

36 Strategies of the Highly Successful Executives Workshop

Introduction:

The Thirty-Six Strategies is a unique collection of ancient Chinese proverbs that describe some of the most effective and subtle strategies ever devised. The Thirty-Six Strategies are more suitably applied in the fields of management, leadership, marketing and public relation. These proverbs describe not only battlefield strategies, but tactics used in psychological warfare to undermine both the enemy's will to fight - and his sanity. Tactics such as the 'double cross', the 'frame job', and the 'bait and switch', can be traced back through thousands of years of Chinese history to such proverbs as 'Hide the Dagger Behind a Smile', and 'Toss out a Brick to Attract Jade' respectively.

For the western reader the Thirty-Six Strategies offers timeless insights into the workings of human nature under conditions of extreme stress. Many of the proverbs are based on events that occurred during China's Warring States Era (403-221 BC). Many of those accounts are presented here along with the exploits of some of the orient's greatest generals, kings, emperors, and shoguns. Over 118 anecdotes are included to both explain and offer examples of each strategy's application. By learning from the old masters of the art of deception, one is better able to spot the modern pretenders, for, though the players come and go, the game remains the same.

Objectives:

Generally, the Thirty-six Strategies are grouped under 6 categories. Each category contains 6 strategies. The six categories in turn can be used in two types of situations. The three categories, the "Advantageous Strategies", the "Opportunistic Strategies" and the "Offensive Strategies" are used in a winning situation. The other three categories, the "Confusion Strategies", the "Deception Strategies" and the "Desperate Strategies" are used in a disadvantageous situation. However, the application and usage of these strategies can be mingled in various combinations. They are not intended to be used singly, nor are they only applicable in either a winning or losing situation. The possible combination and application of these strategies are limited only by the imagination and creativity of the strategist.

Program Content:

Chapter 1: Winning Strategies

1. Deceive the sky to cross the ocean
 - Moving about in the darkness and shadows, occupying isolated places, or hiding behind screens will only attract suspicious attention.
2. Besiege Wèi to rescue Zhào
 - When the enemy is too strong to attack directly, then attack something he holds dear. Know that in all things he cannot be superior. Somewhere there is a gap in the armour, a weakness that can be attacked instead.
3. Kill with a borrowed knife
 - Attack using the strength of another (in a situation where using one's own strength is not favourable).
4. Replace labor with leisure
 - 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.
5. Loot a burning house
 - When a country is beset by internal conflicts, when disease and famine ravage the population, when corruption and crime are rampant, then it will be unable to deal with an outside threat. This is the time to attack.
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.

Chapter 2: Enemy Dealing Strategies

7. Create something from nothing

- You use the same feint twice. Having reacted to the first and often the second feint as well, the enemy will be hesitant to react to a third feint. Therefore the third feint is the actual attack catching your enemy with his guard down.

8. Sneak through the passage of Chencang

- Attack the enemy with two convergent forces. The first is the direct attack, one that is obvious and for which the enemy prepares his defense. The second is the indirect, the attack sinister, that the enemy does not expect and which causes him to divide his forces at the last minute leading to confusion and disaster.

9. Watch the fires burning across the river

- Delay entering the field of battle until all the other players have become exhausted fighting amongst themselves. Then go in full strength and pick up the pieces.

10. Hide a knife behind a smile

- Charm and ingratiate yourself to your enemy. When you have gained his trust, you move against him in secret.

11. Sacrifices the plum tree to preserve the peach tree

- There are circumstances in which you must sacrifice short-term objectives in order to gain the long-term goal.

12. Take the opportunity to pilfer a goat

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

Chapter 3: Attacking Strategies

13. Startle the snake by hitting the grass around it

- When preparing for battle, do not alert your enemy to your intentions or give away your strategy prematurely.

14. Borrow another's corpse to resurrect the soul

- Take an institution, a technology, or a method that has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it for your own purpose.

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.

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.

17. Tossing out a brick to get a jade

- Prepare a trap then lure your enemy into the trap by using bait. In war the bait is the illusion of an opportunity for gain. In life the bait is the illusion of wealth, power, and sex.

18. Defeat the enemy by capturing their chief

- If the enemy's army is strong but is allied to the commander only by money 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.

Chapter 4: Chaos Strategies

19. Remove the firewood under the cooking pot

- When faced with an enemy too powerful to engage directly you must first weaken him by undermining his foundation and attacking his source of power.

20. Catch a fish while the water is disturbed

- Before engaging your enemy's forces create confusion to weaken his perception and judgment.

21. Slough off the cicada's shell

- When you are in danger of being defeated, and your only chance is to escape and regroup, then create an illusion.

22. Shut the door to catch the thief

- If you have the chance to completely capture the enemy then you should do so thereby bringing the battle or war to a quick and lasting conclusion.

23. Befriend a distant state while attacking a neighbour

- 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.

Chapter 5, Proximate Strategies

25. Replace the beams with rotten timbers

- Disrupt the enemy's formations, interfere with their methods of operations, change the rules in which they are used to following, go contrary to their standard training.

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.

27. Play dumb

- 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.

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.

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.

30. Make the host and the guest exchange roles

- Defeat the enemy from within by infiltrating the enemy's camp under the guise of cooperation, surrender, or peace treaties.

Chapter 6: Defeat Strategies

31. The honey trap

- Sow discord within enemy's camp.

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 casually.

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.

34. Inflict injury on one's self 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.

35. Chain strategies

- In important matters one should use several strategies applied simultaneously after another, as in a chain of strategies.

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.

Methodology:

An interactive approach with lectures, role-plays, case- studies and activities in relation to topics discussed

Who Should Attend:

Management Level