

DUTY, HONOR, COMPANY

West Point Fundamentals For Business Success

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MAIN IDEA

Most people agree that business is war -- except the primary goal in business is to win market share and make money rather than seize territory or kill the enemy. Therefore, if the military paradigm fits the business world, by studying what succeeds in military battles, you can gain insights into what is likely to succeed in the business arena.

The finest source of military brilliance in the modern world has consistently originated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, which was founded in 1802. Thus, the time-tested methodologies taught there should be rigorously examined for their transferability to business.

The three essential pillars of the West Point philosophy are summed up in its motto: Duty, Honor, Country. In a business context, this underlying philosophy can be translated as Duty, Honor, Company. A business leader with a sense of duty inspires and motivates his or her coworkers. Honor is the foundation of great character traits. And ultimately the company must flourish if it is to endure and succeed.

Accordingly, taking the lead from West Point, leadership, discipline, high ethical standards and investments in the future should become the paramount business priorities. At the same time, business managers should focus on providing leadership and ethics for every person in the company organization. Only when business managers actually get out front and lead will the enterprise flourish and become great.

Duty, honor, company serves exceptionally well both as a motto and a way of life.

Section 1 -- Military Leadership Principles That Apply to the World of Business Page 2

Business leadership is actually based on, and strongly influenced by, military leadership practices -- just the terminology is different. The key leadership principles are:

1. Make certain everyone operates by the same principles.
2. Have a clear and concise mission statement.
3. Build leaders rather than managers.
4. Hold to the highest possible standard of ethics.
5. Respect the need for an appropriate amount of discipline.
6. Have a clearly defined organizational structure.
7. Dress suitably -- your attire is a walking resume.
8. Encourage the development of character.
9. Develop a broad award program to highlight achievements.
10. Build morale -- enthusiasm, devotion and esteem.
11. Respect real world experience.
12. Have an ongoing formal training program in place.
13. Hit a balance between creativity and longevity.
14. Inspire positive action.

Section 2 -- Military Planning Procedures and Their Transferability to Business Planning Page 4

The military planning process can readily be transferred into a practical planning method businesses can use. The key planning principles are:

1. Decisions must be made by individuals, not committees.
2. Staff should present solutions, not point out problems.
3. Address the who, what, when, where, how and why issues.
4. Preplanning means to ask, "What if this happens?"
5. Analyze exactly what the consumer wants.
6. Good logistics means positioning supplies near the battlefield.
7. A business plan is a road map from here to there.
8. Assumptions are the difference between victory and defeat.
9. Issuing orders is 10-percent, execution is 90-percent.
10. Standard operating procedures reduce confusion.
11. In any written communication, keep it simple.
12. All briefings should be brief and to the point.

Section 3 -- Military Doctrines and Tactics That Can Be Applied in the Business Field Page 7

The same military tactics and doctrines that can be used in battle can be successfully applied to the management of a business. The key tactics and doctrines are:

1. The fundamentals never change.
2. On offense, attack audaciously.
3. Defense is the less decisive form of battle.
4. Always look for ways to act to regain the initiative.
5. Develop action plans well before they are needed.
6. Avoid pitfalls when operating internationally.
7. Expose potential problems before the action begins.

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