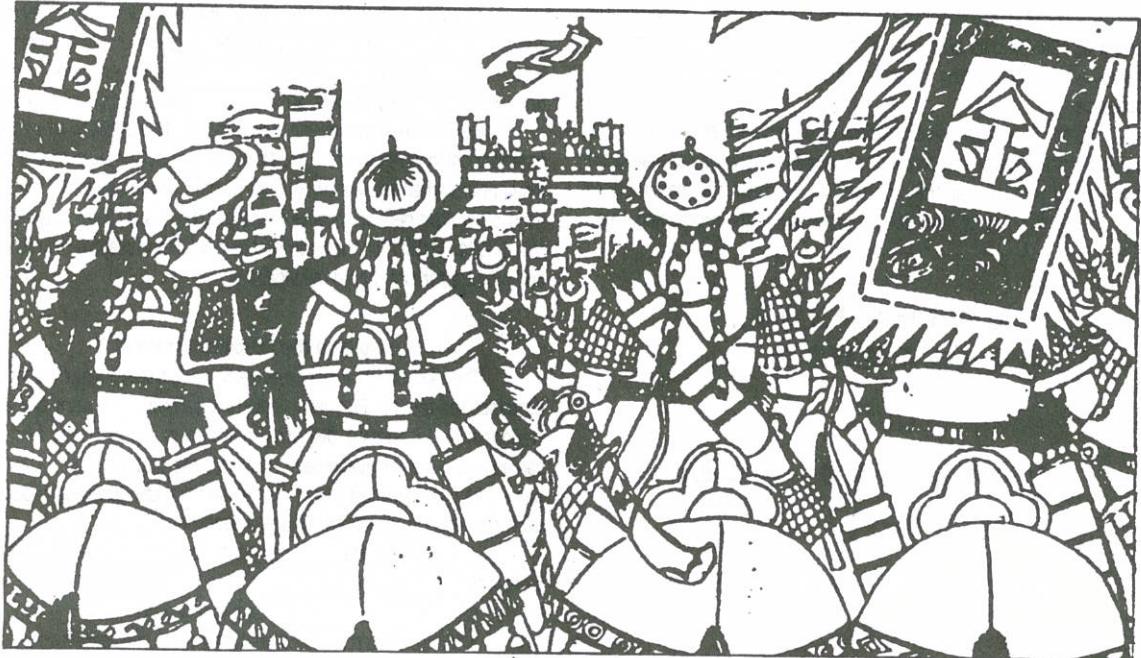


# ATTACKING FOR COMPETITIVE EDGE STRATEGY



Dr. Prin Laksitanond

可胜者攻也...攻则有余

"....those who can win must attack...attack when one's forces are abundant."

Sun Tzu.

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## INTRODUCTION

If blaming the Gulf crisis for all the economic turndowns and political woes the country has witnessed since August 2, 1990 may be so called easing the squeeze of as convenience as economic rising-and-falling phenomenon starting at 1991...should be a gear of rethinking and adjustment running business with a challenging of environmental controls and unexpected turbulence

So to be an aggressive company in a turbulent environment, the company must uncover the competitors' dispositions while concealing the company. The company can then concentrate, segment, and mass produce!

Sun Tzu's Art of War and management once proclaimed that :



凡先处战地而待敌者佚，  
后处战地而趋战者劳。



能使敌人不得至者，害之也。



故善战者，致人而不致于人。



兵非益多也



故形人而我无形，则我专而敌分；  
我专为一，敌分为十，  
是以十攻其一也，则我众而敌寡；  
能以众击寡者，  
则吾之所与战者，约矣。



Meaning "generally, those companies which reach and occupy the business ground early will have time to rest and wait for the competitors. On the other hand, those which arrive at the market field late will have to rush into action when they are already tired and exhausted" and "by inflicting damages and placing obstacles, a company can prevent competitors from implementing their strategies"

"Therefore, the company which is skilled in its operating fields will always bring competitors to where they want to compete, and is not brought there by them."

Also, "The strength of a competitor does not depend largely on resources but rather on a proper niching in the market" (Wee, 1990 : 19-21)

But what has been said about war by the great Chinese general is quite true also with business practices. Let's mention what Max Weber would have said in regards to common pitfalls in conducting a business.

Max Weber, spotted as the "Father of Modern Organization" identified and built his theory on career status, specialization of labor, hierarchical authority, rules and regulations, and impersonalization. His theory is in fact based on the Protestant-work ethic approach "man's duty to work hard."

He identifies five design flaws (things do invariably go wrong in organization) in which some of the flaws come about because of the faulty assumptions when the work-flow organization was designed. On the other hand, other flaws develop because of changing times and changing technology (Ward, 1991 : 11-13) Then the business should watch the deadline-time schedule and prepare for time-based management.

## Avoiding the Deadline Syndrom

The most effective managers are those who set up realistic, attainable deadlines for the job. But, no matter how carefully one plans the entire responsibility for setting deadlines, one cannot foresee everything that can go wrong with an assignment. Predicting the problem is only a guessing game. The manager must realize that some thing can go wrong and should allow for setbacks when confronting a deadline.

Jean Guarino, therefore, suggests four simple rules of such confrontations which can be summarized as follows :

1. Allow some flexibility in establishing deadlines.
2. Consult the staffs who are going to do the assignment.
3. Anticipate problems and changes.
4. Monitor the progress of a job. (Gaurino, 1991 : 25-26)

Surely, managers are not such born leaders but we can take a soapbox approach to be a business leader, can't we ?

## Leading the Charge

Among the great business leaders we have no argument that it is neither enough to amass great wealth nor enough to lead great enterprises. A great leader must be more than wealthy, humanistic, powerful, prominent etc. What then! they must have changed the business world and the whole world for the better.

We have seen such great leaders as Robert Galvin of Motorola, Dee Word Hock of Visa, and Peter Lynch of Fidelity Investments who made their marks in changing the business world around them with such great ideas that are flexible, workable, feasible, and right timing. (Nulty, 1991 : 60-64)

## The Gun That Won the Levi Strauss Co.

The Levi Strauss Co. is a classic example of an American company which takes a stand for value approach as a business strategy : created a flatter organization, including the painful step of cutting the work force by one-third, and invested heavily in new product development, marketing, and technology. As chairman and Chief executive officer CEO, Robert Haas has combined strong commercial success with a commitment to social values and to its workforce. He implemented the Aspirations Statement Program--defines occupational roles and responsibilities, conducts performance evaluations, trains new employees, organizes work, and makes business decisions. Meanwhile, the Levi Company has stayed true to its traditional

commitment to social issues even as it has updated that commitment. It must reflect the changing economic and social realities of a new era.

To this end, may managers being a new strategic concept in attack taking a competitive edge stand--time-based management.

### Thinking the unthinkable in time-based management

In business performance, practically, manager always thinks of cost savings, They prefer to rank their business as a world-class business enterprise. Therefore, one must leverage its impressive engineering and manufacturing capabilities striving for competitive advantage and most important is to manage a time-based strategy.

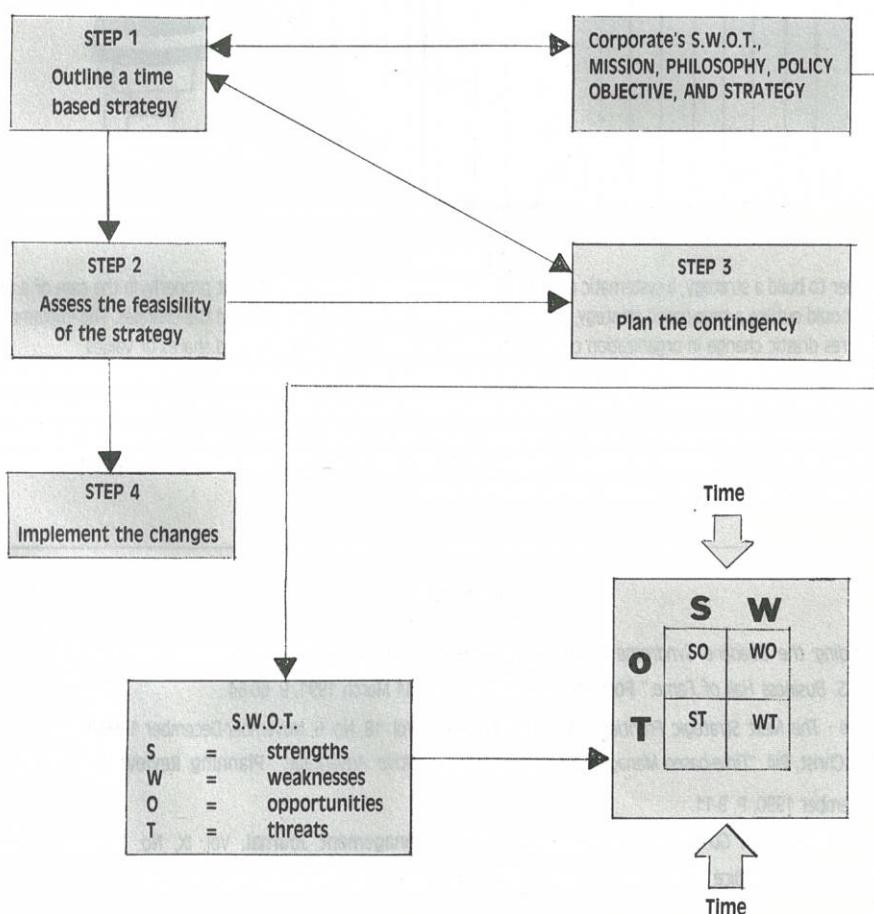
A time-based strategy may hold the key to being the first in the market place with an innovative or modified product, or being able

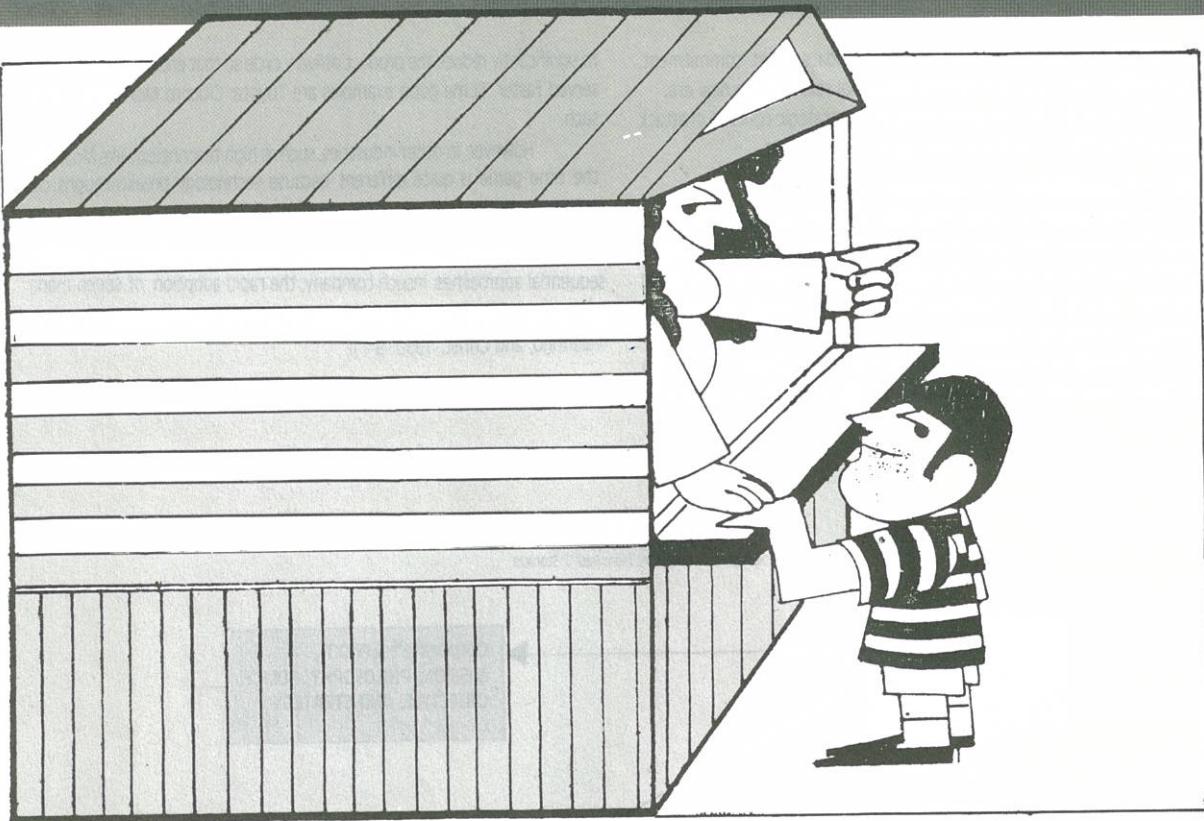
to significantly reduce the product delivery cycle so that end consumers can be served faster. Some good examples are Toyota, Citicorp Mortgage, 3 M as such.

However, in other industries, such as high technology like Motorola, the time game is quite different because technology breakthroughs can quickly erase the time gap. (Stonich, 1990 : 5-7)

Unfortunately, many corporate cultures are locked into traditional sequential approaches. In such company, the rapid adoption of speed management can induce culture shock and disturb one function against another. (Valentino, and Christ, 1990 : 9-11)

EXHIBIT 1  
Steps for time-based leadership  
(adapted as necessary from Paul J. Stonich)





### Conclusion

In order to build a strategy, a systematic process of decision making must be carried out properly. In the case of a time-based company, a firm should outline a time-based strategy, assess the feasibility of the strategy, and plan the changes. The implementation of the strategy requires drastic change in organization culture, structure, system, style, staff, skill, and shares of values.

When a great Chinese knight like "Sun Tzu" makes a strategic example and guideline for business people analogically to implement the art of war into business world of turbulence, he provided the business leader a direct way for success in business planning.

As a Fastest-first organization of today, the manager must keep in mind to be more aggressive in running via business. The business leader must strive for a competitive edge by attacking first, gaining **production cost, profit, innovation**, and searching for excellence if and only if these factors are business games for this decade.

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