good for causing both surprise and upset.

Here's an idea for you

Launch several initiatives (some true and some fake) to divert your opponent's attention, they won't know what is real and what isn't and won't dare ignore any of them.

6 The Chu–Han Contention was a post-Qin Dynasty interregnum period in Chinese history. Following the collapse of the Qin Dynasty, Xiang Yu split the former Qin Empire into the Eighteen Kingdoms. Two prominent contending powers, Western Chu and Han, emerged from these principalities and engaged in a struggle for supremacy over China. The war ended with total victory for Han who then established the Han Dynasty.

9. Watch the fires burning across the river

Delay entering the field of battle until all the other players have become exhausted fighting among themselves and at that point go in at full strength and pick up the pieces.

When a serious conflict breaks out within the enemy alliance all you have to do is be patient, and wait quietly for the chaos to build up. Because once this internal conflict intensifies then self-destruction will be the outcome. Besides being patient make preparations for any advantage that may come out of the chaos.

A more extreme version of this tactic occurred when the great Japanese general Toyotomi Hideyoshi was positioning his forces against Akechi Mitsuhide in what would be the battle of Yamazaki. Shortly after the two opposing sides had engaged, Tsetsui Junkeian, an ally of Mitsuhide, arrived on the scene. Impressed by the superior forces of Hideyoshi rather than join Mitsuhide's forces as expected he refused to attack but instead ordered his men to line up in battle formation on a hill above the Hora-ga-toge pass where he could watch the battle before deciding which general to side with. Seeing Hideyoshi gaining the advantage he betrayed his original ally and sent his troops over to Hideyoshi's side. This incident was never forgotten and gives rise to the Japanese equivalent of 'Watching the fire…' which is known as 'To wait at Hora-ga-toge'.

Another example on a much larger scale is the fall of the mighty Roman Empire which failed primarily because the Romans exhausted so much manpower, resources and time in fighting civil wars among themselves for personal power and glory. This distracted them from the outside pressures of other countries pushing at the borders of the vast empire. In a similar way the British Empire eventually began to disintegrate because the British exhausted themselves fighting Germany in two world wars.

Nortel Networks Corporation, sometimes known simply as Nortel, was a multinational telecommunications equipment manufacturer headquartered in Ontario, Canada.

On 14 January 2009, Nortel filed for protection from its creditors in the US, Canada and the UK, in order to restructure its debt and financial obligations but in June 2009, the company announced it would cease operations and sell off all its business units.

At its height, in the Summer of 2000, riding high through the high-tech and telecom booms, Nortel was worth about $385 billion. Hit hard by the collapse of the telecom and Internet tech bubbles, Nortel went through a period of accounting scandals that led to a series of financial restatements, and added to this was the pain of the emergence of new low-cost telecom equipment manufacturers such as Huawei based in China. Then came the credit crisis.

But even in the last dying days the wolves were circling. The last major asset of Nortel, approximately 6,000 patents and patent applications covering a variety of technologies such as wireless, wireless 4G, data networking, optical, voice, Internet, and semiconductors, was sold for $4.5 billion to a consortium that included Apple, EMC, Ericsson, Microsoft, Research In Motion and Sony.

Here's an idea for you

This is perhaps one of the most cynical of the stratagems, allowing others to effectively fight your battle for you, or at least most of the battle. But you can be opportunistic in life by keeping alert for when others are weakening their positions through arguments and disagreements.

10. Hide a knife behind a smile

Charm and ingratiate yourself with your enemy and then, when you have gained his trust, move against him in secret.

Sun Tzu's7 most often quoted advice was to 'Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer' but here the stratagem is far more duplicitous in that it advises that the sole purpose of keeping close to your enemy is not just to understand them and be prepared for any aggression from them, but is to deceive them with a treasonable act that would see their downfall.

In the early years of the Warring States Period Cin was not yet a strong country. In order to strengthen his country Cin Siao Gong recruited talented people to assist him in governing the country and Shang Yang was one of those people who came to Cin from Wei and helped advise Cin Siao Gong on how to reform. For his wise counsel and contributions Cin Siao Gong awarded Shang Yang land and title.

In 340 BCE Cin Siao Gong appointed Shang Yang as his general to attack the country of Wei and in response the King of Wei selected Prince Wei Mao to lead his country's defence. Shang Yang heard about this and immediately wrote to Wei Mao with the words 'The time we spent together in Wei was a precious memory to me. Although we are serving different masters now, I still treasure our friendship very much and do not want to be hostile towards you. So why don't we meet and talk about a solution that is acceptable to both of us and sign a peace accord without the use of force?'

Wei Mao accepted his invitation and met Shang Yang. However, when the talk was over, Wei Mao was ambushed on his way back and captured , at which point Shang Yang launched an attack against Wei and won a big victory.

A 'wolf in sheep's clothing' is an idiom of biblical origin. It is used to describe those playing a role contrary to their true character, with whom contact is dangerous. The phrase originates in a sermon by Jesus recorded in the New Testament 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.'

The continuing military involvement in Afghanistan with a number of US and UK personnel being killed by recruited and trained, and

therefore trusted, Afghan police and military members is a current version of this stratagem.

There is a danger in this stratagem that is explained in one of the Aesop's Fables:

'Once upon a time a wolf resolved to disguise his appearance in order to secure food more easily. Encased in the skin of a sheep, he pastured with the flock deceiving the shepherd by his costume. In the evening he was shut up by the shepherd in the fold; the gate was closed, and the entrance made thoroughly secure. But the shepherd, returning to the fold during the night to obtain meat for the next day, mistakenly caught the wolf instead of a sheep, and killed him instantly.'

Over the years the competition between Mercedes-Benz and BMW has always been what can only be described as 'intense' but in part due to the recent economic crisis and the need to find new ways of reducing costs while maintaining quality and innovative new models, the companies have become allies.

In the premium market Toyota have Lexus and Nissan have their Infiniti brand while VW already owned Audi, all of which were putting pressure on the markets that Mercedes-Benz and BMW held sway over.

Through a series of collaborations BMW helped Mercedes-Benz to enter the small car market when they built the A class and, when BMW developed the 'new' Mini, Mercedes-Benz/Daimler AG assisted in the engine development.

Other major projects are being discussed and as Dieter Zetsche, head of Daimler AG said, 'It is clear that we are two independent companies whose success in the market depends on the strength of our brands… but it is not something that would prevent broad co-operation.'

This collaboration between former rivals will benefit both companies, and as BMW and Mercedes-Benz are independent premium companies they need this association to ensure that they each have a larger global presence and are thus able to steal a sector of the market from their competitors.

Here's an idea for you

It is about the complete relaxation of your opponent in your company, as you demonstrate that you are no threat to them at all; just before proving that you are, in fact, the worst possible threat.

Here's an idea for you

Take this stratagem one stage further and actually (falsely) become your opponent's friend or ally and pick your moment to reveal the truth.

7 Sun Tzu was a Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher who is traditionally believed to be the author of *The Art of War*, an influential ancient Chinese book on military strategy.

11. Sacrifice the plum tree to preserve the peach tree

There are circumstances in which you must sacrifice short-term objectives in order to gain the desired long-term goal. This is the scapegoat stratagem whereby someone else suffers the consequences so that the rest do not.

Li Mu was a prominent military general of the state of Zhao during the Warring States Period. He, together with Bai Qi, Wang Jian and Lian Po were known as the four greatest generals in this period.

When Li Mu defended the northern frontier fighting against the Xiong Nu he adopted an extremely defensive strategy, and because of this was accused of cowardice and subsequently replaced by a more aggressive general who was defeated every time he attacked the Xiong Nu.

The King of Zhao had to recall Li Mu and gave him a much larger army. Li Mu concealed his troops and played the coward, which successfully made the King of Xiong Nu begin to despise the army of Zhao. Then Li Mu pretended to be defeated abandoning many weapons and captured goods and people on his retreat. But when a large force crossed the border, Li Mu surrounded it and defeated it completely.

In chess there is the phrase, ‘sacrificing a pawn to save a rook’. A sacrifice is a move giving up a piece in the hope of gaining in return a tactical or positional compensation. A sacrifice does not have to be a lesser piece for a higher piece, indeed it could also be a deliberate exchange of a chess piece of higher value for an opponent’s piece of lower value.

Any chess piece except the king can be sacrificed and because players typically try to hold onto their own pieces, offering a sacrifice can come as an unpleasant surprise to an opponent, putting them off balance and causing time to be wasted trying to calculate whether the sacrifice is sound or not and whether to accept it. Sacrificing one’s queen, the most valuable piece, is the ultimate tactic of confusion and concern for an opposing player.

On 23 April 1985 the Coca-Cola Company took arguably the biggest risk in consumer goods history, announcing that it was changing the formula for the world’s most popular soft drink, and creating an

explosion of consumer wrath the likes of which no business had ever seen before.

The Coca-Cola Company introduced a reformulated Coca-Cola drink, which is commonly referred to as 'new Coke', marking the first formula change in this beloved soft drink for ninety-nine years. The company aimed to re-energise its Coca-Cola brand and address some of the gains its rival, Pepsi, had made over recent years.

The company talked about taking 'intelligent risks' but the general drink- buying population saw it another way; there was panic buying of the 'original' coke, protest groups started up, phone- in shows lit up with the views of angry people.

When the announcement of the return of 'old' Coca-Cola was made in July 1985 by the company there was a collective sigh of relief and the story that the 'old' coke was returning to store shelves led two network newscasts and made the front page of virtually every major newspaper in the US.

Today many would say the 'cola wars' are over as Diet Coke has recently surpassed Pepsi to become the number two soda in America, and with Coca-Cola selling some $28 billion worth of soda against PepsiCo's $12 billion.

Here's an idea for you

Throw your opponent off balance by laying down a sacrifice that they did not expect, and perhaps cannot reject, in order to gain an alternative benefit for yourself.

Here's an idea for you

For the ultimate advantage let your opponent know something about one of your own allies that they can use to profit from the situation. Of course once you have gained their trust you can make your own profit at the right time when they are least expecting it.

12. Take the opportunity to pilfer a goat

While carrying out your plans you need to be flexible enough to take advantage of any opportunity that presents itself, however small, and avail yourself of any profit, however slight.

King Wei Huei was planning to launch an attack on Jhao, a country north of Wei. He appointed Pang-Juan as his general and, after some time, the Wei army fought its way to Handan, the capital of Jhao, and laid siege to the city. The King of Jhao was desperate and appealed to Chu, a neighbouring country with a strong military force, for help.

After hearing of Jhao's appeal for help, the Prime Minister of Chu advised against coming to Jhao's aid, but another advisor Jing She thought otherwise. He proposed a strategy by which, under the pretext of rescuing Jhao, they could undermine the strength of Wei while profiting from Chu.

After agreement to this approach Jing She was appointed as the general and the Chu army soon entered Jhao. Handan fell to the Wei army but, almost immediately, news came through that the capital of Wei was under siege by the Ci army. So the Wei army abandoned the city of Handan and retreated quickly to defend Wei's capital but were ambushed on their way back by the Ci army and suffered heavy losses.

Both Wei and Jhao had been hurt badly in this episode and this presented Chu with a golden opportunity. Jing She quickly seized the southern part of Jhao, and there was nothing Jhao could do about it.

As Shakespeare wrote in Julius Caesar, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat. And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.'

In 1988 there was a takeover battle that highlighted the greed of business with figures that even today are scary in value, billions of dollars. Ross Johnson who, through a series of moves, had become the head of RJR Nabisco became fed up with the low valuations the market was assigning to his company (a major revenue line was tobacco which was increasingly unpopular), and so he decided to launch a management led leveraged buyout (LBO) to purchase the public shares of RJR Nabisco and take the company private. LBOs

were increasingly popular in the 1980s.

After Johnson launched the bid (with the help of Salomon Bros and Shearson Lehman Hutton), Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) made a counter bid (with the help of Drexel Burnham Lambert's), which in turn prompted Forstmann Little & Co to also enter the battle (in this case it was personal between Forstmann and Kravis). Effectively a bidding war erupted that became less and less about RJR Nabisco and more and more about personal egos and competition.

The winner, with a bid of $25 billion, was Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and the loser, apart from Ross Johnson and his management team, was RJR Nabisco since the company has gone down ever since. KKR had a $30 billion debt burden after the LBO and their main rival, Philip Morris, was presented with a golden opportunity. While RJR used its tobacco cash to pay off its acquired debt its rival ploughed profits right back into the business. By 1991 Philip Morris had grown its market-share lead by an impressive eight points and RJR Nabisco didn't clear its LBO debt until 1999 – and even then it had to sell its overseas operations to achieve this.[8]

Here's an idea for you

Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans, so it is said, and the advice here is that you need to always be ready to stop what you are doing in order to take advantage of new opportunities that come your way.

Here's an idea for you

Always be ready to make small and incremental profits at the expense of your opponents, it is not always about the 'big win'.

8 There is perhaps the greatest business book ever written based on the RJR Nabisco experience – *Barbarians At The Gate: The Fall of RJR Nabisco* by Bryan Burrough and John Helyar. Highly recommended.

Stratagems for attacking situations

'Nobody ever defended anything successfully, there is only attack and attack and attack some more'

George S. Patton

13. Stomp the grass to scare the snake

Do something unaimed, but spectacular to provoke a response of the enemy thereby giving away his plans or position, or just taunt him. Do something unusual, strange and unexpected as this will arouse the enemy's suspicion and disrupt his thinking.

During the Qing Dynasty,9 there was a circuit court judge named Wang Shou Yu who had a deputy named Jhao Bo Ren. Because of a personal feud with the judge Jhao Bo Ren was looking for an opportunity to get revenge on his master. One day he bribed a guard to steal the judge's seal and when Wang Shou Yu later found out what happened he could not arrest the deputy, as he had no evidence that Jhao Bo Ren stole the seal. And without the seal Wang Shou Yu could not do his job as judge.

Seeing how troubled the judge was, one of his assistants came up with a clever plan to recover the stolen seal. That night the government building caught fire and, as were the rules, everyone was obliged to come and help put it out. Wang Shou Yu hastily rushed out of the building with the box that stored the judge's seal when not in use and in front of everybody, handed over the box to Jhao Bo Ren and ordered him home to keep the seal safe from the fire. Jhao Bo Ren was suspicious because the box was heavy, and of course it could not be the seal that made it so. But he couldn't do anything but obey the order. The next morning, Wang Shou Yu assembled everyone in the court house to reward them for their contribution in fighting the fire. When Jhao Bo Ren handed the box over to Wang Shou Yu the judge opened it immediately and the stone which had previously been placed in the box by Wang Shou Yu was now replaced with the stolen seal.

Alphonse Gabriel Capone (or Al Capone as he is best known) was an American gangster who led a Prohibition-era crime syndicate. The Chicago Outfit, which subsequently became known as the 'Capones', was dedicated to smuggling and bootlegging liquor as well as other illegal activities such as prostitution, in Chicago from the early 1920s to 1931.

In 1929, the Bureau of Prohibition agent Eliot Ness began an investigation into Capone and his business activities with a view to getting a conviction for Prohibition violations. At the same time Frank

J. Wilson investigated Capone's income tax violations, which in the end the government decided was more likely material for a conviction and was less likely to be thwarted through any intimidation from Capone. In 1931, Capone was indicted for income tax evasion with the charge that he owed $215,080 in taxes from his gambling profits. Capone pleaded guilty to all charges in the belief that he would be able to plea bargain; however, the judge who presided over the case, Judge James H. Wilkerson, would not make any such deals. Capone changed his plea to not guilty and tried to bribe the jury but Wilkerson changed the jury panel at the last minute. On conviction Judge Wilkerson sentenced Capone to a total of ten years in federal prison.

Virgin Atlantic, led by Richard Branson, has been a rival of British Airways ever since its inception in 1984. Despite becoming profitable within the first twelvemonths, by the 1990s Virgin Atlantic had increasing financial problems primarily the result of a reduction in demand for travel caused by the recession as well the increased public fear of travelling in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. The Conservative government at the time wanted to avoid the collapse of another major British airline and so decided to let Virgin Atlantic into Heathrow despite significant opposition from British Airways.

In 1993 BA had to pay a multi-million settlement after Virgin Atlantic had accumulated evidence of BA employees poaching Virgin customers and tampering with confidential company files. Added to that it was accepted BA's PR consultant had been undermining Richard Branson and his company's reputation in the City and the press. This became known as the 'dirty tricks' campaign.

That same year Branson lodged a $325 million action against BA in the US, accusing it of flaunting anti-trust laws over its domination of transatlantic flight routes. Legal wrangles over this continued until the US courts threw out the case in 1999. And in 1994 Virgin won another £2.65 million from BA in a separate case about aircraft maintenance

And so the rivalry continues. But throughout all of this it could be argued that Virgin Atlantic, supported by the Virgin brand and the charismatic leadership under the now 'Sir' Richard Branson has repeatedly won the war of brand loyalty over BA.

Here's an idea for you

Any action that is sudden and unexpected, and perhaps not directly made towards your opponent, is going to cause some degree of

concern, which at the very least is going to put your opposition off their stride.

Here's an idea for you

If your opponent thinks that they know you and your strategy then create a shock by doing something completely out of character; this will make them stop and think.

9 The Qing Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1912. It was preceded by the Ming Dynasty and followed by the Republic of China.

14. Borrow a corpse to resurrect the soul

Take an institution, a method, or even an ideology that has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it for your own purpose. Revive something from the past by giving it a new purpose or bring to life old ideas, customs, or traditions and reinterpret them to fit your purposes.

According to Chinese mythology, Li was a meditation master. One day he informed one of his students that he would be travelling in spirit to visit heaven and that he would be back in seven days' time. The instruction to the student was that he was to guard Li's body during those seven days with great care.

On the sixth day following Li's departure, the student received an urgent request to come home because his mother was gravely ill. Li had been gone for six days, and the student wondered if he might remain in heaven and so, before his departure to his mother's sickbed, the student burned Li's body and left. When Li did return from heaven on the seventh day as he said he would, he was unable to find his body and so his soul entered the body of a beggar who had just died on the roadside. Thus the beggar's corpse was given new life.

In the summer of 1994 Jeff Bezos quit his job in New York as a VP at a financial services firm. He moved to Seattle to take advantage of the explosive growth of the Internet and to start Amazon (the company's original name was 'Cadabra' but this was rejected after someone misheard it as 'cadaver').

Despite the established book stores reticence on entering this new online world Amazon quickly grew and became more than just an online bookstore, in fact the most successful 'bookstore' ever. It soon became a community in which customers could create reviews online and research what others thought before buying from the comfort of their home or office; and from there it then extended its range beyond just books.

The company has grown, despite some early difficulties, into a multi-billion-dollar business and is now the undisputed leader of Internet commerce.

Only four car makers in the world can boast an unbroken tradition stretching back more than a hundred years. Skoda Auto is one of

them. But by the 1980s the company's reputation was so poor that its owners may have been well advised to have given up making cars and gone back to repairing bicycles – which is how it started life at the end of the nineteenth century.

Between the wars Skodas were regarded as tough and reliable, a reputation that continued in the immediate aftermath of The Second World War before the company hurtled rapidly downhill in the 1960s.

Not only were the cars ugly, but in the 1970s and 1980s most Western motorists regarded the Skoda as a rust-bucket, spawning a series of jokes.

The company was eventually bought by Volkswagen in 1990 and the transformation from motoring ugly duckling to automotive swan began. Borrowing heavily from VW's own styling Skodas suddenly became rather good value, thanks to their cheaper production costs. And, while still equipped with VW technology, Skoda added its own improved design which led to a fine collection of awards including the prestigious 'Best Car Manufacturer' award in 2010.

Perhaps now its reputation is even better than its German parent, with many motorists regarding the Skoda as among the most stylish and reliable on the road.

Here's an idea for you

Think about what your competition may have discarded as an unprofitable activity and consider if you can gain anything through reinvention or reuse.

Here's an idea for you

If you cannot think of a better way of doing something then learn from your opponent, directly or through their partners and just simply copy what they do well.

15. Entice the tiger to leave its mountain lair

Never directly attack an opponent whose advantage is derived from its position. Instead lure him away from his position thus separating him from his source of strength.

When Liou Bang established the Han Dynasty10 he adopted the feudal system in which a general would be awarded land and title in direct proportion to his skill and success in battle. As a result all the generals possessed large territories and had large armies of their own. After a period of time Liou Bang began to worry if his now powerful generals would think about revolting in the future. Among them, Han Sin, who had gained the most through rewards from great battles, became the biggest threat to Liou Bang.

One of Liou Bang's advisors, Chen Ping, proposed a scheme to entice Han Sin to leave his stronghold where he was protected by his army in order to capture him. Pretending to take an excursion to a resort Liou Bang ordered all of the feudal lords to visit with him. When Han Sin arrived he was arrested and his land (with armed forces) confiscated.

The stratagem is based on the idea that the tiger is powerful only when it is in its natural environment but if removed from that environment it becomes weaker and more vulnerable.

Another example from nature is the crocodile. Crocodiles hunt by lying in wait typically submerged with all but their eyes and nostrils above water and in this position are effectively invisible to anything at water level. In this position they'll wait motionless for a potential prey to appear. The crocodile will then fully submerge, resurfacing periodically to track its prey, until it is close enough to lurch out of the water and grasp its prey in its powerful jaws. It will then drag its prey into the water, away from land and into an environment that strongly favours the crocodile.

Since its first flight back in 1999, from Fort Lauderdale, JetBlue has evolved into one of the four main carriers in the world's largest aviation market, the USA. JetBlue has achieved this success in the face of significant opposition from the entrenched existing carriers through a unique combination of low costs and a differentiation strategy. With new planes, low fares, a non-unionised labour force, and focus on customer service, JetBlue caught the old guard of carriers off-guard. The company talks about putting the human element back into flying

and this has resonated well with passengers.

JetBlue's accomplishments have been propelled by its customer service approach, with amenities such as good leg room, free snacks/ meals and free live TV and radio, as well as with modern terminal facilities being developed. But despite all of this JetBlue remains a low cost and a low-fare airline.

The combination of low fares and amenities has engendered a level of passenger loyalty that once led an aviation consultant to comment, 'JetBlue doesn't have passengers, it has groupies.'

Here's an idea for you

It may not be easy to entice your opponent from their position of power and security, the appropriate bait needs be used – so what is definitely going to get their attention?

Here's an idea for you

Examine your opponent's source of power, and if the source is an individual, remove that individual in some way (ideally to join you) and if the source of power is a process then make that process your own.

10 The Han Dynasty was an imperial dynasty of China, preceded by the Qing Dynasty and succeeded by the Three Kingdoms

16. In order to capture, one must let loose

Cornered prey will often mount a final desperate attack. To prevent this you let the enemy believe he still has a chance for freedom. His will to fight is thus dampened by his desire to escape. When in the end the freedom is proven a falsehood the enemy's morale will be defeated and he will surrender without a fight.

In the early years of the Han Dynasty news that Prince Mao Dun of Syong Nu murdered his own father and declared himself the new king spread to the neighbouring country of Dong Hu. The Dong Hu wanted to see what kind of person Mao Dun was and so they sent an emissary requesting a gift of the old king's horse. The officials of Syong Nu disapproved but Mao Dun gave this horse to Dong Hu as a gift stating he would not lose the friendship of a neighbouring country over a horse.

Later Dong Hu sent another emissary, this time requesting the Queen of Syong Nu. The officials were once again up in arms in protest but, once again, Mao Dun gifted the queen to the Dong Hu stating he would not lose the friendship of a neighbouring country over a woman.

Later the Dong Hu sent a third emissary this time demanding a piece of land. But this time Mao Dun was angry, declaring that land was the foundation of a country. The emissary was arrested and Mao Dun invaded Dong Hu without any prior warning. As a result Mao Dun quickly and easily conquered Dong Hu.

If an enemy has no way to retreat then desperation will increase their bravery and the ferocity of their fight so you always offer them room for retreat, and in such retreat their will and morale will be low.

At the Battle of Pasir Panjang 1,400 Malay, British, Indian and Australian soldiers faced an opposing force of 13,000 Japanese troops in an attempt to save Singapore or at least give the civilians time to evacuate. It was, inevitably, a futile attempt to stop the advancement of the Japanese towards the centre of Singapore and indeed the majority of the defenders paid the ultimate price in the battle (those that didn't were taken prisoner and were among those who would later be pressed into service on the Thai-Burma Railway where they would be forced to build the now infamous bridge over the river).

But the Japanese suffered a disproportionately high number of casualties because of these men's bravery.

Kimberly-Clark, the maker of such well-known brands as Kleenex, Kotex, Depends and Huggies were looking for the next big thing, something they could develop into another success to add to their already wide range of products.

One of the people Kimberly-Clark spoke to was Maria Bailey, a well-known author and talk show host, and a kind of 'go-to authority' on anything related to mothering stuff. She noted that around the country real life mums were inventing new childcare products and these 'mompreneurs' could be contacted to see what it was they thought was good, useful, important and not there right now in the Kimberly-Clark world.

As a result a supportive scheme was set up by Kimberly-Clark who would provide grants to fund certain mompreneurs' own business ideas and in exchange they would get the right of first refusal if the business mums ever decided to sell up. This became known as the 'MomInspired' programme and Kimberly-Clark recognised that for a fraction of the cost of what they would have had to spend to create a prototype of any one of the dozen selected products, they have been able to support many potential winning ideas.

The company has received massive amounts of positive free media attention and has built solid relationships with those who received funding and which could well lead to many profitable partnerships in the future.

Here's an idea for you

Be magnanimous in your successes and allow your opposite number to leave with some dignity, and in some way in your debt.

Here's an idea for you

Once the dust has settled you can negotiate, from a point of great strength, with your defeated opponent to ensure that there is either no further threat through agreement or complete defeat through further action.

17. Tossing out a brick to get a jade gem

Bait someone by making him believe he gains something or just make him react to it and obtain something valuable from him in return.

Tang Tai Zong was very fond of calligraphy and had always wanted to acquire the most famous calligraphy painting; the Lanting Preface.[11] The painting was in the possession of Bian Cai, a monk at Yong Sin Temple. However Bian Cai claimed that he did not actually own the original. And so Tang Tai Zong chose Siao Yi to steal the real Lanting Preface and in disguise he travelled as poor scholar to the Yong Sin Temple, allegedly studying the murals in that temple, and bringing with him two original works by the famous calligrapher Er Wang as bait.

Seeing how impoverished the scholar was Bian Cai invited him to dinner and to stay at the temple for a while, and in the following days they talked about art and literature until one day Siao Yi casually mentioned that he had with him some authentic works by the famous calligrapher Er Wang. Bian Cai asked if he could see them and found that they were indeed original. At this moment Bian Cai declared that he had the famous Lanting Preface.

Siao Yi replied that he had heard that the Lanting Preface was destroyed during the war which upset Bian Cai who said he would show it to Siao Yi to prove him wrong. When this happened Siao Yi examined the work and pretended to see a flaw before declaring that this could not have been the original. Later, when Bian Cai went out to do something, Siao Yi took the Lanting Preface, along with the works of Er Wang that he had brought with him, and left.

Exchanging a common brick for a valuable piece of jade would certainly be an advantageous transaction.

The real meaning is to tempt through the offering of something useless in order to gain something valuable. It is a tactic that utilises baiting the enemy. The point of the tactic is to throw out bait that does not seem like bait. On the other hand, it is important to have a keen sense of judgement to ensure you do not take the enemy's bait in return.

The ability to look past the immediate gain and see the long-term cost is a valuable skill.

It started as a simple gimmick back in 1977 when Dick Brams, the 'father of the Happy Meal', who was the McDonald's St Louis regional advertising manager suggested, 'Why not create a meal just for kids?' and in 1979 McDonald's rolled out the first Happy Meal. It was circus-wagon themed and came with the standard hamburger or cheeseburger option, as well as French fries, cookies, a soft drink and of course the now famous toy.

A big moment for the concept came in 1987 when the first Disney Happy Meal debuted, and it has continued from strength to strength through all of the toy fads from Beanies to Transformers. Children from a young age have learned that by going to McDonald's, or persuading their parents to take them to McDonald's, to be more precise, they will get a treat – a toy.

It is estimated that some 3.6 billion Happy Meals have been sold since 1979 and that, of course, excludes all of the food that 'Happy Meal' eating children encouraged their parents to consume as they accompanied their children and their children's children to McDonald's.

Due to the recent emphasis on decreasing childhood obesity and improving overall childhood health and eating habits the Happy Meal has changed to include healthier options but conversely there is even talk now of the Happy Meal disappearing, as the size of 'Happy Meal' portions is no longer sufficient to satisfy the needs of the young consumers.

Here's an idea for you

You must convince someone that what you have is of greater value than what they have. Pick something that might be of lesser value to you than to them, or build up in value something that you have with suggestions of reward and benefit.

Here's an idea for you

Alternatively you can reduce the value of what your opponent has; this in turn raises the value of what you have until you own the 'gem', and they now have the 'brick'.

11 The Lantingji Xu literally 'Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion' or Lanting Xu is a famous work of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi, composed in year 353.

18. Defeat the enemy by capturing their chief

If the enemy's army is strong but is allied to the commander only by money, superstition or threats, then take aim at the leader. If the commander falls the rest of the army will disperse or come over to your side. If, however, they are allied to the leader through loyalty then beware, the army can continue to fight on after his death out of vengeance.

The An Shih Rebellion happened during the Tang Dynasty. Jhang Syun was appointed the general in charge of defeating the rebels and because he was an expert in military strategy the defeat came quickly and the rebel army suffered significant casualties. However, the rebels refused to retreat despite the huge losses and Jhang Syun realised that the only way to finally end the war was to secure the capture of the leader of the rebel army.

This leader was Yin Zih Ji but this fact was unknown to Jhang Syun. Cunningly he ordered all the soldiers to sharpen the ends of dried wheat stalks and use them as arrows to shoot at the rebels. When the rebel army saw this they felt certain that Jhang Syun's archers must have run out of arrows and they ran to report this good news to their leader and show him the wheat stalks.

But all their movements were being watched by Jhang Syun who had ordered his best archer to shoot at whoever the rebels presented the wheat stalks to. As a result Yin Zih Ji was struck by an arrow and badly wounded. The sight of their leader's injury created chaos among the rebels and the fighting ended.

Defeat through capture of the enemy's chief is a principle that everyone can understand; throughout history there are many proofs of the effectiveness of this strategy.

The Norman conquest of England was the invasion and subsequent occupation of England by an army of Normans and French led by Duke William II of Normandy, later known as 'William the Conqueror'. William, who defeated King Harold II of England on 14 October 1066, at the Battle of Hastings, was crowned as king on Christmas Day, 1066.

The pivotal point in the Battle of Hastings is traditionally considered to be when Harold was struck in the eye by an arrow. With the

English leader wounded and fallen the fight went the way of the invaders.

There are many stories of one company stealing or attempting steal a competitor's CEO in order to gain experience and weaken the competitor's capability. Most recently, in what is being trumpeted as a rare coup for Yahoo, the struggling tech giant, Marissa Mayer has been named as its new chief. As a top executive at Google for more than a decade, Mayer is credited with shaping many of Google's most high-profile pages including the clean, white search page and heading up its location services such as Google Maps.

Mayer called Yahoo 'one of the best brands on the Internet' and the decision to join was an easy one. Certainly for Yahoo this may well prove to be a significant 'win'.

With Google's $12.5 billion acquisition of Motorola Mobility completed recently it was reported that Apple, one of its biggest rivals, tried to lure away Google executive Dennis Woodside, who had just been named as Motorola's new CEO.

Apparently Apple CEO Tim Cook was attempting to poach Woodside away from the online search giant to install him as Apple's head of sales. Why? Well, at Google Woodside is credited with helping expand its operations across the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) regions and, as Vice President of Google's Americas business, driving revenues up in the US alone from $10.8 billion to $17.5 billion in under three years.

Here's an idea for you

Perhaps any assassination attempt on the leader of your competition might be considered extreme these days but it could well be possible that you could 'kill' off the competition by bringing the leading person on to your side with a better offer.

Here's an idea for you

Ensure that the most powerful force in any opposing team is distracted by some other issue in order that they lose focus and their leadership is neutralised.

Stratagems for when you are losing

The following three categories of stratagems, the ‘Confusion Stratagems’, the ‘Deception Stratagems’ and the ‘Desperate Stratagems’ are to be used when you consider that you are in a disadvantageous or losing situation.

Presumably you would only use these techniques if you actually didn’t enjoy the experience of a non-winning position and wished to adjust the balance in your favour.

‘If you can accept losing, you can’t win’

Vince Lombardi

Stratagems for confused situations

'Chaos is inherent in all compounded things. Strive on with diligence'

Buddha

19. Remove the firewood from under the pot

If something must be destroyed, destroy the source.

In the fourth year of Han emperor Sian's Jian An Period the biggest threat to Cao Cao was Yuan Shao who was entrenched in the north, and in time the two armies formally engaged in battle at Yang Wu. The strength of Cao Cao's forces was far less than Yuan Shao's mighty army, added to which Cao Cao's food supply was running low and soldiers were exhausted.

Surprisingly at this time Syu You, the advisor to Yuan Shao, unexpectedly chose to defect to the side of Cao Cao. Naturally, wanting to gain information from his ex-opponent, Cao Cao asked him for ideas on how to fight Yuan Shao. Syu You advised that a frontal attack against Yuan Shao's larger force would result in defeat and so it would be better to win by wit. He informed Cao Cao that the food supply for the Yuan army was stored at a place called Wu Chao and its defence was very light. Syu You wisely suggested that a raid to burn down the food barns would result quickly in a real problem for the 100,000 soldiers of Yuan Shao.

Indeed, when Yuan Shao heard the news of the fire, he sent some of his troops to try and rescue the food supply but in vain. Without food the morale of his troops soon collapsed and many of his soldiers either fled or were killed. As a consequence Yuan Shao's regime collapsed.

The strength of the fire determines whether the water will boil and the strength of the fire comes from the burning wood. It may not be wise to confront the boiling water directly but by taking the wood from under the cooking pot the boiling water will soon cool. In other words, do not confront your opponent's strong points but instead remove the source of his strength.

The US Treasury Department team had been working on a plan to freeze Libyan assets in US banks, hoping they might lock down $100 million or more and prevent Muammar Gaddafi from tapping into these resources as he unleashed vicious attacks against the protesters who wanted him removed from power.

In fact they discovered that their $100 million estimate was off by a massive amount: in fact there was some $29.7 billion! And to further help matters most of this money was at just one bank.

It was a piece of extraordinary good fortune for the Obama administration at a crucial moment in the efforts to address the deadly events unfolding in Libya. Executive Order 13566 illustrates how a process of identifying and freezing assets has, these days, become one of the first tactical tools to employ in such a situation.

At the time David S. Cohen, acting undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, stated: 'We never expected that this by itself was going to persuade Gaddafi to give up power,' but that since Gaddafi needed to continue to pay his hired mercenaries and had to pay his regular, and for now, loyal troops this would cause him a problem in a very short time. 'He's [Gaddafi] in a cash-intensive business. And not having access to the Libyan Investment Authority assets, the Central Bank of Libya assets, and other assets that he and his children have overseas, is going to be a problem for him.'

And so it proved when Gaddafi was captured and his rule was over.

Research In Motion (RIM) was the pioneer of the smartphone with its BlackBerry device but these days it could be on the path to oblivion, with only a historical byline to its credit. Over the past five years RIM has experienced significant turmoil while Apple and Android continue to consume the market it once ruled over.

Initially RIM ignored the competition. Talking about the iPhone, Jim Balsillie CEO of RIM said, 'It's kind of one more entrant into an already very busy space with lots of choice for consumers… but in terms of a sort of a sea-change for BlackBerry, I would think that's overstating it.'

And then they failed to compete, the Storm model was supposed to be the iPhone killer, but failed. It came out a year later, didn't have wi-fi capability, and was really not even a good touch screen phone let alone an iPhone copy; in fact it took four more years for RIM to have a decent touch screen phone and the BlackBerry tablet has also proved to be less than a success. Apple is just better and cooler and continues to undermine RIM by delivering to market a range of products that consumers really want.

Things got worse when in October 2011 the BlackBerry network went down due to a switch outage that shut down BBM and email for a day in the US. It was the largest and most embarrassing outage in history, and came shortly after various European outages.

It is not all over yet but in June 2008 RIM closed at $144.56 per share

and forty-nine months later it closed at $6.78 – a near 95% loss.

Here's an idea for you

You can take the strategy of convincing all those that matter that you are just as good as your opponent and thereby creating a 'level playing field'.

Here's an idea for you

You can resort to negative campaigning that focuses on the bad points of an opponent to destroy any credibility that they may have built up.

20. Disturb the water and catch a fish

Create confusion and use this confusion to further your own goals.

Originally it means to stir the water sediments in order to cloud the vision of the fish and therefore catch the fish. Here it means to create confusion so that the enemy does not know what is real and what is not; a confused enemy is more vulnerable to any attack.

Jin Wu Di once sent an army of over 200,000 soldiers to attack Wu. This strong army was led by the great general Du Yu who, on arrival at the city of Yue Siang next to the Yangtze River, ordered his captain Jhou Jhih to cross the river at night with just 200 raiders. Once across, they all changed into the uniform of Wu's army and hid themselves and waited in ambush.

The next day, Sun Sin, the general in charge of defending Yue Siang, took his army off to fight the Jin army but the Wu army lost this battle and retreated back to the city, at which point the 200 Jin raiders mixed themselves among the Wu army and entered the city walls during the confusion. Here they set fires all over the city and during the subsequent chaos Jhou Jhih and his full army conquered the city of Yue Siang.

In the US it was recognised that, despite many efforts over many years, the campaign to persuade college students to quit smoking was not being too successful. Then an alternative approach was taken by one advertising agency in Florida whose advertising campaign took the teenage desire for rebellion and turned it against the tobacco companies. It was recognised that smoking was less about any tobacco fix and much more about the act of rebellion and so the 'Truth' brand was created that would compete with the cigarette manufacturers' own campaigns. For example, in one TV spot Florida teenagers videoed a road trip where they drove to Philip Morris' headquarters in Richmond and asked the security guard at the compound gate if they could talk to the Marlboro Man. 'Sorry, he's dead,' the guard replied, which was true as the famous model who played the Marlboro man had indeed just died… of lung cancer! This all went on the tape and then on to the air.

Another advert showed a group of girls phoning through to Lucky Strike's advertising account coordinator to ask what the 'lucky' part

about Lucky Strike cigarettes was. One girl asked, 'Is it because… I might live?' After the executive hangs up the girls laugh maliciously.

The television spots made it look like a teenage rebellion against cigarette companies was sweeping the state. As a spokesman for the alternative campaign said, 'We never said "don't smoke"… we just got a bunch of kids together to make a statement to the tobacco industry – to rebel against them.'

Direct Line can be easily described as a success story. In the UK in 1985 consumers were offered something new, a way to buy car insurance without leaving your home or your office. Gone were the trips to the insurance broker in town and with filling in forms before being presented with a choice of potential products – for which you would then fill in more forms. Now you could pick the phone up, talk to someone friendly and, when a decision had been made, forms would appear in the post the following day or so. Easy.

By cutting out the broker and selling direct to the public it quickly became the largest supplier of car insurance and expanded rapidly into many other insurance offerings. Direct Line is well known in the UK for its distinctive logo – a red telephone on wheels – one that was added to with a red computer mouse, as the company launched itself into online services, again leading the pack with great marketing and great service.

The company revolutionised the way we purchase insurance and today the industry is unrecognisable from that pre-1985. Now all insurers offer online services and there is a plethora of comparison sites enabling us to get the best deal. It should be noted that Direct Line excludes itself from these comparison tools, declaring that they are the best.

It looks likely that Direct Line will shortly be floated on the UK stock exchange.

Here's an idea for you

If you cannot see a direct way to overcome your opponent then create confusion through other indirect activities that buy you time to consider your options, or force your opponent to drop their guard.

Here's an idea for you

Consider a lateral approach to achieving your goals. What is it that would cause your opponent to stop and think?

21. Slough off the cicada's golden shell

This is a stratagem mainly used to escape from an enemy of superior force. Mask yourself by either leaving your flamboyant traits behind, thus going incognito, or just masquerade yourself and create an illusion to fit your goals and distract others.

During the Song Dynasty12 the emperor sent an army to attack Jin but was defeated many times and so Bi Zai Yu, the general of the Song army, decided it was best to retreat. But he was concerned about the safest way to complete such a retreat.

After some thought he came up with a plan and gave three orders: First, the flags were not to be pulled out. Second, the army tents were not to be taken down. Third, the battle drums must not stop beating.

He then led his army in retreat under the cover of night and at dawn the Jin army saw nothing unusual on the Song side. It was not until a few days later that they started to become suspicious because there was no sign of movement within the Song camp, and when they sent a scout to see what was going on they found the camp had long been deserted.

You may ask how the battle drums could still be beating when all had left the camp. Well, when the Jin soldiers walked to the back of the camp they found several goats tied up to a tree by their hind legs. Their front legs had been left dangling just low enough to beat on the drums underneath and as the goats struggled to escape the battle drums still sounded.

When a cricket has grown to a certain stage it sheds its outer shell and leaves the empty shell behind. This empty shell is often mistaken for a real cricket.

The von Trapp family, made famous through the film *The Sound of Music* escape the Nazis when they persuade a local official that they must perform at the Salzburg Festival. The choreography of their final song 'So Long, Farewell' allows the family to leave slowly, a few at a time, and flee by climbing over the Alps and into Switzerland.

IBM's story is well known as perhaps the greatest turnaround of any major corporation in the world. The company, known as 'Big Blue', that had built its reputation and fortune through hardware, software

and services was, in 1994, on the verge of extinction having lost almost $16 billion due to the changing dynamics of the business it was in. It supposedly only had enough cash to survive for another 100 days.

And so the company turned to Lou Gerstner who, in his nine years at the helm, grew the company by around 40% (with the majority of the growth coming from the services and consulting division). For the investors, the stock price of the company during that period increased eight-fold.

The full story can be found in *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* Lou Gerstner's memoir of his nine years as CEO of IBM, sub-titled *Inside IBM's Historic Turnaround*. But the key point as far as Gerstner was concerned was that the company had to change both its strategy (IBM was on a path to breaking up into smaller businesses) and its culture. He discovered IBM was totally focused on its own internal rules and conflicts and had forgotten about the customer. In his words: 'Units competed with each other, hid things from each other. Huge staffs spent countless hours debating and managing transfer pricing terms between IBM units instead of facilitating a seamless transfer of products to customers.'

Change was indeed desperately needed and, as time has proved, Gerstner led that change successfully.

Here's an idea for you

Be in one place but convince your opponent, through subterfuge, that you are elsewhere, from here you are better prepared to surprise them and succeed.

Here's an idea for you

Just disappear. Stop what you are doing, play the waiting game while all the work is being done by your opponent and they will be concerned about what you are 'up to'.

12 The Song Dynasty ruled in China between 960 and 1279; it succeeded the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period and was followed by the Yuan Dynasty.

22. Shut the door to catch the thief

To capture the enemy, you must plan prudently if you want to succeed. Do not rush into action and before you 'move in for the kill' first cut off your enemy's escape routes, and cut off any routes through which outside help can reach them.

During the reign of Empress Wu Ze Tian in the Tang Dynasty there were two ministers by the name of Lai Jun Chen and Jhou Sing who were much favoured by the empress. These two ministers enjoyed devising various torture instruments and became experts in such torture and the gaining of confessions from anyone who was suspected of treason or disloyalty to the empress.

One day the empress received a tip that Jhou Sing was plotting a revolt and the empress asked Lai Jun Chen to arrest Jhou Sing and to find out all about the revolt and about any other conspirators. Lai Jun Chen thought this was a difficult task because Jhou Sing was also an expert at the torture techniques Lai Jun Chen would have to use and so it would not be easy to make him confess.

Cunningly Lai Jun Chen invited Jhou Sing to dinner where he asked him for advice: 'Recently the criminals have become more and more cunning, they refuse to confess despite using all kinds of torture on them. Do you have any good ideas my friend?' Jhou Sing said excitedly, 'I have a new idea which would definitely make any suspect confess. It only requires a large water jar full of water. You put the suspect into the jar full of water and bring the whole thing to a boil. Any suspect would confess right away, I assure you.'

At that Lai Jun Chen ordered his men to carry a big water jar into the room. They filled it with water and brought it to a boil. At this point Lai Jun Chen suddenly turned on Jhou Sing and explained that the empress knew about the planned revolt and that she had appointed Lai Jun Chen to investigate and gain a confession. He said to Jhou Sing, 'Confess now! Or else I will be forced to invite you into the water jar!'

A striking feature of the final letters of Osama bin Laden, retrieved from his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, is that they show that he had become isolated from his own organisation and was considered by many to be delusional about his organisation's capacity, suggesting for example the shooting down of President Obama's plane; as well as

being an object of ridicule among many elements previously under his direction.

By many accounts bin Laden played no active role in the leadership of his organisation after 2003 and couriers spoke of the al-Qaeda leader's physical and mental health deterioration. The continuous actions of the USA and alliances post-9/11 had reduced a powerful threat to that of a man almost alone at the end.

In October 2011 the Australian airline Qantas, made a startling announcement; their CEO Alan Joyce, announced at a news conference that he planned to lock out all workers in dispute with Qantas with immediate effect and ground all flights.

'The airline will be grounded as long as it takes to get a resolution on this,' he declared. The background to this was a running dispute with the unions and the threat of a new 'extreme' plan of disruption.

'Qantas is losing $15 million a week from strike action – a continuous debt we can't afford,' he said, adding that the unions were slowly killing Qantas with the number of people expressing an intention not to fly Qantas rising from 5% to 30%.

This declaration from Joyce ensured that the Prime Minister of Australia acted, as the federal government feared that an extended period of grounding would do significant damage to the national economy. On 31 October a full Bench hearing of Fair Work Australia declared that all industrial action taken by Qantas and the involved trades unions be terminated immediately.

Here's an idea for you

Like revenge, which is said to be best served when cold, you should consider all possible outcomes before you actually make your move on your opponent – how could they respond and how would you react to each possible response?

Here's an idea for you

Ensure that you have a back-up plan in case your anticipation of the responses from your opponent is incorrect, or you have missed one possible course of action.

23. Befriend a distant state while attacking a neighbour

It is known that nations that border each other become enemies while nations separated by distance and obstacles make better allies. When you are the strongest in one field, your greatest threat is from the second strongest in your field, not the strongest from another field.

Near the end of the Warring States' Period the political situation had developed into a struggle for supremacy among the seven strongest countries. After the reforms instituted by Shang Yang, Cin grew stronger by the day and plans were made to invade and secure the remaining six countries in order to create the first unified empire in China.

At first King Cin Jhao wanted to conquer Ci, but his prime minister Fan Suei advised against this plan suggesting instead it would be better to befriend the distant state and attack the ones nearby.

Fan Suei pointed out to his king that Ci was the strongest country and also the furthest away from Cin. Any attack on Ci would have meant that Cin troops must first go through the lands of Han and Wei. The risks would be too high to directly attack Ci, so why not attack neighbouring Han and Wei first and then advance towards Ci. He added that it would be best, in order to prevent Ci from allying with Han and Wei, for King Cin Jhao to form an alliance with Ci.

In the forty years that followed this was the policy that Cin applied. Cin conquered first Han and Wei and then later Jhao and Yan in order to unify the north. Later Chu in the south was conquered, before finally Cin was able to conquer Ci.

The dream of unifying China was achieved through this tactic and King Cin Jhao became Cin Shih Huag the very first Emperor of China.

Kautilya, or Vishnu Gupta, wrote the ancient Indian political treatise entitled the *Arthashastra*13 which is most famous for outlining the Mandala theory of foreign policy. Here neighbours of any state are considered as enemies of that state, but any state on the other side of a neighbouring state is regarded as an ally, or potential ally.

Another way of putting is that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

It has been suggested that the US is attempting to construct such a Mandala circle (trade based) in order to contain the recent growth of China in the world marketplace.

In 1965 in Bridgeport, Connecticut Fred DeLuca, an ambitious seventeen-year-old, was looking for a way to make enough money to pay for his university tuition. At a barbecue during a conversation with a family friend, Dr Peter Buck, it was suggested he open a submarine sandwich shop.

With a $1,000 loan from Dr Buck, the partnership was formed and Pete's Super Submarines opened in August 1965. The first year was a challenge but a year later they opened their second location and quickly realised that marketing and visibility were going to be key factors in the success of the business. The name was shortened to 'Subway' and the now familiar yellow logo was introduced.

The next step was to formulate a business plan that outlined Subway's brand goals and, in an effort to reach those goals, outlets began franchising, giving others the opportunity to succeed in their own business venture. The first franchise opened in 1974.

Subway is now the world's largest food chain, yes bigger even than McDonalds these days, with 37,636 restaurants in 100 countries. The franchise model has certainly paid off big time.

Here's an idea for you

Look at your opponents' strengths and then look at their potential allies to decide if you would be better keeping your peace with them for now and taking on a weaker opposition.

Here's an idea for you

Make efforts to stir up trouble between your opponent and a third party; if there is no such animosity already then create some, and if there is some already then merely 'stoke the fires'.

13 The *Arthashastra* is an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy.

24. Obtain safe passage to conquer the state of Guo

Borrow the resources of an ally to attack a common enemy. Once the enemy is defeated, use those resources to turn on the ally that lent you them in the first place.

In the Spring and Autumn Period the small states of Yu and Guo were bordering the larger state of Jin and it was known that Jin wished to conquer these lesser states.

In order to achieve the first part of his plans Jin Sian Gong bribed the Duke of Yu with horses and gold in exchange for safe passage for his army to pass through Yu in order to attack Guo. The Duke of Yu accepted this offer and this way the Jin army was able to conquer the city of Sia Yang smoothly.

Three years after that Jin made the same request to the Duke of Yu again but this time one of the senior officials of Guo, Gong Jhih Ji, cautioned the Duke of Yu against accepting Jin's request by saying, 'Yu is to Guo, as lips are to teeth. If the lips are gone, the teeth will be exposed to the cold.'

He suggested that instead of granting Jin's request both Yu and Guo should unite together to fight Jin. But despite Gong Jhih Ji's warning and advice the Duke of Yu chose to ignore him and agreed to Jin's request for safe passage a second time. Gong Jhih Ji predicted that this would end in disaster for Yu and he took his family and fled to another country.

As predicted Guo was conquered by the Jin army and then, on their way back through Yu, the Jin army launched a surprise attack on the unsuspecting Yu, which ended with a victory for Jin and the delivery of both Yu and Guo.

The non-aggression pact in The Second World War was signed between Germany and Russia; it was effectively a contract to prevent Russia from declaring war on Germany as they began their offensive on Europe and took country after country. What Stalin didn't know was that the pact was just a smokescreen and Germany was actually building its economic and military strength ready to turn on Russia when it was ready to do so.

On its company website Nokia proudly declares: 'Over the past 150

years, Nokia has evolved from a riverside paper mill in south-western Finland to a global telecommunications leader connecting over 1.3 billion people. During that time, we've made rubber boots and car tyres. We've generated electricity. We've even manufactured TVs. Changing with the times, disrupting the status quo – it's what we've always done. And we fully intend to keep doing it.'

Proud words, but Nokia was once the world's largest vendor of mobile phones with what seemed an unassailable global position. Over the past five years, however, it has suffered a massive decline in market share as a result of the growing use of smartphones, principally the Apple iPhone and devices running on Google's Android operating system. As its share price fell from a high of $40 in 2007 to just under $3 in 2012 the company has tried to fight back and recover from its lack of initial investment in the smartphone technology that is now seen as standard in the market.

The jury is still out on whether Nokia will live up to their claim of 'changing with the times' but Nokia and Microsoft have teamed up to build an iPhone killer in a desperate attempt to take on Google and Apple in the fast-growing smartphone market. Nokia said that using Microsoft's Windows Phone software in its smartphones would speed up new product launches and win market share.

Here's an idea for you

Make your opponent your friend before then making your friend your opponent once again, but make them believe that they are always your friend until the last possible moment.

Stratagems for deception situations

'All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem'

Martin Luther King, Jr

25. Replace the beams with rotten timbers

Disrupt the enemy's formations, interfere with their methods of operations, change the rules which they are used to following and go contrary to their standard training. In this way you remove the supporting pillar, the common link that makes a group of men an effective fighting force.

Ming Shih Zong was a very superstitious emperor who had a favourite fortune teller by the name of Lan Dao Sing.

Before he became the emperor's favourite he was required to take a clever test. The emperor sent a eunuch to deliver a confidential letter to him but before he could open and read the letter the eunuch burned it in front of him with the challenge that since Lan Dao Sing was skilled in magic he would know the questions that were in the letter that the emperor wished him to answer. The eunuch waited for these answers while Lan Dao Sing began to panic, afraid that the emperor would have him killed if he did not answer correctly.

But suddenly he came up with an idea and, instead of giving the answers to the messenger he followed him back to see the emperor where he said to Ming Shih Zong, 'I know how to call upon the supernatural powers. But the eunuch whom your majesty sent today was not devoted enough and so the gods refused to show me the answers. May I request that you send your letter again using another eunuch who is more devoted?'

Because the emperor was superstitious he agreed and this time Lan Dao Sing was ready. Before the letter was burned Lan Dao Sing switched the real letter with a false one when the messenger was distracted. In this way Lan Dao Sing learned the questions and, of course, as a result of this trickery, gave the emperor the correct answers.

Ever since electronics have been used in battle in an attempt to gain superiority over the enemy, an equal amount of effort has been made developing techniques to reduce the effectiveness of these electronics. Radar jamming originated with the Royal Air Force during the Second World War with a technique code named 'window' which is now referred to as 'chaff'. Chaff was made of different lengths of metallic strips (to reflect different frequencies) released from an aircraft so as to create a large area of false radar responses to confuse radar trackers

and allow the plane to avoid detection.

In 1978 James Dyson, the inventor of such things as the Sea Truck and Ballbarrow, realised his bag vacuum cleaner was constantly losing suction power as it clogged up with dust and so he set to work solving this problem. Five years and thousands of prototypes later, the world's first cyclonic bag-less vacuum cleaner arrived on the scene: what is now known universally as the 'Dyson'.

Initially he offered his invention to all the major manufacturers but, one by one, they turned him down, not interested in the new technology but more determined to continue selling bags worth some $500 million every year.

Finally in 1993 Dyson opened a research centre and factory near his home in England and the result was the Dyson Cyclone, the first vacuum cleaner that didn't lose suction. In under two years Dyson was the UK's best-selling vacuum brand. The competitors such as Miele, Bosch, Siemens, Electrolux and Philips initially all tried to stop Dyson showing how their models clogged and lost suction but later tried to jump on the bandwagon to produce 'bag-less' vacuums.

Meanwhile 60% of people were buying a Dyson because it was recommended to them and in 2011 the company passed the £1 billion turnover mark having reshaped the 'vacuum' business completely.

Here's an idea for you

First, understand what makes your opponent strong and then consider ways of making them play by your own rules rather than to those that support their strength.

Here's an idea for you

Isolate your opponent in some way that makes them work in a new manner that makes them at least your equal.

26. Point at the mulberry tree while cursing the locust tree

To discipline, control, or warn others whose status or position excludes them from direct confrontation, use analogy and innuendo. When names are not used directly, those accused cannot retaliate without revealing their complicity.

Ming Sian Zong was an incompetent emperor who trusted his favourite eunuch, Wang Jhih, too much. Together with two of his men, Wang Yue and Chen Rong, the three held power and committed evil all over the country. No one dared reveal the truth to the emperor.

At the same time, there was another eunuch by the name of A-Chou who was very clever and funny and the emperor liked him very much. One day Ming Sian Zong ordered A-Chou and his troupe to perform for him and so A-Chou staged a show called 'Drunk', but this was a show that had the intention to show the emperor the evil ways of Wang Jhih.

At the start A-Chou appeared on stage walking around as a drunkard, talking nonsense and making the audience laugh out loud. Then the role of the passers-by came onto the stage and announced, 'The minister is coming on official business clear the way and be quiet,' but the drunken A-Chou pointed at the passers-by and laughed, 'Who cares if you are a minister or a small official? Who cares if you are a black dog or a white dog? You go your way, and I go my way. In fact, I was here first! So it is you who should walk around me.' The audience laughed again.

The passers-by then announced, 'The emperor is here, clear the way and be quiet,' but A-Chou burst out laughing and said, 'The emperor is still dreaming I think, his mind is so clouded that he is even more drunk than I am.'

The passers-by then made one last announcement, 'Wang Jhih is arriving,' at which A-Chou immediately knelt on all fours, trembling and pleading for forgiveness. Watching this Ming Sian Zong got the message about Wang Jhih.

There are three main ways of fire-fighting; direct, indirect and

parallel.

In the indirect attack approach, used in a burning building, the theory is to aim the stream of water (a 30 degree or less spray pattern is advised) at the ceiling and not directly at the fire itself. When this method is employed two things happen, first the water cools the ceiling upsetting the thermal balance and some of the water will vapourise into steam, and second the rest of the water will fall like rain on to the main body of the fire below with the intention of extinguishing the fire.

In some circumstances it can be more effective than taking the direct approach of spraying the flames themselves.

Court jester's or 'Fools' have their origins way back in time and records show that during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) they occupied an important place within the court circle. In the UK and Europe they played an influential role in society, particularly during the medieval period.

Contrary to popular belief many jesters were very accomplished musicians who were articulate and well read; they also had acrobatic skills and were clever in sleight of hand tricks. Very often their performances had political overtones, so it was at times a precarious job but one that had great rewards should the Ruler be 'much amused'.

In modern times there have been some 'rulers' who might be accused of being a fool. George W. Bush is perhaps one of them with his long list of gaffes and made -up words. But he did make it to the top job in the US and he certainly had many attributes that allowed him to be successful in that role (at least successful in what he wanted to achieve – yes he did have advantages in his name, his charm, his general good looks, and the easy access to money and political contacts afforded by his family connections).

Some would suggest that actually by 'playing the fool' he was protecting himself and deflecting any negativity on to others on his presidential team – maybe he was cleverer than many thought?

Here's an idea for you

To win an advantage over others who you don't believe you can directly attack then make others aware of the real truth (make up the 'real' truth, which should be all bad of course, if you have to).

Here's an idea for you

Pass your beliefs about your opposition through your own partners in order that the 'truth' is not seen to come from you.

27. Feign madness but keep your balance

Hide behind the mask of a fool, a drunk, or a madman to create confusion about your intentions and motivations. Lure your opponent into underestimating your ability until, overconfident, he drops his guard. Then you may attack.

During the Three States Period, before Emperor Wei Ming died, he appointed Cao Shuan as the regent to his young crown prince. But Cao Shuan had more ambitious plans and after Wei Ming died he tried to seize power for himself by suggesting that the child emperor be dethroned and that Sih Ma Yi be appointed prime minister. Cao Shuan hoped that by promoting Sih Ma Yi from a general to a prime minister Sih Ma Yi would have to cede military command of the army. In this way Cao Shuan could then appoint his own man as general and thereby seize control of the military. Sih Ma Yi knew that he was too weak to confront Cao Shuan at that moment so he pretended to be ill and took his bed in order to thwart Cao Shuan's wicked scheme.

When Cao Shuan heard this news he was not convinced that Sih Ma Yi was really sick so he sent someone to verify the story. What was reported back was that Sih Ma Yi was a haggard old man who needed a maid to steady him and feed him. He had spoken in a confused way, mixing the Jing province with the Bing province, he had dribbled medicine all over his mouth and his clothes and he stared into the distance lost in his own mind. There was none of his past glory and grace.

When he heard this Cao Shuan laughed out loud and from that point on paid no attention to Sih Ma Yi.

The next spring, while Cao Shuan left the city for ancestor worship, Sih Ma Yi launched a rebellion and disclosed the crimes by Cao Shuan and his gang. He accused them of treason and, when captured, executed all of them. This was how Sih Ma Yi won back the political power of Wei.

Columbo was a highly popular American detective television series, starring Peter Falk as a homicide detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. At the start of each episode the crime and the killer is revealed to the viewer and the show then progresses as Columbo cleverly secures all the evidence needed for an indictment and thereby solves the case. His formidable eye for detail and meticulously

dedicated approach only becomes clear to the killers at the very end, when it is all too late. Up until then the detective is consistently underestimated by his suspects as they are initially reassured and distracted by his confused speech, bad dress sense and rough looks.

Steven Ballmer is the CEO of Microsoft Corporation, the world's leading manufacturer of software for personal and business computing. Ballmer joined Microsoft in 1980 as employee number 30 and was the first business manager hired by Bill Gates.

His flamboyant stage appearances at Microsoft events are widely circulated on the Internet as viral videos – just go check out 'Steve Ballmer goes crazy' and enjoy the show.

The official Microsoft site describes Steve as ebullient, focused, funny, passionate, sincere, hard-charging and dynamic adding that 'Ballmer has infused Microsoft with his own brand of energetic leadership, vision and spirit over the years.'

Certainly he is no fool, with a personal fortune of $15.7 billion, and as the now leader of Microsoft he has kept the ship steady, although he is perhaps not such an innovative leader as Bill Gates. Many such companies in the tech space have struggled with a slow market – some exceptions being, for example, Google, Apple and Facebook.

Here's an idea for you

Hide your real intentions by behaving in a different way, by being friendly, funny, or just the last person your opponent would expect any attack would come from.

Here's an idea for you

Act as though you don't understand anything, that what is being proposed is too complicated for you to make a good decision, but then take great advice and apply your correct intelligence to winning.

28. Remove the ladder when the enemy has ascended to the roof

With baits and deceptions, lure your enemy into treacherous terrain. Then cut off his lines of communication and avenue of escape. To save himself, he must fight both your own forces and the elements of nature.

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties14 there was a local judge in the Ci province by the name of Yang Jin. A businessman who travelled through Ci province was robbed of all his belongings and he immediately reported the robbery to this judge. According to the businessman the robber did not have a local accent or local dress. Yang Jin asked about the details of the robber's dress and his looks and then he ordered his subordinates to broadcast the news that someone was murdered outside the city gate and the officials were trying to identify the deceased. They were releasing the description of the dress of the deceased in the hope that someone would come forward to identify the corpse.

The news spread quickly and very soon a wailing old woman came to the court to identify the body. After asking her a few detailed questions Yang Jin was certain that the suspect was her son. So he sent his men to hide outside the old woman's house and as soon as the suspect entered the front door he was captured. They searched him and his room and found all the missing possessions of the businessman. The suspect confessed immediately.

In the card game of poker a bluff is a bet or raise made with a hand which is not believed to be either the best hand or perhaps even a good hand in this round. The objective of a bluff is to induce a fold by at least one opponent who holds a better hand, or better still all of your opponents as they have been convinced that they cannot beat your hidden hand. Optimal bluffing requires that the bluffs must be performed in such a manner that opponents cannot tell when a player is bluffing or not, no 'tells', and in a non-repetitive way. If not then the game can turn against the bluffer.

In 1998, after dropping out of Stanford University, Sergey Brin and Larry Page founded Google on some very basic principles that remain at the heart of the company's success today. Its success, valued at some $160 million, comes from its acceptance by a wide range of

computer users, from experts to novices, who just trust the brand. The fact that Google is now an accepted word in the dictionary shows the sheer power and influence the company has on our lives.

It is simple to use, it gives relevant results and it is 'comfortable' – a number of reasons that Google surpassed all other search tools, such as Yahoo, a long time ago.

Google grew in popularity around the world without any marketing campaign, it just did what users wanted it to do and word spread. Added to that it is a 'fun' company that shares its humour with its users in many ways, including the seasonal and event-based graphics that make up the ever-changing Google logo. As an example of the sense of fun that pervades the corporate culture, in 2005 Google sold 14,159,265 additional shares in a secondary stock offering. Why the unusual number of shares? Well it represents the first eight digits after the decimal point for pi (3.14159265), completely appropriate for a company run by two mathematicians with a real sense of humour.

When Google reached a level of mastery of the Internet it set about making sure that it both secured and advanced its mastery through such offerings as Google Maps, Google Earth, Google Docs, AdWords and many more.

Here's an idea for you

You should raise the demands on your opposition to make them stretch their efforts and resources to take them out of their comfort zone and into a much less comfortable place.

Here's an idea for you

Offer up some attractive benefits to your opponent that they can't resist and that brings them out into the open more, in order for you to make your move.

14 The Southern and Northern Dynasties was a period in the history of China that lasted from 420 to 589. Though an age of civil war and political chaos, it was also a time of flourishing arts and culture, advancement in technology, and the spreading of Buddhism and Taoism.

29. Deck the tree with false blossoms

Tying silk blossoms on a dead tree gives the illusion that the tree is healthy. Through the use of artifice and disguise, make something of no value appear valuable, of no threat appear dangerous, of no use appear useful.

There once was a hunter who was away seeking food for his family leaving at home his wife Cuei Hua. She saw a suspicious man outside their home and rushed to shut the door but the thief was quicker than she was and in no time he was in the house and had sat himself on a chair in the living room. He said that as it was getting dark she should let him stay for the night and he would then leave in the morning. Cuei Hua realised that her husband wouldn't be home anytime soon and that she was incapable of fighting off this man. She thought what she should do and then she caught a glimpse of a couple of her husband's shoes underneath the bed and this gave her an idea.

Cuei Hua first poured tea for the thief and commented that friends were important to a traveller, so he should have a cup of tea first and then she would bring him some water to wash his feet.

Cuei Hua went and fetched six pairs of shoes which she brought to the living room, then she brought a large basin full of water. The thief asked why there were so many shoes, saying 'One pair of shoes is enough for me and I don't need so much water to wash my feet.'

Cuei Hua replied sweetly, 'Oh only one pair is for you, the others are for my husband and his relatives who should be back soon.'

The thief looked around quickly and Cuei Hua said, 'They are not here as yet but they'll be back very soon. Please make yourself at home and I will begin to prepare dinner in the kitchen so we can all eat when they return.' The thief realised that things would not be as easy as he had at first imagined and he slipped away quietly while Cuei Hua was busy cooking in the kitchen.

After a massive US-led invasion in 2003 and the victory over Saddam Hussain's evil regime there is still a great deal of debate over the truth regarding the infamous weapons of mass destruction that was the spark that ignited the war.

President George W. Bush's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza

Rice acknowledged that there was some uncertainty over Iraq's ability to obtain a nuclear weapon but warned, 'We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.'

Such weapons were never found but the Bush administration achieved their initial goal of removing Hussain and reformulating the Iraqi government. But many would argue the full war is far from over, and many more feel that the world was intentionally mislead over these WMDs.

Enron was at one time the seventh largest company in the United States and it collapsed into bankruptcy without ever reporting a losing quarter. More than $60 billion of shareholder investments became worthless (Enron owed $67 billion to its creditors). Nearly 5,000 employees lost their jobs with no severance pay and many employees lost all their retirement investments in Enron, losing not only their jobs but also their retirement savings.

The Enron scandal, revealed in October 2001, eventually led to the bankruptcy of the Enron Corporation, an American energy company based in Houston, Texas, and the related collapse of Arthur Andersen, which was one of the five largest audit and accountancy partnerships in the world at the time.

Enron's success led it to the position of being able to lead and shape the energy markets in the United States and subsequently earned the company accolades from many sources. *Fortune* named Enron the most innovative company in America for six years in a row, beginning in 1996. But the dark side to all this innovation and success was a massive fraud.

Through the use of accounting loopholes, special purpose entities, and generally poor financial reporting, Enron's executives were able to hide billions of dollars of debt from failed deals and projects. Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow and other executives not only misled Enron's board of directors and audit committee on high-risk accounting practices, but also put pressure on Andersen to ignore the issues while still driving the company onwards and upwards for the greed and the glory of the executive team.

Many executives at Enron were indicted on a variety of charges and were later sentenced to prison. Employees and shareholders received limited returns in lawsuits, despite losing billions in pensions and stock prices. As a consequence of the scandal, new regulations and legislation were enacted to expand the accuracy of financial reporting

for public companies. One piece of legislation, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, expanded repercussions for destroying, altering or fabricating records in federal investigations or for attempting to defraud shareholders. The act also increased the accountability of auditing firms to remain unbiased and independent of their clients.

Here's an idea for you

Making things seem better than they actually are hides the truth from your opponent about your strength and capability.

Here's an idea for you

Making things seem worse than they actually are is the same, but counter, stratagem; both result in your opponent not knowing the truth about you and therefore giving your actions an advantage.

30. Make the host and the guest exchange roles

Usurp leadership in a situation where you are normally subordinate. Infiltrate your target. Initially, pretend to be a guest to be accepted, but develop from inside and become the owner later.

Once there was a gang that included one thief and two robbers. Their strategy was from the rooftops: the robbers lowered the thief down into a house with a rope and the thief would then collect all the valuables and tie the loot to a rope so that the robbers could haul it back up. They did this successfully three times until the two robbers calculated that they had collected enough valuables.

On the last haul the thief hid himself inside a wooden box along with some stolen jewellery. The robbers found the box to be very heavy when they hauled it up and this made them very excited as they thought that it must be something very valuable this time. And so they became greedy, deciding to take off with the box leaving the thief behind in the house; but what they didn't know was that the thief was already hidden inside the box.

After walking a distance they took a break on the roadside because the box was too heavy. The thief thought that it should be morning by now and when he heard the voices of a group of passers-by he thought that he had been abandoned by the two robbers so he shouted out, 'Help! Help! Robbers!' The robbers did not expect to hear any sound coming out of the box and so, scared at what it might be, they ran away. The passers-by opened the box freeing the thief who then made up a story about how he was robbed and kidnapped by the two robbers. In the end he walked away with all the stolen goods.

The cuckoo, a dove-sized bird with blue-grey upper parts, head and chest with dark barred white under parts, is unique among birds in the way it parasitises other species of birds during the rearing of its young. It lays a single egg in the nest of a bird of another species, most commonly, the hedge sparrow, meadow pipits, dunnocks and reed warblers.

The unaware foster-parents then feed and raise the young cuckoo as if it were their own, but only the young cuckoo survives. All eggs and fledglings belonging to the birds that built the nest disappear over time. In its first few days of life the fledgling cuckoo works its way

backwards, up the side of the nest, pushing behind it an egg or young sparrow, until this can be thrown from the nest. It repeats this task until only it remains in the nest and as a result it takes all the food supply provided tirelessly by its foster parents.

The legendary Steve Jobs cofounded Apple in his parents' garage in 1976, was kicked out of the company in 1985, and then returned to rescue it from near bankruptcy in 1997. By the time he died, in October 2011, he had built Apple into the world's most valuable company. Along the way he helped to transform seven industries: personal computing, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, retail stores and digital publishing.

But to be clear Apple didn't invent the iPod, they took the idea from others and made the music industry their own on the way. How we buy and listen to music is now shaped almost entirely by Apple's vision.

And you know what, Apple didn't invent the smartphone either, they took the idea from others and reshaped the industry into their own vision. The future of the mobile industry has been shaped by Apple and will continue to be for some time.

And Apple didn't invent the tablet computer, they also took this idea from others and now theirs is the template for the tablet market.

Steve Jobs said, 'Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower,' but then he also declared 'I want to put a ding in the universe.' He surely did that, the Apple way.

Here's an idea for you

Offer to assume responsibilities of any opponent, perhaps pretending to just be offering simple help to make their life easier, in order to gain control of matters.

Here's an idea for you

Trick your opponent into thinking that they need to focus on something else in order for you to take over.

Stratagems for desperate situations

'Courage enlarges, cowardice diminishes resources. In desperate straits the fears of the timid aggravate the dangers that imperil the brave'

Christian Nestell Bovee

31. The beauty trap

Send your enemy beautiful women to cause discord within his camp. This stratagem can work on three levels. First, the ruler becomes so enamoured with the beauty that he neglects his duties and allows his vigilance to wane. Second, other males at court will begin to display aggressive behaviour that inflames minor differences hindering cooperation and destroying morale. Third, other females at court, motivated by jealousy and envy, begin to plot intrigues further exacerbating the situation. Known also as the 'honey trap'.

During the An Shih Rebellion of the Tang Dynasty the government army was led by the great general Li Guang Bi and the rebel army was led by General Shih Sih Ming. The two armies faced each other in a stalemate across opposite sides of He Yang River. The rebel army had more than 1,000 fine horses and was in better condition than the government army.

The rebel army's horses came to the riverbank to bathe and drink each day. As he watched them from the riverside, this gave Li Guang Bi a brilliant idea. He ordered his men to assemble all the mares in their camp and he ordered all the foals to be taken away and locked inside the city gates. That day, when the horses from the rebel army arrived at the river for their daily bath, Li Guang Bi released all of his mares on his side of the riverbank and because their foals had all been taken away, the mares started to call out for their young. Hearing the calls and attracted by the mares the stallions from the rebel army rushed across the river and their mares soon followed across as well.

In a short while all of the 1,000 rebel horses became government horses and the strength of the rebel army was destroyed as a result. This is the famous story of the 'Pretty Mares Trap'.

One of the best-known honey traps in spy history involved the infamous Mata Hari, a Dutch woman who had spent some years as an erotic dancer – famous to the point that Greta Garbo played her in a 1931 film.

During the First World War the French arrested her on charges of spying for the Germans, based on their discovery through intercepted telegrams that the German military attaché in Spain was sending her money. The French claimed that the German was her control officer

and she was passing French secrets to him, secrets she had obtained by seducing prominent French politicians and officers.

During the trial Mata Hari defended herself vigorously claiming that she was the attaché's mistress and that the gifts and money were from him. Unfortunately her arguments did not convince and she died by firing squad in 1917.

Later, after the war, the French admitted that they had no real evidence against her, concluding that she was tried and executed not because she was running a 'honey- trap' operation but to send a powerful message to any other woman who might be tempted to follow her example. The lesson here, perhaps, is that resembling a 'honey trap' can be as dangerous as actually being one, or even caught in one.

These days there is a growth in 'honey-trap agencies' that specialise in testing a partner's fidelity through organised temptations and surveillance.

Hooters is a restaurant chain whose name is a double entendre referring to both its owl logo, a bird known for its 'hooting' calls, as well as the American slang term for breasts.

Hooters' attraction is primarily that of the waiting staff who are primarily young, attractive waitresses, 'Hooter Girls', whose revealing outfits and sex appeal is played up and is a primary component of the company's image. The company does employ males as cooks, busboys and managers though. The menu includes hamburgers and other sandwiches and the restaurant's speciality, chicken wings, along with a range of beverages, alcoholic and soft plus a range of Hooters T-shirts, sweatshirts, and various souvenirs and curios. The attraction is clear in that 'sex' sells and the 'Hooter Girls' can be considered sexy for sure.

Abercrombie & Fitch, the American clothing company founded in 1892, has a well-reported mission of selling its idea of youthful physical perfection; from the Bruce Weber ad campaigns to the employees that fit its ideal of American beauty. The company conceded that this ideal didn't include black, Hispanic and Asian employees in 2004 when it paid $40 million to employees and job applicants of those demographics to settle a class-action federal discrimination lawsuit.

Things now seem to be pretty much the same with chief executive

Mike Jeffries stating in 2006, in response to a question about how important sex and sexual attraction was in the Abercrombie & Fitch experience, 'It's almost everything. That's why we hire good-looking people in our stores. Because good-looking people attract other good-looking people, and we want to market to cool, good-looking people. We don't market to anyone other than that.' Abercrombie & Fitch are predicting sales of £4.6 billion by 2015.

Here's an idea for you

To avoid direct contact with your opponent use someone, or something, that you know would be attractive to them as a way to learn more about their plans in a way that would be to your advantage.

Here's an idea for you

To discredit your opponent use someone, or something, to cause them embarrassment.

32. The empty fort strategy

When the enemy is superior in numbers and your situation is such that you expect to be overrun at any moment, then drop all pretence of military preparedness and act calmly so that the enemy will think you are setting an ambush. This stratagem has to be used sparingly and only after one has first developed a reputation for military prowess. This also depends on having a clever opponent who, in perceiving a trap, may over-think his reaction.

During the Three Kingdoms Period Kung Min sent his troops off to battle. He and his city were left without a good defence as a result and his greatest enemy, Si Ma, the commander of the army of Wei, made an unexpected move on the city. But Kung Min had a cunning plan, he sent an old man to open the city's front gate and sweep the entranceway while he went to his tower to prepare food and wine. He played a musical instrument and sang poetry as if he had not a care in the world.

Commander Si Ma approached the city gates but hesitated to enter. He was wary of tricks and devious behaviour in his enemies, through past experience in battle, and he feared a trap was waiting for him because of this obvious lack of security. Si Ma ordered his troops to retreat and wait so he might discover the true situation. While Si Ma waited and wondered Kung Min's soldiers returned from their campaign and the city was once more defended. This became known as the 'empty city' strategy.

A deliberate display of weakness can conceal true vulnerability and confuse the enemy. Creating a mystery by hiding your real strength is an effective weapon.

The United States Bullion Depository in Fort Knox, Kentucky,perhaps the most famous gold storage location in the world, declares that at present their gold holdings are 147.3 million ounces (of the 262 million ounces held in the US overall) and that the only gold removed has been very small quantities used to test the purity of gold during regularly scheduled audits. Except for these samples, no gold has been transferred to or from the Depository for many years.

However, the rumour has been circulating for over fifty years that the vault is, in fact, empty. But no visitors are allowed at Fort Knox (with

no exceptions, as the website clearly states). Fort Knox gold audits have been secret for the last twenty-five years, and no full audit at all has been conducted since the early 1960s. The last president allowed into the place was Harry Truman sixty-one years ago.

So gold or no gold – it works.

The extreme security in place protects the gold, if it is there, and protects the real location even if Fort Knox is just a cover and there is actually no gold.

Here's an idea for you

Hide your real strength in order to maintain an air of mystery about yourself that will concern your opponent as they will want to know exactly what they are up against.

Here's an idea for you

When you are in a weak position pretend that you are strong with displays of confidence, and when you are strong act in a concerned and protective way.

33. Let the enemy's own spy sow discord in the enemy camp

Undermine your enemy's ability to fight by secretly causing discord between him and his friends, allies, advisors, family, commanders, soldiers and population. While he is preoccupied settling internal disputes, his ability to attack or defend, is compromised.

Cao Cao's navy was defeated by Jhou Yu, a general of Wu and so he recruited generals Cai Mao and Jhang Yun, experts in naval battles, to rebuild his navy.

When the news reached Jhou Yu he decided that both generals needed to be removed in order to prevent any future threat. When Cao Cao learned that Jhou Yu was enquiring about his new navy he became very concerned. At this point Jiang Gan, a subordinate famous for his eloquence, told him that given the fact that he and Jhou Yu were old acquaintances he was confident that he could persuade him to defect.

When Jiang Gan arrived at the Wu camp Jhou Yu said, 'The king of Wu regards me highly and so I will not offer my services to Cao Cao. But in any case we have not seen each other for a long time so let us not talk politics tonight but just enjoy the food and wine I have prepared for you and enjoy all the drink I have ready.'

Jhou Yu was in an extremely good mood and drank cup after cup until he passed out. Jiang Gan took this opportunity to look around and he saw some papers lying on Jhou Yu's desk. To his shock, as he read the papers, he found some secret correspondence between Jhou Yu and the two generals, Cai Mao and Jhang Yun.

The next morning he reported what he had learned to Cao Cao immediately, declaring that the generals were actually spies sent by Wu. Cao Cao was, naturally, furious and on impulse he executed the two immediately. It was only afterwards, when he reflected on the whole event, that he realised he had been tricked by Jhou Yu's clever ploy.

The United States, less than 100 years old, faced a civil war that could tear it apart and Lincoln, as its chief executive, felt it was his responsibility to keep the country as one.

One of his first deeds as president was to call to Washington one who he believed could help preserve it. This was a Scottish detective from Chicago who had already proven his loyalty and bravery by saving the president from an assassin's bullet. His name was Allan Pinkerton.

It was the president's wish that Pinkerton organise a secret service in Washington city. It was well known that the town was already full of spies working for the Confederacy's central espionage unit, the Signal Bureau.

After accepting the offer Pinkerton brought in a number of operatives such as Kate Warne who shared her time between Virginia and Tennessee posing as a Southern belle, familiarising herself with other ladies of the South who spoke freely about their husbands and boyfriends' regiments.

Through Kate and many other spies, or Pinkerton agents, they found that information was not hard to come by. They loitered in camps and ingratiated themselves with the local soldiers where they were able to pick up vital information such as which army corps was stationed where, who commanded what, who were the Confederate spies and what was the strength of artillery emplacements.

All of which aided Lincoln achieve his declaration that, 'The Union must be preserved!'

In 2003 the US defence giant Lockheed Martin sued a rival defence contractor, Boeing, accusing it of major industrial espionage in the race for new air force contracts.

Lockheed Martin said Boeing had acquired thousands of confidential documents relating to its bid for a $2 billion military rocket programme back in 1998.

This accusation resulted in the Pentagon barring Boeing from future rocket work and revoking $1 billion of contracts with the company.

The ban is now lifted and interestingly both companies announced that they were burying their past rivalries by forming a joint venture.

And there are many more examples; a row between Sweden and Russia broke out in 2002 following allegations of espionage at Swedish telecoms and defence giant Ericsson; and consumer goods giant Proctor & Gamble agreed to settle out of court with Anglo-Dutch rival Unilever over allegations of corporate spying in 2001.

With the high rewards on offer it seems ‘dirty tricks’ is still one in the armoury of major corporations.

Here’s an idea for you

Play the devil’s advocate but not to gain real understanding but merely to put your opponent in direct opposition to their partners.

Here’s an idea for you

Listen out for any points of disagreement between your opponent and their partners and then try to persuade any one of those partners to act on your behalf.

34. Inflict injury on oneself to win the enemy's trust

Pretending to be injured has two possible applications. In the first, the enemy is lulled into relaxing his guard since he no longer considers you to be an immediate threat. The second is a way of ingratiating yourself to your enemy by pretending the injury was caused by a mutual enemy.

In the Three Kingdoms Period two brothers, Cai Jhong and Cai He, plotted a false surrender to Jhou Yu for revenge over the death of their brother.

Noticing that they did not bring their families with them, Jhou Yu knew that this was a trick but pretended to be unaware. Jhou Yu called on his old comrade Huan Gai to perform a trick in front of the two brothers to help him uncover the truth.

Jhou Yu had previously given an order that said anybody who suggested surrender in his army would be executed and so the next day Jhou Yu ordered an attack on the Cao army. Huan Gai declared he was against such a suggestion saying, 'We cannot possibly defeat Cao Cao's huge army, why not just surrender now?' At these remarks Jhou Yu pretended to be furious and ordered Huan Gai to be beheaded. Everybody fell on their knees to plead for Huan Gai's life as he was known as a good and loyal subject and a great general. So Jhou Yu relented and said he would commute the death penalty but that Huan Gai should be caned fifty times as punishment instead.

Afterwards Huan Gai wrote a letter of defection and the spy, Cai Jhong, was able to verify that Huan Gai was nearly beaten to death. The usually paranoid Cao Cao therefore believed the words that Huan Gai wrote: 'The military supply ships I am going to take with me tonight when I defect will be flying the colours of blue dragons. We will meet in the middle of the river.' And sure enough that night Cao Cao was delighted to see a whole fleet flying blue dragon flags. But as the fleet came closer his military advisor suddenly noticed something wrong and shouted, 'Supply ships are usually very heavy but these ships take on too little water. We have been tricked. Turn back immediately.'

As the cry went up Huan Gai set fire to the ships he was delivering to Cao Cao and, aided by an east wind blowing the fire from the supply ships towards Cao Cao's fleet of ships that were chained together, the

fire spread from ship to ship, and the entire fleet was completely destroyed.

This can also be a stratagem to use as a defensive mechanism. The hog-nosed snake, if threatened by a predator, rolls onto its back and appears to be dead while a foul-smelling fluid is secreted from its body. The predator then loses interest in the snake as it appears dead. In nature, rotten-smelling animals are to be avoided as a precaution against infectious diseases or sickness.

Apparent death, colloquially known as playing dead or 'playing possum', is a behaviour observed in a number of animals in which they take on the appearance of being dead to a predator. The Virginia opossum is the best-known example perhaps and from which the phrase 'playing possum' is derived.

'Bloodgate'15 is the nickname for a rugby union scandal involving the English team Harlequins in their Heineken Cup match against the Irish side Leinster in April 2009. It was so-called because of the use of fake blood capsules, and has been seen by some as one of the biggest scandals in the sport of rugby since it became professional in 1990.

Harlequins' wing, Tom Williams, came off the field with what turned out to be a faked blood injury (using a blood capsule purchased from a joke shop) in order to facilitate a tactical substitution for Nick Evans to re-enter the field having gone off earlier injured. Evans was a goal-kicker and was deemed critical at this stage of the game by the director of rugby Dean Richards.

An investigation that followed revealed that blood injuries had also been faked by Harlequins to enable tactical substitutions on four previous occasions. These findings resulted in a twelve-month ban for Williams, a three-year ban for Richards and a two-year ban for physiotherapist Steph Brennan. The club also had to pay a hefty fine.

Here's an idea for you

As a way of gaining sympathy from your opponent you can pretend to be injured in some way, not necessarily physically injured but your plans damaged in a way that your opponent may inadvertently give you some time to recover.

Here's an idea for you

Convince your opponent that you have been aggrieved by a common opponent and ask them to help you out for the interest of you both.

15 The name is a pun on the famous ‘Watergate’ scandal.

35. Chain stratagems

In important matters, one should use several stratagems applied simultaneously after another as in a chain of stratagems. Keep different plans operating in an overall scheme; however, in this manner if any one stratagem fails, then the chain breaks and the whole scheme fails.

During the Song Dynasty Jin often attacked the border towns of Song as the small Song border garrisons were not capable of defending themselves from the strong Jin army and so often suffered great losses in battle. Bi Zai Yu knew that it was suicidal to fight the Jin army directly and so instead he used guerrilla warfare. Whenever the Jin army advanced to attack him, he retreated and fled with his garrison. Whenever the Jin army took a break, he harassed and attacked them. Soon the Jin army was exhausted fighting a guerrilla war with the small Song garrison.

Once, while the Jin army was taking a break, Bi Zai Yu launched an attack again. When the Jin army responded, the Song army fled as was their usual behaviour and therefore the Jin army returned to their camp. But unexpectedly the Song army returned and beat their battle drums to fight once again; because of this the Jin camp had no time to feed their horses before they had to fight again.

Bi Zai Yu anticipated that the horses must be starving by now and so he ordered his soldiers to prepare many beans and scatter them on the ground. When the Jin army arrived, their starving horses saw the beans and started feed on them in a frenzy, ignoring the orders given by their riders. And in this way the Song garrison annihilated the Jin army.

Sun Tzu, in the *Art of War*, advised 'Not to repeat tactics which gained you in the past, but let your tactics be moulded by infinite variety of circumstances.'

There is an unwritten rule in professional wrestling that says you should never try the same move three times in a row. The first time you will surprise your opponent and the second time they may well still be stunned enough to not react in time, but by the third they will have had time to see what you are about to do and deliver a counter-attack that may well leave you worse off than they were after the first two attacks.

Business is complicated and a single strategy just won't deliver.

The best business strategies must steer a course between the inevitable internal pressure for business continuity, the demands of a rapidly changing world that the business aims to service, and a rapidly changing world that your competitors will be helping to create.

Flexibility is key and being agile requires you to pursue many strategic actions along with an ability to manoeuvre fast and deal with whatever the market throws at you.

Here's an idea for you

First understand all the options open to you and decide on the one that you think will upset your opponent's plans most of all. Then plan a second option that you will have ready to put into action if it is needed.

Here's an idea for you

Repeat your tactics only twice. If a third move on your opponent is still required to achieve your goal make sure that you do something different.

36. If all else fails, retreat

If it becomes obvious that your current course of action will lead to defeat, then retreat and regroup. When your side is losing, there are only three choices remaining: surrender, compromise, or escape. Surrender is complete defeat, compromise is half defeat, but escape is not defeat. As long as you are not defeated, you still have a chance.

The Ming emperor Hwei Ti had disposed of all his uncles except one who feigned madness. In 1403 this uncle, the Prince of Yan, led a huge army to the capital of Nanking to seize the throne. The city was surrounded and the emperor considered committing suicide when he was stopped by a eunuch who told him that his grandfather, the emperor Hong Wu, had left a chest in his care with orders that should any great crisis occur to threaten the dynasty then the reigning emperor should open the chest.

When the lid was lifted the box was found to contain the robes of a Buddhist monk, a diploma, and a razor. The emperor understood the meaning at once and with a handful of attendants fled the palace through a secret tunnel to a Buddhist temple. There he shaved his head and put on the robes. He made his way out of the city and all the way to Sichuan province where he lived in obscurity in a remote monastery.

Meanwhile the palace had burned down during the fighting and it was assumed that the emperor had died in the fire.

Forty years later during the reign of Emperor Ying Tsung an old Buddhist priest arrived at court and claimed that the old emperor Hwei Ti was still alive. An official investigation was made which discovered that Hwei Ti was indeed still alive and living as a Buddhist priest. The old emperor was invited back to the capital with great ceremony and he lived out his last days as a guest in the palace.

Retreat is another form of advance. There is a Chinese maxim which says, ‘A good man does not fight a losing battle.’

In August 338 BCE the Athenian orator and statesman Demosthenes was an infantryman at Chaeronea, where a great battle took place between the Athenians and the Macedonians. The Macedonians were victorious, and thousands of Athenians died. Demosthenes fled from

the battlefield and was subsequently ridiculed because of this desertion.

To anyone who later called him a coward, Demosthenes would reply, 'The man who runs away may fight again' from those words is derived the modern-day version: 'He who fights and runs away will live to fight another day.'

In 2007 a memo written by Starbucks Corporation founder and chairman, Howard Schultz, was posted on the Internet. He noted with a mixture of pride and also concern that Starbucks had grown from 1,000 to 13,000 stores in 10 years and expressed regret over a 'series of decisions that, in retrospect, have led to the watering down of the Starbucks experience and what some might call the commoditisation of our brand'. He went on to say that, 'Some people even call our stores sterile, cookie cutter, no longer reflecting the passion our partners feel about our coffee.'

This was a low point in the company and one that Schultz finally came to acknowledge and act upon. He halted the company's breakneck expansion by closing nearly 1,000 stores (mainly in the US), took out almost $600 million in costs, and shut the business for one day to retrain the thousands of workers in what Starbucks was really about and what its culture should be.

For the first time Starbucks started advertising and now each store is designed to fit in with its local area so that no two Starbucks will look exactly alike.

Since that point Starbucks has moved through a challenging transformation and now operates more than 17,000 stores in 50 countries, with more to come. With a new corporate symbol that has dropped the Starbucks nameplate that had encircled its iconic sea nymph logo it is on a path to greater international expansion.

'The store base is going to be significant outside North America,' Schultz explains. 'I just returned from China, where the opportunity is going to be significant.'

Here's an idea for you

Know when you are beaten, for now, and withdraw with dignity from opposition.

Here's an idea for you

Consider carefully how you ended up in the position that required such a retreat and what you would do differently next time around.

Appendices

'However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results'

Winston Churchill

I. Countering the Thirty-Six Stratagems

And what if the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* are used against you?

Well at least you should recognise them, and as the most important element of your response is to anticipate and understand what is being done to you then this puts you in a good position. Consider Stratagem 4 'Wait at leisure while the enemy labours'. You should be able to spot delaying tactics, or extra work creation tactics and respond in kind. For example, if someone is 'moving the goalpost', then argue for them to be 'moved' some more, to where perhaps you are ready with an answer or just to force them to also work more. If you understand the tactical approaches another party is likely to use, you will not be surprised and you can prepare suitable responses.

You should consider that in fact there are three methods of using the stratagems.

According to Professor Harro von Senger 16 the first is to take the initiative in resorting to them, the second is to analyse the potential stratagems of your adversary so as not to fall into any trap that they may lay, and the third is to analyse the stratagems from a spectator point of view.

He says, 'Why do I recommend the discipline of stratagems? It's because it is real wisdom. As a Westerner, I have realised that my studies of the stratagems have greatly enriched my intelligence. It is a good instrument to understand politics, economics and human relations. I am particularly interested in the second method of employing stratagems to avoid falling into traps and the third method of using stratagems as a spectator.' He adds, 'The difference between my book and those written by Chinese authors on the same subject is that my book systematically studies the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* in a scientific manner and makes analysis from different angles. If we can use the knowledge with Chinese people, we will be able to build a better world of peace and mutual comprehension.'

'Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake'

Napoleon Bonaparte

16 Harro von Senger is a leading expert in sinology. He has doctorates in both law

and classical sinology, and is a professor of sinology at the University of Freiburg, Germany, and author of *The Book of Stratagems*.

II. Further reading

Sun Tzu's The Art of War: A 52 Brilliant Ideas interpretation **by Karen McCreadie**

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* has provided strategists with essential advice on battlefield tactics and management strategies for more than 2,000 years. In recent years *The Art of War* has become a cult book for business leaders and is regarded as essential reading for global entrepreneurs seeking to master strategy. The book has also, unsurprisingly, had a huge influence on military planning both in the East and West. Assuming you don't necessarily have any countries to invade or plan to lay siege to any kingdoms in the foreseeable future author Karen McCreadie interprets Sun Tzu's strategies for the debatably less dangerous pursuit of business.

This brilliant interpretation of Sun Tzu's work is not a substitute for the original. Its purpose is simply to illustrate the timeless nature of Master Sun's extraordinary insights by bringing them to life through modern business case-studies. The fantastic format of Karen's work helps to transform the undeniable wisdom contained in the original *The Art of War* into an entertaining accompaniment to one of the greatest books ever written.

Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince: A 52 Brilliant Ideas interpretation **by Tim Phillips**

Machiavelli based *The Prince* on his profound understanding of human nature. This short treatise on Renaissance statecraft and power has been controversial and inspiring since its first publication nearly 500 years ago. Machiavelli's analysis of the ways men seize, retain and lose power represented the first exposé of realpolitik and it has been used ever since as a handbook for manipulating events to one's own advantage. Here, Machiavelli's text is interpreted for the modern-day world of business.

Tim Phillips interpretation of Machiavelli's work is not a substitute for the original; its purpose is simply to illustrate the timeless nature of Machiavelli's insights by bringing them to life through modern business and political case studies. This brilliant interpretation of *The Prince* is an entertaining accompaniment to one of the most famous books ever written.

The Thirty-Six Stratagems for Business: (Achieve Your Objectives Through Hidden and Unconventional Strategies and Tactics) **by Harro von Senger**

Though more than 80 books have been published recently in the Far East recommending the use of the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* in the modern business world, these books are as yet unknown in Western countries. Managers at all levels will therefore benefit from this English-language book evaluating the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* and detailing how to apply them in management as well as 'economic warfare'. Entertaining and thought provoking, the text includes examples of managers who have been able to achieve objectives using the stratagems that encourage flexibility and new ways of thinking about business issues, making this handbook widely adaptable to changing conditions.

The Thirty-Six Stratagems for Executives (Sun Tzu's The Art of War for Executives) **by Donald G. Krause and Jeff Carter**

Winning in business, political and interpersonal competition requires combining higher-level strategy with practical tactics to produce an effective approach to competitive action. Understanding the competitive situation, evaluating the nature of alternatives which are reasonably available given the situation, and creating an effective mix of actionable strategies are the fundamental steps to success in any competition.

The *Thirty-Six Stratagems* is a short handbook of tactical methods which can be used as building blocks to develop workable alternatives for tactical action under the stress of competition. The tactics covered anticipate a wide range of competitive conditions and can be readily applied to many competitive problems, including those encountered in modern business and political situations.

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