This is a reading from *The Art of War,* written by the legend of Chinese 5th Century history, Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu is said to be a legend as there is no documentation to provide information supporting if Sun Tzu was a man, a group, or even an ideal. For the sake of ease Sun Tzu will be referred to as if he were a human being. Sun Tzu lived from 460-400 B.C., and *The Art of War* was believed to have been written in 403 B.C., within the warring states period. As an interesting side note the 5th century also saw the life of another powerful mind, in Greece, by a man named Plato, born in 427 B.C. As stated previously, Sun Tzu was from China, which also happened to be the birth place of Confucius.

Now the question may come to mind, why is *The Art of War* even relevant to business? Think of it this way: The army in this reading is like a business. Understanding one’s own business is crucial, and just as importantly they must understand your opponents. Business is competitive, only the greatest leaders win in the world, and waging a war in business follows just like the art of war.

Looking more at the reading itself, Sun Tzu covers some incredibly important ideas. The first of this is the roles that Sun Tzu lays out for change, flexibility, planning, span of control, deception, and winning without fighting. These roles are all necessary to make a great general and win without fail or lose every time when lacked.

Next is how Sun Tzu thinks about the importance of knowledge of the enemy and of yourself and how this knowledge affects success. Sun Tzu said “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle”

Within the reading Sun Tzu talked about having alternatives within a war, and how having both leads to higher probabilities of success in a war. How having alternatives provides strengths is that the combinations are limitless, and to those who can wield all manner of combinations can always surprise the enemy because of how tactics can be changed.

Again, it may be difficult to see how business and war are connected in strategy, but look again. *The Art of War* relates to marketing because marketing is a competition, and understanding the “war” between a business and its competitor can give the business the advantage to be successful. If that business is at the advantage to defeat it’s enemy or disadvantaged with a need to successfully retreat understanding the art of war allows for that business to get through unharmed. Same with business, though there are no lives lost, economics and marketing is a “war”, a competition where only those who are most capable will be victorious.