

## PLAYBOOK: DUELING PLAYBOOKS

## Dueling Playbooks

### The opposing best-practice ideas of Sun Tzu and Krishna

By Pete Engardio

To Sun Tzu, author of the once-hip management treatise *The Art of War*, victory should be the "great object." Winning the battle is all about unyielding discipline.

*The Bhagavad Gita*, a Hindu text more in keeping with today's zeitgeist, contains the wisdom of Lord Krishna. Focus on your thoughts and actions, rather than the outcome.

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## Sun Tzu's Ideas

## Krishna's Take

#### ON FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

**Greed is good.** Troops have to see there is "advantage from defeating the enemy" in order to be motivated. Share the booty with the rank and file, and give them shares of conquered territory.

**Greed is bad.** "You should never engage in action only for the desire of rewards," Krishna says. Acting on worldly desires leads to failure. Do well, and good things will come.

#### ON MANAGING UNDERLINGS

**Be tough.** Sun Tzu calls for "iron discipline": If you indulge troops with too much kindness and don't maintain your authority, they'll be "useless for any practical purpose."

**Be fair.** Enlightened leaders are compassionate and selfless, and they "treat everyone as their equals." Followers will rally around them and follow their example.

#### ON INITIATIVE

**Attack only when victory is likely.** Better yet, maneuver to win without a fight. If the odds are bad, retreat and wait for another opportunity. Long campaigns strain resources and make you vulnerable.

**Act rather than react.** A leader's actions today can become the "karma" that influences his status tomorrow. Leaders accomplish "excellence by taking action,"

#### ON THE ULTIMATE GOAL

**Beat the enemy.** War is a vital fact of life that "cannot be neglected by a responsible sovereign." Winning requires clever tactics and, in some cases, deception.

**Seek higher consciousness.** Leaders should view problems within their larger contexts. Translation: Show sensitivity to multiple stakeholders including shareholders, employees, partners, and neighbors.

