

# Types of leadership styles sun tzu



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2. Sun Tzu said that “ a general must see and know alone, meaning that he should be able to see and know what others can not. Seeing what others do not see is called brilliance, knowing what others do not know is called genius. Brilliant geniuses win first, meaning that they defend in a such way as to be unassailable and attack in such a way as to be irresistible”[2].

4. Sun Tzu’s ‘ Art of War’ mainly deals with the objective of winning battles with minimum effort, minimum conflict, minimum losses and maximum operational efficiency. In the book Sun Tzu has mentioned that best winning is to win without fighting which has become very important in leadership strategies.

In his book Sun Tzu had mentioned that :-

‘ if you know yourself and your enemy, you’d surely win’

‘ if you know yourself but not your enemy, you may either win or lose ‘

‘ if you know neither yourself nor your enemy, you would lose’[3]

5. There has been a great emphasis on the personality of the leader in modern leadership but it can be seen that leadership traits of an effective leader were described by Sun Tzu over 2500 years ago. If one considers the follower and the situation to the leader together , “ the Art of War” becomes a handbook for leadership. “ A leader takes a very vital role in winning a war and SunTzu promotes leader as the central point in his last chapter[4]. The strong qualities and capabilities of a leader determine the success achieved in war whereas his weaknesses will lead his followers into defeat. This war

strategy is already very old but it is still relevant in discussing the role of leaders in technologically advanced modern day battlefield environment.

6. Sun Tzu describes five major qualities/traits of an effective leader which in turn describes the character of an individual . Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage and sternness[5]. A leader must have all these qualities to be effective and practice these basic qualities to reduce friction in the organisation. “ A leader and a commander is very important for a nation as they first decides on all the strategies then carries it out”[6]. If the leader has no foresight and his soldiers lack impetus then all the strategies of the leader is insufficient to strike[7].

(a) Intelligence. The intelligence and professional competence of a leader and his ability to use his intelligence and gained knowledge to plan and complete the professional tasks at hand is very vital. A leader must be technically proficient and tactically sound so that his followers develop full faith and follow him without questioning. A leader who has adequate knowledge of his job, Leads from front while Setting an example for the people to follow. Reliance on intelligence alone will result in rebelliousness[8]. Leaders are in process of constant learning and evolving various methods to cope with the changing environmental, conventional and unconventional threats we face. A leader must be able to effectively communicate and put fwd his thoughts, must be able to understand the nature of conflict and the battlefield. The leader must have good strategic understanding and sound tactical knowledge to detect, and find suitable ways to avoid or resolve conflict. A leader must make a sound plan to win. Master Sun laid lot of emphasis on winning without fighting and said that <https://assignbuster.com/types-of-leadership-styles-sun-tzu/>

those who win every battle are not really skillful but a skillful, good and intelligent leader has sound and effective plans to render the other armies helpless without fighting. Sun Tzu said that “ To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”[9].

(b) SunTzu said that “ generals are assistants of the nation. When their assistant is complete, the country is strong. When their assistance is defective, the country is weak”[10]. Ho Yan Xi further amplifies his statement where he describes the word ‘ complete’ which means the ability, thoroughness and intelligence of the generals[11]. A country is safe and strong if its generals are thoroughly able , intelligent, have sound knowledge of progress of operations. The generals must have in depth knowledge of all the sciences of warfare before they command their own soldiers in battle and be able to assess the battlefield intelligence, battle formations to adjust and suitably modify there plans. A wise commander is able to recognize changing circumstances and act expeditiously to his own advantage. Zhang Yu talking about the intelligence traits of a leader said that if the leader have intelligence and courage they should be entrusted with the responsibility to accomplish the task and not controlled by civilians[12].

(c) Trustworthy. A leader must be honest and straight forward in his dealings with the troops to gain respect and cohesion amongst them. A leader must develop trust and confidence of his men which develops with feelings of appreciations and mutual bonds between leader and led established in the mind of people in the beginning. Master Sun brought out the importance of rewards and punishments only after the personal attachment to the

leadership is formed . “ If troops are punished before their loyalty is secured they will be disobedient. If not obedient, it is difficult to employ them. If troops are loyal, but punishments are not enforced, you cannot employ them”[13]. It is amazing that people would accept reward and punishments if they feel that it has been conferred on them by a fair and trustworthy leader. A trustworthy leader would lead his troops cohesively in a strong knit team and develop mutual trusts and bonding. Mutual trust is exhibited in an organization where the leaders have full faith and trust on their frontline soldiers to accomplish the mission and those frontline soldiers do have full faith and confidence that they will be supported by their leaders in all facets in completing the mission. The mutual trust developed would amount to develop cohesiveness and unity in the organization. A leader will have full faith and confidence, people will have situational awareness and assist in critical decision making leading to an appropriate action.

(d) Humaneness. A leader must be caring and human in his dealings. He must love mankind, sympathises with others and appreciates their work. A leader must regard his soldiers as his children , & they will follow him into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own beloved sons ,& they would stand by you even unto death. Sincerity and humanity are very much crucial as both are required for frontline soldiers to have leader’s trust and confidence. Both these factors are required so that a leader is able to control the situation with assurance and confidence . A true confidence and mutual trust is build on all the factors of wisdom, sincerity, humanity and courage. Caring for troops is also reflected through the two previously discussed traits intelligence and trustworthiness.

(e) Courage. Courage is reflection of how you react and face the physical challenges of an armed individual and resolve that threat accordingly. “ If a general is not courageous he will be unable to conquer doubts or to create great plans. Courage is important and essential because without it, a leader cannot take advantage of wisdom with bold action when sit requires it”[14]. Courage is also internally, known as moral courage where you as a leader stand up for, support, your people in an effort to show the well meaning intent of your organization. It also means admitting mistakes and challenging others to learn from and adapt the lessons learned to future problems. Talking about courage Chen Ho said “ A good leader are not committed to death yet do not expect to live; they act in accord with events, not quick to anger, not subject to embarrassment. When they see possibility , they are like tigers otherwise they shut their doors. Their action and inactions are matter of strategy, and they can not be pleased or angered[15]. In today’s climate where explicit answers are sought even for dynamic encounters that require implicit judgments’ in rapidly changing circumstances a leader must be brave and “ dare what seem like the impossible” and face the adversity.

(f) Sternness. To accomplish our goals as an individual or organization, Sun Tzu says we as leaders must be strict. We must be willing to do what needs to be done. This includes a deep look into ourselves as leaders, a self assessment, to ensure that we are indeed the best leader. We must be willing to lead even in unpleasant situations, after all that is when a true leader shows the stuff he/she is made of. You must be there to lead and be seen taking charge in a variety of situations. This has a tremendous effect on the focus of an organization. So get out in front and be in charge, suffer the

hardships and assume the risks and share the victories and defeats. You will be amazed at how this affects the morale and overall unity and focus of an organization in meeting its goals.

7. Sun Tzu had discussed in chapter 8 about five weaknesses of a leader, which are useful means to evaluate and appraise the quality of our leaders. These five weaknesses[16]and their impact on leadership styles are enumerated below:-

(a) A Reckless Leader Might Get Killed. In a war, courage is one power a leader must have. But, courage with no consideration comes with considerable risks of falling into defeat. Courage is not just a determination covered with recklessness. A leader who manages to go to war with neither concept nor strategy is doomed to disastrous recklessness.

(b) A Cowardly Leader Might Get Captured. A leader having a pretty soul laden with worries and fears will always hesitate in making decisions. If he keeps this attitude in any of his action, enemy would easily anticipate his moves. So in any opportunity he would fall into enemy's hands.

(c) A Temperamental Leader Might Easily Be Provoked. Anger will only sink a person to the "grave" of his ego which then easily plunge him into troubles. Emotional or temperamental attitude of a leader will fully expose him to provocation. This will eventually lead him into acting recklessly and fooling himself so a temperamental leader could very likely fall trapped into some "mud-hole" ready to ruin him.

(d) A Megalomaniac Leader Might Easily Fall Victim To Slander. If a leader is too anxious to defend his honour and to glorify his status and position, it might make him an easy target of slander. Such a leader, especially in pursuing higher title, might tend to act recklessly to achieve his ambition. In such condition he might be accused of selfishly promoting himself while neglecting the true essence of his struggle.

(e) A Submissive Leader Might Be Disappointed. Compassion is a noble character that must be firmly retained. Nevertheless a leader who is too easy to show compassion could just be disappointed. An excessively unconsidered compassion for his people will just cause troubles. Any policy decided only after much judgement is likely to waste so much time as to miss any good chance coming along at the time.

All these five traits mentioned above are serious faults in a general and in military operations are calamitous. The ruin of a army and death of the general are inevitable results of these shortcomings. They must be deeply pondered.

Kautilya talks about leadership with respect to the king and not as related to military leader. He emphasized that a king is protector of a state and is ever active in promoting the security and welfare of the people. A wise and intelligent king cultivates the intellect by association with elders. The king had self control and always improved his own discipline by learning[17]. These qualities of a king relates with the traits of a leader as preached by Sun Tzu of being trustworthy, humanness and intelligence



8. Sun Tzu discussed several ways to motivate & lead troops in battle which incl leading by example, sharing the common soldier's lot , improving morale and delegating authority. Sun Tzu believed that if an army is led by its leader from front he will win the support without extorting it and gain affection without inviting it and wins trust without demanding it[18]. The best way to prove one as leader is to show character where he leads by actions and not by words. Strategies, missions and orders are imp and must be followed and supported by actions by the leader in order to send a truer and clearer msg to his soldier. A leader must do his best to ensure that troops are well fed, well armed and hard trained. He should meet with small unit commanders, non commissioned officers and individual soldiers to learn their concerns and needs. A leader must know the units capabilities, take suitable measures to improve and strengthen the unit's morale. A leader must not reward frequently as it shows end of his resources and not punish frequently as it shows that he is in acute distress.

9. Erwin Rommel, both as a small unit leader and as a field marshal, [19]always lead in this manner. As a pl & coy cdr he would often lead the adv elements and take scouts to penetrate behind en lines. Rommel also believed that a leader " must be first in the toils and fatigues of the army," sharing not only the army's triumphs but also its tabulations which establishes a bond and increases their moral making them stronger in the face of war.

10. Leadership , as practiced by general WU Chi, is all about to know your men , eat with them the same food and wear the same clothes as the troops do, on the march he did not mount his horse and carried his reserve rations.

He shared exhaustion and bitter toil with his troops. This was to an extent practiced by Gen Norman[20]Schwartzkof in American Div at Chu Lai in Viet Nam as Bn commander.

11. Leadership is a key to effective decision making and the overall[21]performance of individuals and hence the organization. People in an organization depend upon leaders, so we must commit ourselves to the leadership qualities Sun Tzu describes, and inspire total commitment from others. Do not let lack of leadership be the friction in your organization, there is enough uncertainty, chaos and complexity and new information being processed in dynamic encounters to make decision making difficult enough. The will to win starts with the top. Take charge and be the leader you know and build a thriving organizational culture.

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