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Insight from the Front Line to the Bottom Line

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The following is a guest post by John Durfee. John is an Operation Freedom War veteran and a manager for Airsplat, the nation's largest retailer of Airsoft Guns. Learn from his insights when it comes to workplace team building and employee leadership development from an armed forces perspective.

I left the military years ago, but the principles drilled into me are still part of who I am and who I strive to be. In the business realm, I find that they are still front of mind as I work to be successful and help my company prosper. I need to train a strong force, strengthen our defenses, and know the lay of the consumer landscape in order to defeat our competitors. In all my reading, I've found philosopher Sun Tzu to be a valuable source of knowledge for helping me in both my military and business world campaigns. Here are some gems of wisdom that I've used in my office:

Defense

"Confront them with annihilation, and they will then survive; plunge them into a deadly situation, and they will then live. When people fall into danger, they are then able to strive for victory."

Strength and growth occurs when you are challenged. Most of the time, when you're in a job for a long period of time, you can become comfortable. And though you may end up performing the tasks you are assigned well, the danger that accompanies that is complacency. You want to view your employees as always in training - always being challenged. Regularly give them tasks that are a little beyond their current standard of abilities. Have them start to take more responsibilities, while simultaneously giving fewer instructions. Provide them a goal without specifically showing the way. You'll be surprised when you find them completing these harder tasks. You'll be creating more independent and self-reliant workers who will stay productive and proactive.

Offense

"Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."

I work in a marketing department that uses a lot of online Web 3.0 sources to connect to customers. We use Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, and more to bring our market presence forward. However, our competitors have the same tools at their disposal. The name of the game is flexibility and anticipation. Doing so allows us to make better offers to potential customers. They show us what they can do, and in return we show them we can do it better.

A successful manager is one who is flexible and open to criticism of their own operation. Ask your team if they have any input - foster an environment in which any idea is a possible plan. This way you'll have the collective knowledge of the group. If someone comes up with a great idea, let them use it as pet project to see the results on a small scale. As Sun Tzu says, "To [Buy Cialis](#) fight and conquer in all our battles is not

supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."

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