

## About *Adaptability*

This is the shortest chapter in *The Art of War* but it is also one of the most important. Because of both its brevity and importance, we are expanding on our normal form of analysis. So far, these study guides have looked at each stanza of the work. In this chapter, we will focus on not just whole stanzas, but in many cases on the individual lines of the stanzas.

Sun Tzu used the term “adaptability” to discuss our need to adjust our plans to meet current conditions. The concept is critical for two reasons. First, Sun Tzu’s system mandates opportunism. No matter what our plan, we *must* take advantage of certain types of opportunities when they present themselves. Secondly, competition is highly dynamic. Situations change quickly. When we find ourselves in certain situations, we must react instantly in the appropriate manner. This is important at this point in the work because in earlier chapters we have been looking at the general rules of competition, but from now in the book on we focus on very *specific* rules for competing in particular situations.

This chapter makes it clear that adaptability does *not* mean that we can do whatever we want in every situation. Creativity is encouraged, but we must also use what is known to work. The leader’s ability to discern what is needed is the fine line between knowledge and vision. Since adaptability depends entirely on the discernment of the leader, the end of this chapter addresses specifically the weakness of a leader and how it makes an organization susceptible to attack.

## Lesson 127

### Are there any constants in the realm of competition?

- A. Competition always has rules, a goal, and the resources to address that goal.
- B. Competition always has at least two opponents, one of whom will emerge victorious.
- C. Competition always involved confrontation.
- D. There are no constants in competition.

*Everyone uses the arts of war.*

*As a general, you get your orders from the government.*

*You gather your troops.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- A. Competition always has rules, a goal, and the resources to address that goal.

The three lines above are just the beginning of the first stanza. They above echo the first three lines of the previous chapter. In that earlier chapter, the point of these lines was to focus on the basics of competition and not to look for battles to fight. In this chapter, the three lines above are repeated, but in this context, they emphasizes that “the art of war” is a framework of rules within which competition takes place. These rules are not man-made conventions; they arise from the nature of competition itself.

This begins the chapter on adaptability to make it clear that by adaptability we don’t mean that we can break the rules of competition. “The arts of war” are natural laws like the law of gravity. Everyone works within these rules because we are all equally bound by them. Similarly, we always get our competitive goal from :”the government,” that is, the larger productive organization. And we always have to draw resources from this productive organization for competitive action. These *general* rules are restated here because the rest of the chapter begins elucidating the *specific*, situational rules that we must also obey, but these basics come first.

## Lesson 128

**When you had planned to rest but find yourself in a difficult situation, what should you do?**

- A. You should follow your plans.**
- B. You should rest in order to regroup your forces.**
- C. You should make new plans.**
- D. You should keep going.**

*On dangerous ground, you must not camp.*

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- D. You should keep going.

This is the first of a series of rules that Sun Tzu gives illustrating that we have to adjust our plans to address the specific situation that we are in. To a certain degree, Sun Tzu considered some adjustments so obvious that they need little explanation. He wrote his work for people who already understood his system. For those studying his work, this rule and those following can be used to illustrate both the general concepts here—adapting to the situation—and the specific lessons of the rule.

Adaptability means adjusting our plans to meet the situation. When we meet an unexpected situation, we do not necessary remake all of our plans. We can change a step in our plans or address a specific situation without throwing out our plans entirely. Adaptability doesn't mean that every action must be impromptu. It simply means that plans do not cover every situations that arises in a competitive campaign.

The term “dangerous ground” is actually defined and discussed in detail in a later chapter, and the rules for it are more complicated than simply not camping. We don't have the details here to appreciate what Sun Tzu is saying. He is simply offering us what he sees as a truism. We would say that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. The point is that when we encounter problems and difficulties, we can't stop to lick our wounds until the problems are solved. Even if we have planned to stop, we have to keep going.

## Lesson 129

**When you discover in executing your plans that others share similar goals and interests, what should you do?**

- A. Expect that they will become competitors.**
- B. Join with them as allies.**
- C. Focus on your own self-interest.**
- D. Take advantage of them through deceit.**

*Where the roads intersect, you must join your allies.*

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- B. Join with them as allies.

When we plan a campaign, we focus on our own goals and own resources. Along the way, we often discover that we share interest with others. When we do, we should never pass up an opportunity to join with them for mutual benefit. We should plan to go it alone but readily adapt our plans to make room for others who want to join us.

This advice works equally well for companies looking for alliances or for businesses hiring employees. We may not have planned to make corporate alliances, but we should always be open to the opportunity. Similarly, we may or may not plan to hire employees, but our actions depend totally on what we find along the way. If we can't find good people, we shouldn't hire them, no matter what our plans. Conversely, if we find a good person, we should hire them whether or not we had planned on hiring anyone.

Perhaps this is a good place to discuss a frequent problem in translating *The Art of War*. For Sun Tzu, the line between a potential ally and a potential enemy was a fine one. The Chinese character he often used for "enemy" is most accurately translated as "nobleman." It refers the lord of a neighboring fiefdom. These people were both potential allies and enemies. This situation isn't all that different from what we face today, where many of the companies we deal with are potentially competitors, allies, or even customers.

## Lesson 130

**When we discover a market that has good current potential but no long-term future, what should we do?**

- A. Avoid it entirely.**
- B. Use it as a stepping stone.**
- C. Spend time developing it.**
- D. Spend more time studying it.**

*When an area is cut off, you must not delay in it.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. Use it as a stepping stone.

Sun Tzu offers a more detailed analysis of “cut off” terrain later in the book, but the use of such areas is standard procedure. If an area is dangerous to be in for the long term, we can use it temporarily, but we should never get stuck in it. A big part of maintaining our momentum is avoiding obstacles that set us back. Above all, we don’t want to get “stuck” anywhere.

Sun Tzu’s method is incremental. He believes in small steps. His early chapter on analysis and planning expansion make it clear that small steps are safer and more certain than large ones. He sees forays into new areas essentially as probes to discover the possible resistance and potential value of an area.

In making these probes, we often discover markets and situation that have potential but no long-term future. If we linger in these areas, we are like an actor who is “type-caste” by playing a certain role. It limits our future movement and expansion.

We can use temporarily such areas to get us from one place or market to another, but we cannot linger in them. We cannot develop our position in these areas without limiting our future potential. There may be good money to be made in making the “dead-end widget” today, but we cannot afford to get type-caste as an organization that can only make the dead-end widget.

## Lesson 131

**When you face problems in every direction, what should you do?**

- A. Get creative.**
- B. Get angry.**
- C. Find allies.**
- D. Pick a battle.**

*When you are surrounded, you must scheme.*

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- A. Get creative.

If we see problems in every direction, we need to discover a direction we overlooked. This is why the leader's visionary skill is so critical to the competitive system.

Again, like many of the lines in this stanza, Sun Tzu sees this advice as somewhat obvious. We say that necessity is the mother of invention. When our plans have lead us to a point where we seemingly have no place to turn, we can usually find a ticky way out of the trap. The fact that our plans have come to nothing is not the end of the world; it is the seed of a new idea. We shouldn't give up. Instead we need to do some serious creative thinking.

This type of situation is also addressed again in a later chapter. At that point, the character that Sun Tzu uses to describe our "scheming" literally means "watchtower." The idea is that when we seem surrounded, we should build a watchtower to look for an opening. In other words, we need to change our viewpoint. We must look at our problems from a new perspective. This idea of getting above the situation is a wonderful insight into the nature of the creative process.

In a chapter dedicated to adaptability, this line (and the next) captures the courage required for vision. If we see problems in every direction, we must have faith that we can find a way out. We certainly didn't plan or expect these problem, but we can recover from them.

## Lesson 132

### When do you *always* fight?

- A. When you have an advantageous position.**
- B. When you outnumber the opponent.**
- C. When you are threatened with destruction.**
- D. When you are protected from defeat.**

*In a life-or-death situation, you must fight.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- C. When you are threatened with destruction.

The line above is the last line in this list of necessary reactions to common situations. It is also consistent with Sun Tzu's concept that direct confrontation is the last resort. This reaction, like the others that precede it, are covered in more detail later in the book.

Our goal in competition is to avoid fights, but when we are faced with destruction, we must fight with everything we have. Fighting is costly and dangerous, but this doesn't matter at all when the only alternative is oblivion. The ultimate goal is survival.

In business competition, the rules of survival are perhaps even simpler than the rules of warfare. In business, we can continue playing the great game as long as we have the resources to play. When we run out of money, we have to give up and do something else if we want to eat. So when must we fight, throwing all caution to the wind? When it becomes clear that we are going to go broke if we don't.

This is the last of the five rules that form the middle of this stanza. For Sun Tzu, these rules are all so obviously true that they are beyond debate. Though he discusses them all in more detail later, he uses them here to illustrate the idea that, no matter what our plans, we must adapt to our situation. These rules are not optional. They apply to common situations. When we find ourselves in these situations, we must use the prescribed approach.

## Lesson 133

**Other than following well-defined rules, what else is important in adapting to the situation?**

- A. Avoiding mistakes.**
- B. Handling internal conflicts.**
- C. Seeing opportunities.**
- D. Being courageous.**

*There are roads that you must not take.  
There are armies that you must not fight.  
There are strongholds that you must not attack.  
There are positions that you must not defend.  
There are government commands that must not be obeyed.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- A. Avoiding mistakes.

“Non-action” is an important part of the the competitive process. Success comes more often from what we choose not to do than what we do. For many “gung-ho” managers, non-action is the most difficult part of the art of competition. We can plan to be aggressive, but as we approach the point of commitment, we must decide if the action that we had planned is the best possible thing we can do with our resources. We must make sure that we are avoiding costly mistakes.

Resources are limited. Every choice to “do something” is also a choice against saving our resources. Everyone can see an infinite number of tasks that need doing. Every product, service, and task can be improved. Customers make demands for more of everything on a daily basis. It is the leader’s job to choose what must be done and what tasks can be avoided. It is our job to recognize when our chance of success simply does not justify the commitment of resources.

This section ends the first stanza and the list of ways that we must adjust our plans in the face of reality. This stanza signals a change in the text from general concepts to very situational rules.

## Lesson134

### **What is the purpose of knowing how to adapt?**

- A. Finding advantages.**
- B. Avoiding risks.**
- C. Planning a campaign.**
- D. Surprise.**

*Military leaders must be experts in knowing how to adapt to win.  
This will teach you the use of war.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- A. Finding advantages.

Competition starts with a goal. At the beginning of a competition, we are giving “orders from the government.” These orders usually define our goal, our purpose in competing. However, Sun Tzu says that there are orders that we must not follow. Our goals themselves can change through the course of a campaign.

We must always be looking for an advantage. We plan from what we know, but our knowledge is limited. This is especially true of our knowledge of the future. We can not let our plans blind us to the opportunities that arise along the way. A true leader plans from his knowledge, but he must also have vision. He must continually be on the lookout for opportunities that are unplanned.

Sun Tzu taught that the competitive environment is always full of opportunities. Our problem is that we fail to see them.

Our opportunities arise from the situation we are in. The worst situations contain opportunities. Bad situations, being surrounded for example, force us to find the hidden opportunity. Our expectations can blind us to our true situation and the opportunities that surround us. Leaders have to be different from regular people. We must know our situation and how to search for the opportunity hidden within it.

## Lesson 135

### Where do we look for opportunities?

- A. In the trends.
- B. In our organization.
- C. In our philosophy.
- D. In the market.

*Some commanders are not good at making adjustments to find an advantage.*

*They can know the shape of the terrain.*

*Still, they can not find an advantageous position.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

D. In the market.

The trends of the time may expose the opportunity, but opportunity resides in the market. Organizations do not create opportunity. They can only position themselves for opportunity. Our philosophy determines our methods, but not opportunities. Opportunities are found only one place: in the market, that is, in the shape of the terrain.

People can think that they know the market, but their confidence can be an obstacle to seeing new opportunities. We can never know the market completely. The ground has infinite detail. We can never have too much knowledge, but we should never have too much faith in our knowledge. This sense of certainty acts as a barrier to knowledge.

The danger in knowledge is that we stop seeing. We think that we already know all twists and turns of a given region, so we stop seeing that area. We stop searching. We stop wondering. We are no longer curious. We stop asking question. There are two problems with this approach. First, our knowledge reflects the past, not the present. If we stop seeing, we lose touch with the process of constant change. Secondly, we miss the critical details. By definition, opportunities are easy to overlook. If they were not, others would have seen them already. To see opportunities, we have to study the conditions closely.

## Lesson 136

**When you discover a new opportunity, what do you need to be able to do?**

- A. Adjust your knowledge.**
- B. Consider your alternatives.**
- C. Change your methods.**
- D. Forget the past.**

*Some military commanders do not know how to adjust their methods.*

*They can find an advantageous position.*

*Still, they can not use their men effectively.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- C. Change your methods.

The step that follows vision is action. In Sun Tzu's system, this means that we must move to the new position, adjust our *methods*. This is why we say that an action is a move or, more simply, a change.

Change is difficult for most people. People get comfortable in their habits. They want to keep doing what they have done before. Change means uncertainty. Most people are afraid of change.

Leaders must be change-masters. We must be comfortable with continually adjusting our approaches. We must be constantly looking for ways to improve what we are doing, but we must also be willing to completely change the entire organization when the situation calls for it. Bill Gates offered a great example of this when he reorganized Microsoft to adjust to the rise of the Internet. He realized that desktop computing was a "cut off" position and began moving out of it.

Today, we call an organization that can change and evolve a "learning organization." Our methods, systems and organization must continually adapt to new opportunities as we discover them.

## Lesson 137

**To achieve consistent results, what should you use?**

- A. Consistent methods.**
- B. Flexible methods.**
- C. Standardized methods.**
- D. Unique methods.**

*You must be creative in your planning.*

*You must adapt to your opportunities and weaknesses.*

*You can use a variety of approaches and still have a consistent result.*

*You must adjust to a variety of problems and consistently solve them.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. Flexible methods.

Normal business logic dictates that consistent or standardized methods produce consistent results. This is true in manufacturing or any other type of production. Rules for working in a competitive environment, however, are different. To achieve consistent results in a competitive environment, we must be flexible in our methods.

In a production environment, we control all the factors that determine consistency. We set standards and achieve consistent results through our ability to control the environment. Sun Tzu's point here is that the competitive environment differs inherently from the controlled internal environment. In a competitive environment, we have others working against us with devotion equal to our own. This means that the environment is always beyond our control. It is the messy, anarchy of war that Sun Tzu talks about. How then do we achieve any type of consistent results? .

We vary our methods to meet current challenges. We plan surprise so that our competitors' actions have less impact on us. We continually adjust our plans to meet the competition.

## Lesson 138

**How do we deal with an unpredictable environment in order to produce consistent results?**

- A. React to the competition.**
- B. Challenge the competition.**
- C. Wait for the competition.**
- D. Predict the competition.**

*You can deter your potential enemy by using his weaknesses against him.*

*You can keep your enemy's army busy by giving it work to do. You can rush your enemy by offering him an advantageous position.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. Challenge the competition.**

Unlike a production environment, the competitive environment is never totally in our control. We get what control we can by taking the initiative and forcing the competition to react to us rather than our reacting to them.

Sun Tzu here repeats earlier lessons. This lesson emphasizes the point that adaptability doesn't mean giving the competition the lead. We adapt to the situation, but we want the competition to deal with challenges that we determine. If they are dealing with our challenges, we don't have to deal with theirs.

What do we want our competitors to do? Do we want them making their own plans against us or do we want to keep them busy dealing with challenges that we have offered them? The answer is obvious. The only way we can predict competitive behavior is to try to control it. This control is never even nearly complete and far from certain, but whatever control we can exert works in our behalf.

## Lesson 139

**If we hold a place of value, how can we defend it against the competition?**

- A. By size and strength.**
- B. By readiness and positioning.**
- C. By guile and deception.**
- D. By control and command.**

*You must make use of war.*

*Do not trust that the enemy isn't coming.*

*Trust on your readiness to meet him.*

*Do not trust that the enemy won't attack.*

*We must rely only on our ability to pick a place that the enemy can't attack.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. By readiness and positioning.

Holding onto an advantageous position is always difficult. We must never think that any position is safe from competition. If we are large and dominant, competitors will look for small pieces of our territory that they can take away. We should try to keep our position a secret, but others will eventually discover it.

If we expect eventual attack, we must use whatever time we have to entrench ourselves in our territory. We need to build barriers to entry. We can and must do whatever we can to make it difficult if not impossible for anyone to win the position.

Our ability to defend is largely determined by our initial decisions about what positions to develop. Some positions are naturally easier to defend than others are. Other positions are naturally open to attack. Sun Tzu discusses these different types of positions in more detail in later chapters. The point here is that our ability to make the adjustments necessary to defend a position depends largely on how wisely we pick a position.

## Lesson 140

**If a competitor puts himself in a position where he can be destroyed, what should you do?**

- A. Destroy him.**
- B. Avoid him.**
- C. Ignore him.**
- D. Suspect him.**

*You can exploit five different faults in a leader.  
If he is willing to die, you can kill him.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- A. Destroy him.

We have already looked at two weaknesses of leadership: failure to see opportunity and failure to adjust our methods. Now we will look at five more. Like other situations that we find ourselves in, these leadership weaknesses demand a response on our part. We must adjust our plans to take these weaknesses into account.

The first and most serious of these weaknesses is the willingness to be killed. This weakness may sound relatively rare, but it is more common than it seems at first. We must recognize it, especially in ourselves, in order to defend against it.

Some people would rather “die” than be wrong. They will risk everything to prove themselves right. Similarly, some people will risk everything to avoid even minor setbacks. This tactic is not as foolish as it sounds. Because they are willing to risk everything, these people often put more resources into a battle than others are willing to and win more than their share of battles.

When dealing with these people, we must destroy them. We cannot back away simply because they are willing to take foolish risks. The battle may not be worth the effort, but we must use the opportunity to eliminate a dangerous competitor.

## Lesson 141

**What should you do if a competitor is afraid to risk everything in order to win?**

- A. Capture him.**
- B. Destroy him.**
- C. Respect him.**
- D. Ally with him.**

*If he wants to survive, you can capture him.*

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- A. Capture him.

Some leaders have the opposite problem of the “bet everything” type of leaders. Instead of risking too much, they are afraid to risk anything. Their concern for losing takes a different turn. They are always afraid of losing too much. They don’t mind losing a battle. Instead of worrying about winning, they are always looking for ways to cut their losses.

We can hold these leaders captive to their fears. Once we know their weakness, we can easily use it against them. Since they are afraid to risk too much on any given battle, all we have to do is keep raising the ante. It doesn’t matter if we invest more than the battle is worth because we know that our opponent will always back down.

Sun Tzu’s method teaches us to calculate the value of every battle and to gauge our investments appropriately. It also teaches us to take small, incremental steps toward our goals. What we are learning here is that we have to adjust that basic method, depending on the types of competition we face. The basic method works well given a normal competitive environment, but it doesn’t work as well when we face a flawed opponent. If the opposing leader is too aggressive or too fearful, we must adjust our normal methods to meet him. We must be more aggressive ourselves in order to effectively counter his approach.

## Lesson 142

**What do you want your *opponent's* emotional state to be during competition?**

- A. Relaxed.**
- B. Angry.**
- C. Happy.**
- D. Fearful.**

*He may have a quick temper.  
You can then provoke him with insults.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. Angry.**

If you remember, in the middle of the last chapter, Sun Tzu was telling us that we need to control our emotions and remain relaxed during confrontation. People make the best decisions when they are relaxed and patient.

However, some people are easily angered. Being challenged makes them fearful. This fear translates into anger. Once they are in this emotional state, their behavior becomes aggressive and wild. This can sometimes work to their benefit. Many people are afraid of a person who is easily angered. They treat him cautiously, afraid of his aggressiveness. A skilled competitor is not afraid of angering their opponents when the time is right. An opponent's anger may make them aggressive, but it also forces them to make poor decisions and become more easily predictable. If we can force them to show their anger and poor judgment, they are further weakened because their people and allies will lose faith in them.

If we discover that an opponent is easily angered, we should use this flaw against them when the time is right. We can turn their aggressiveness and hostility against them by luring them into situations that they cannot win. We can damage the respect that others have for their judgment and opinion by exposing that judgement as easily clouded by anger.

## Lesson 143

**What should you do if your opponent is overly proud of their reputation?**

- A. You should flatter him.**
- B. You should embarrass him.**
- C. You should confuse him.**
- D. You should earn their him.**

*If he has a delicate sense of honor, you can disgrace him.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

- B. We should embarrass him.

This question addresses the motivation of a leader. Sun Tzu warned us earlier in the work that we must never fight for ego or fame. He knew that a great many people do fight to satisfy their egos. They are seduced by the sense of power and glory that they can get from leading an organization in competition. The more success they have, the more enticing this form of emotional gratification can be.

Sun Tzu distinguished here between two forms of egotism. Some people are so egotistic that their actual success or failure has no impression upon their sense self-worth. These people do not have the “delicate” sense of honor that Sun Tzu is talking about here. People with a “delicate” sense of honor take a great deal of pride in their success because they need to be successful to feel good about themselves. This sense of honor is delicate because no matter how good we are, working in a competitive environment means that we must deal with failure. No wins every battle in a competitive field. People who see themselves as too pure and perfect to suffer a defeat are headed for a fall.

Competitive success requires humility. Those who lack humility need to be tested by failure. We can embarrass these people in any number of ways. We know that they have a high-opinion of themselves and this makes them easy to predict. They are easily set up for a trap in which they will be embarrassed. Once embarrassed, they are likely to break.

## Lesson 144

**What should you expect if your opponent is completely devoted to specific individuals who are working for him?**

- A. His people will be loyal to him.**
- B. His people will create problems for him.**
- C. His people will make him strong.**
- D. His people will all be excellent.**

*If he loves his people, you can create problems for him.*

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- B. His people will create problems for him.

When it comes to a leader's relationship to his people, there are two different potential problems with excess "love." The first is caring too much about specific individuals. The second is caring too much about what our people in general think about us.

As leaders, we are often in the difficult position of having to choose between the good of our organization and our devotion to specific individuals. In these situations, the good of the organization, that is, the best interests of everyone, must take precedence over our devotion to specific individuals. We can't play favorites. This is why it isn't a good idea to hire friends or relatives. If a leader puts their concern about an individual above the needs of the organization as a whole, it creates dissension within the organization. The organization suffers because others doubt the quality of the leader's decisions.

We also can't worry about doing what makes people happy. Leadership is not a popularity contest. The success of a competitive organization depends upon Leaders making difficult decisions. If a leader is too concerned about the opinions of his people, he will be unable to make the right choice when the situation calls for a tough decision. A leader cannot be indifferent to the opinions of his people. He needs their support, but that support comes from making the right decisions even when they are difficult and not from doing what is popular.

## Lesson 145

**Where should we look for a leader's five weaknesses?**

- A. In our opponents.**
- B. In ourselves.**
- C. In our people.**
- D. In all of the above.**

*In every situation, look for these five weaknesses.  
They are common faults in commanders.  
They always lead to military disaster.*

**From *The Art of War***

Answer:

D. In all of the above.

When these weaknesses appear in our opponents, we must know how to counter and exploit them. If they take risks or are afraid of risks, we can respond appropriately. If they are easily angered, we can upset their judgement. If they are fighting for egotism, we can make competition to painful for them. If they play favorites within their organization, we can use this against them.

If we have these weaknesses ourselves, we need to work against them. If we are fearless, we must be more careful. If we are too timid, we must try to be more aggressive. If we are easily angered, we must calm down. If we care about what people think, we should stop caring. If we have special friends or relatives within our organization, we should make it clear that we will never favor them and that they have to stand on their own.

We should also look for these same weaknesses in our managers. We must tell people when we think they are too aggressive or too timid. We must counsel people who have problems with anger. If they have problems with their ego, we should make it clear that the organization will not tolerate it. If they are playing favorites, we must call them on it. If we cannot correct their behavior, we must eliminate them from our organization. These problems only create more problems with time.

## Lesson 146

### How do you truly defeat an opponent?

- A. By overpowering their men.
- B. By taking away their territory.
- C. By destroying their leadership.
- D. By countering their philosophy.

*To overturn an army, you must kill its general.*

*To do this, you must use these five weaknesses.*

*You must always look for them.*

From *The Art of War*

Answer:

- C. By destroying their leadership.

We can win territory and find success without specifically defeating any competitor. However, when it becomes necessary to defeat a competitor in order to succeed, we should know what it takes. An organization exists in opposition to us as long as its leadership is opposed to us. We can beat them in a confrontation after confrontation. We can win territory from them. As long as their leadership stays intact, they can rise again to oppose us. The only way to make sure an organization is dead is to cut off its head.

We should never plan to attack the leaders of another organization. Our goal should never be simply to defeat another person. Personal battles do not belong in the competition arena of real life. Too many people depend upon organizations and their success to make any organization into vehicles of personal vengeance.

We only go after the leaders of an opposing organization when the situation presents itself as opportunity. We must have something specific that we will win from hurting our competitor, *and* our competitor must demonstrate one of the five weaknesses, making him a target for this type of direct attack. If both of these conditions exist, we must adjust our plans accordingly. We must always adjust our plans to take advantage of the opportunities that come our way.