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Five Stars for Managers: Strategy Concepts in Business

Herman S. Napier
Walter L. Kreeger
Purdue University Press (August 2001)
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On any given day, businesspeople gird themselves for battle, as they fight to win the war to make their companies profitable. Using military terminology and strategies is not a particularly new concept (haven't business leaders always quoted from Sun Tzu's The Art of War?), but the authors of this book go a step further and refer to actual military campaigns throughout history to develop strategic concepts for the business world.

Napier, who served in the Army as a US Special Forces staff officer and taught at West Point, is now emeritus professor in the College of Business Administration at the University of Arkansas. Kreeger, who led a combat platoon and served as personnel officer and company commander, holds a doctorate in university administration from the University of Arkansas and works as a translator and consultant in the United States and abroad.

In chapters such as "Look at the Big Picture First" and "Go to the Sound of the Guns," Napier and Kreeger present proven military strategies and then link those strategies for use in solving common business problems. Particularly, Napoleon Bonaparte's and Sun Tzu's methods for developing objectives, gathering resources, and conducting campaigns are cited frequently throughout the book.

Though not stated explicitly, the most obvious audience for this book are military personnel making career changes. To get the most out of it, the ideal reader would already have a deep knowledge of battle lore. For example, to illustrate one point, the authors mention Stonewall Jackson's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War. Other than describing it as a masterful campaign that outwitted two stronger Union forces, few details are provided, and for those not strong in history, the example is not as clear as it could have been.

For military buffs in business, this book will be a delight, as a great deal of information is presented and sound business strategies are developed. For those who are not, it will be slower going, but the ammunition is in there to help fight those daily battles.

VICKI GERVICKAS (July / August 2001)

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