

*Sun Tzu
Boyd
Wardley*

THE ART OF STRATEGY

**Steps Towards
Business Agility**

Interpreted and Compiled
by Erik Schön

YOKOSO PRESS



*An excellent fusion of Sun Tzu, Boyd, and Wardley that is beautifully laid out,
highly readable and very straightforward in compressing the learning curve on all three!*

MARK J. MCGRATH, chief learning officer

*Erik Schön has created a great example of Boyd's "snowmobile" – a synthesis across a variety
of domains leading to new insights and capabilities. I'm sure every strategist, business leader,
and entrepreneur will find valuable ideas for making their own enterprises more competitive.*

CHET RICHARDS, author of *Certain to Win: The Strategy of John Boyd*

*The Art of Strategy is condensed knowledge that all managers, agile coaches and other leaders
should have. These are three thinkers from very different contexts. But as Erik has put it, with
similarities and differences topic by topic, a fourth voice appears. That voice belongs to the inter-
action between the three narrators and it gives as much value to me as a reader as the other three
voices do.*

STAFFAN NÖTEBERG, author of *Guiding Star OKRs*

THE summary and independent look on modern strategy right now!!!

MARKUS ANDREZAK, founder and managing partner

A great little book with loads of maps in there.

SIMON WARDLEY, inventor of *Wardley Mapping*

Momentum

*arises only from the surprising and the expected,
yet combining them form more ways than can ever be known;
each brings on the other, like an infinite cycle.
Who can exhaust all possibilities?*

SUN TZU 孫子

Strategy is

*a mental tapestry of changing intentions
for harmonising and focusing our efforts
as a basis for realising some aim or purpose
in an unfolding and often unforeseen world
of many bewildering events and many contending interests.*

JOHN BOYD

Strategy is

*the art of manipulating an environment
to gain a desirable outcome.*

SIMON WARDLEY

Sun Tzu, Boyd & Wardley

THE ART OF STRATEGY

Steps Towards Business Agility



Interpreted and Compiled by Erik Schön

Yokoso Press

PUBLISHED BY YOKOSO PRESS
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN
YOKOSOPRESS.SE

Interpretation and compilation: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 by Erik Schön.
[Wardley Mapping](#): Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 by Simon Wardley.
Calligraphy: Copyright © 2020 by Hisayo Oki.
Cover photo: Copyright © 2020 by Erik Schön.

Set in ETbb, Gill Sans and Bera Mono using the `tufte-book` document class in Overleaf \LaTeX .

ISBN (hardcover): 979-8-729-75055-9
ISBN (paperback): 979-8-631-70005-5

Fifth printing, December 2025

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	9
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	13
<i>1. Assessments</i>	17
<i>2. Challenges</i>	31
<i>3. Success</i>	41
<i>4. Setup</i>	49
<i>5. Momentum</i>	59
<i>6. Shaping</i>	69
<i>7. Engagement</i>	75
<i>8. Adaptations</i>	85
<i>9. Movements</i>	97
<i>10. Landscape</i>	109
<i>11. Situations</i>	117
<i>12. Disruption</i>	131
<i>13. Intelligence</i>	143
<i>Sources</i>	147
<i>Glossary</i>	155
<i>Index</i>	185
<i>List of Figures</i>	190

Introduction

What is *strategy*?

Why do you need it?

How do you do it?

And, how can you be more certain to succeed?

THE ART OF **STRATEGY** provides timeless answers to these eternal questions. It is a short introduction to **strategy** through the insights of three successful strategists: Sun Tzu, John Boyd and Simon Wardley. It is a modern reading of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* — the **strategy** classic written in what is now called China around 500 BCE — using the lenses of Boyd (OODA “loop” inventor) and Wardley (Wardley Map inventor) who were both influenced by Sun Tzu.

It is part of a trilogy — *The Art of Strategy*, *The Art of Change*¹ and *The Art of Leadership*² — exploring timeless patterns for sustainable success in turbulent times, helping you to think and act from first principles while being mindful of context.

Each chapter gently transforms *The Art of War* into a modern **business** setting and includes material from Boyd and Wardley in separate sections to complement and clarify Sun Tzu's terse, poetic text. In this way, **strategy** is served in 13 short chapters requiring 5–10 minutes of reading time each. An extensive *Glossary* is provided since many Chinese concepts are purposefully abstract and ambiguous. I have tried to keep the text as simple as possible but not simpler and I recommend reading the chapters slowly, in small doses, to give time for reflection.

You will discover new thinking patterns and visualisation tools that will help you and your **organisation** succeed together with your **stakeholders**. You will also improve your understanding of the — sometimes evil — **gameplays** (and counter-measures!) by Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping who are all inspired by Sun Tzu,³ in some cases indirectly via Boyd.

¹ Erik Schön. *The Art of Change. Patterns for Success. A Modern Interpretation of the I Ching*. Yokoso Press, 2024. URL <http://yokosopress.se>

² Lao Tzu. *The Art of Leadership. Purpose and Integrity for Sustainable Success. Interpreted and Compiled by Erik Schön*. Yokoso Press, 2024. URL <http://yokosopress.se>

³ John Gray. What Sun Tzu Knew. *The New Statesman*, January 2020. URL <https://www.newstatesman.com/sun-tzu-the-art-war-politics>; and William J. Holstein. *The New Art of War. China's Deep Strategy Inside the United States*. Brick Tower Press, 2019

THE FOLLOWING is a summary and visualisation of *The Art of Strategy* according to Sun Tzu, John Boyd and Simon Wardley.

MOVE BEYOND STRATEGY as wars, battles and combat for power towards strategy as individuals, teams or organisations fulfilling their purpose in situations outside their direct control, sometimes engaging with others desiring the same thing.

MOVE BEYOND STRATEGY for survival in competitive environments towards strategy for sustainably thriving in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world where the rate of change will never be slower than today.

MOVE BEYOND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT as planning, metrics and data towards strategy development as choices for a harmonised direction for the organisation based on regular assessments of stakeholders' needs and the organisation's purpose.

MOVE BEYOND STRATEGY DEPLOYMENT as execution, checking metrics and chasing targets towards strategy deployment as initiatives, decisions and actions in a harmonised direction by everyone everywhere in the organisation based on high situational awareness.

MOVE BEYOND BUSINESS as maximising shareholder value towards business as succeeding together with your stakeholders — maximising outcomes while minimising efforts.

MOVE BEYOND AGILITY as a ready ability to move with quick, easy grace towards agility as the ability to adapt to and influence situations more skillfully than competition, including timely break out of successful — but non-sustainable — patterns.

MOVE BEYOND LEADERSHIP⁴ for managers and people in formal leader roles towards leadership-as-a-service⁵ provided by — potentially all — people in the organisation.

MOVE BEYOND WAYS OF WORKING using practices and principles for optimising parts towards ways of working by creating conditions and transcending trade-offs for harmonising the whole.

THE ART OF STRATEGY is to succeed — by securing harmony among stakeholders and keeping competition off balance — through evolving better capabilities to influence, adapt and map.

⁴ For more on the connection between Sun Tzu, Lao Tzu and taoism regarding leadership, see

Lao Tzu. *The Art of Leadership. Purpose and Integrity for Sustainable Success. Interpreted and Compiled by Erik Schön.* Yokoso Press, 2024. URL <http://yokosopress.se>

⁵ Peter Merel. Leadership as a Service. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/leadership-service-peter-merel/>, September 2017

MOVE BEYOND WORDS AND SENTENCES towards seeing how stakeholders’ needs, capabilities and chapters connect:

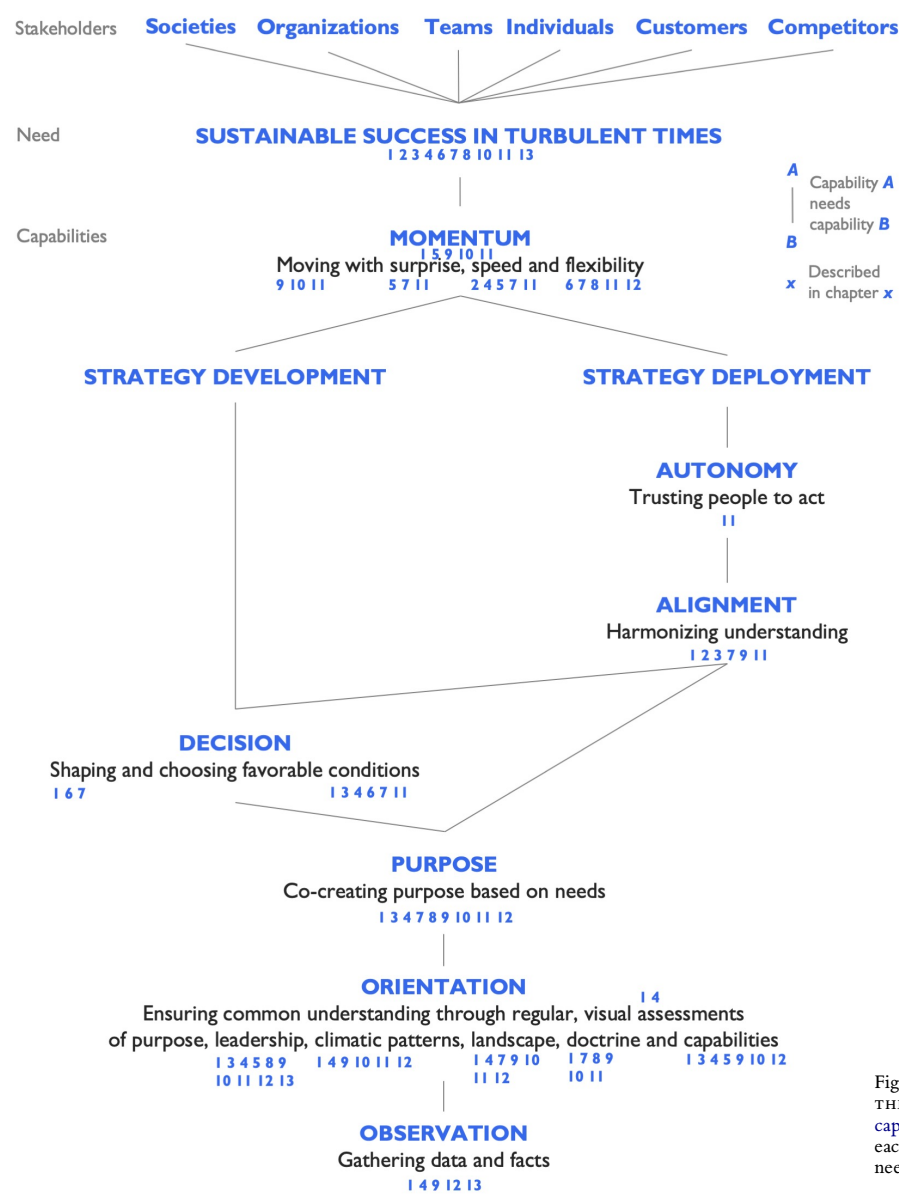


Figure 2: A reader’s guide to THE ART OF STRATEGY: how key capabilities and chapters relate to each other and to stakeholders’ needs

Acknowledgements

THIS INTERPRETATION of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* stands on the shoulders of the following brilliant scholars, researchers and translators who have wrestled with transforming it through time and space: Andrew Zieger, Bengt Pettersson, Brian Browne Walker, Brian Bruya, C.C. Tsai 蔡志忠, D.C. Lau 劉殿爵, the Denma Translation Group, Derek M.C. Yuen 袁彌昌, François Jullien, James Trapp, J.H. Huang 黃柱華, John Minford, John F. Sullivan, Jonathan Clements, Lionel Giles, Michael Nylan, Ooi Kee Beng 黃基明, Peter Harris, Ralph Sawyer, R.L. Wing (Rita Aero), Roel Sterckx, Roger Ames, Samuel B. Griffith, Scott Boorman, Sun Jianyuan, Thomas Cleary, Thomas Huynh and Victor Mair.^{6 7}

The Art of Strategy was inspired by Bob Marshall's *Product Aikido*⁸ — a rendition of the US Marine's Warfighting manual⁹ fulfilling my needs of non-violence and fellowship.

Chet Richards' master classes, talks and writings,¹⁰ Frans Osinga's research,¹¹ and Grant Hammond's biography¹² have helped me understand John Boyd's thinking patterns, briefings and the connection with Sun Tzu — thank you very much for paving the way.

I am forever thankful to Simon Wardley for generously sharing, teaching and building a community¹³ around the innovative way of visualising strategy known as Wardley Mapping, and, for providing new ways of reading Sun Tzu.

Hisayo Oki's calligraphy has added another dimension to each chapter and with deep gratitude I thank her for transforming Sun Tzu's wisdom into art.

And, I remember gratefully:

For valuable feedback on content and structure, Aidan Molloy, Akhilesh Chadha, Anande Purohit, Anne Lundbergh, Barry Bettman, Björn Sandberg, Carsten Christiani, Chet Richards, Christer Hanefalk, Cliff Hazell, Damon Skelhorn, François Herrault, Gábor Oláh, Grigori Milov, Holger Gelhausen,

⁶ See *Sources* for references to the translations of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* used as a starting point for this interpretation. See also Boorman: "In part because Sun Tzu's ideas so commonly come equipped with both multiple facets and multiple interpretations, there is often insight to be had from comparing Sun Tzu translations.", A-25 in

⁷ Scott A. Boorman. *Three Faces of Sun Tzu. Analyzing Sun Tzu's Art of War, A Manual on Strategy*. Cambridge University Press, 2024. With the collaboration of Sun Jianyuan

⁸ Bob Marshall. *Product Aikido*. Self-published, 2013. URL <https://flowchainsensei.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/productaikido041016.pdf>

⁹ U.S. Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, Warfighting*. Department of Defense, 1997. URL <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/mcdp1.pdf>

¹⁰ Chester W. Richards. *Certain to Win. The Strategy of John Boyd, Applied to Business*. Xlibris Corporation, 2004; Chester W. Richards. All by Ourselves. <https://vimeo.com/146524156>, November 2015a; and Chester W. Richards. All by Ourselves. <https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/allbyourselvesv2.pdf>, December 2015b

¹¹ Frans P.B. Osinga. *Science, Strategy and War. The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*. PhD thesis, Universiteit Leiden, Eburon Academic Publishers, 1 2005. URL <https://chicagoboyz.net/blogfiles/OsingaBoydThesis.pdf>; and Frans P. B. Osinga. *Science, Strategy and War. The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*. Routledge, 2007

¹² Grant T. Hammond. *The Mind of War. John Boyd and American Security*. Smithsonian Books, 2001

¹³ See e.g. Wardley Maps Awesome List <https://list.wardleymaps.com> and Discord <https://discord.gg/Drrwr3f9B>

Hugo Schön, Hunter Hastings, Jabe Bloom, Johannes Lindman, Johan Persson, John Hammersley, Jonas Jaconelli, Jose Manuel Beas, Julius Gamanyi, Jørn Larsen, Kristian Norling, Len Epp, Marc Burgauer, Marcus Aurelius Anderson, Maria Berglund, Mark Craddock, Mark J. McGrath, Markus Andrezak, Morten Elvang, Nadja Macht, Olivier de Meringo, Preben Thorø, Rod Leaverton, Si Alhir, Simon Wardley, Staffan Nöteberg, Sue Borchardt, Susan Cohen and Yoko Schön.

For helpful advice on (self)publishing, Alistair Cockburn, Casey Rosenthal, Francesco Cesarini, Henrik Kniberg, Karen Martin, Manuel Rubio, Mary Poppendieck, Mike Rother, Ola Ellnestam, Staffan Nöteberg, Stuart Whitfield and Tomas Björkholm.

For energising encouragements and for spreading the word, Aarsh Malik, Adam Hansen, Adger de Boer, Adolfo Neto, Adrian Cockcroft, Akili King, Alba Tay, Aleix Morgadas, Alexandro Leer, Alex Brad, Alex Irvine, Ali Sabzi, Alizay Yousfzai, Amy Grech, Andi Roberts, Andreas Schliep, Andrew Harmel-Law, Andy Le, Anna Sandell, Anna Sannikova, Annika Steiber, Antoine Buteau, Arne Roock, Ashok Kumar, Beatrix Düring, Ben Ford, Ben Mosior, Bengt Nyman, Bjarne Däcker, Björn Tikkanen, Bob Marshall, Brandon Nelson, Brian Byrne, Brian “Ponch” Rivera, Brigitte Pfeifer, Bruno Poggi, Calogero Kalos Bonasia, Carlos E. Perez, Catherine La Grange, Cem Asma, Chieko Yahagi Lundberg, Chris McAtackney, Chris McDermott, Chris Jackson, Christopher Eyre, Christopher McCann, Corey Foy, Craig Guarraci, Craig McPheat, Cristene Gonzalez-Wertz, Curtis Rosee Lyon, Daniel Bentes, Daniel Zivkovic, Dave Gray, David Holl, David Mavrodiev, Davy Benoot, Deborah Sogayar, Dinis Cruz, Dinkar Gupta, Dipti Singhal, Dominik Ortelt, Elyse Lopez, Eric-Jan Kaak, Esat Artug, Eugene Teo, Evert de Ruiter, Eyal Yaniv, Florian Meyer, Frederik Debonné, Fredrik Lindén, Frida Mangen, Gaurav Agrawal, Gerard Thornley, Giles Anderton, Girish Kumar, Göksenin Yıldırım, Gokalp Caniklioglu, Goran Škugor, Gösta von Stebut, Graham Boyd, Graham Dear, Grant Symons, Guðjón Mar Guðjónsson, Hamed Yazdi, Hammad Saleem, Hans De Leenheer, Hans Gillior, Harprit Singh, Hasnain Mahoon, Henrik Mårtensson, Henrik Taubert, Hiba Ek, Hugo Mumphries, Håkan Forss, Igor Kurochkin, Indra Gunawan Naumira, Ionut Craciunescu, Isabelle Svärd, Isak Dinesen, Jack Rotgar, Jacob Miller, Jakub Stafa, James Cho, James Heys, Jamie Schwandt, Jan Höglund, Janice Fingler, Jan Korecky, Jan Martin Mikkelsen, Jason Gounder, Jeff Sussna, Jim Fonseca, Joakim Manding Holm, Joanna Wrona, Joanne Astley, Joaquín Peña Fernández, Johan Nordin, Johannes Nordh, John Cutler, John Grant, John Le Drew, Jón Ágúst Arason, Jonas Boegård, Jonathan Dupré, Jonathon Fletcher, Jorge De Flon, Jorn de Vreede, Jose Casal, Joseph Bironas, Joseph Burnette, Joseph Moore, Justin Kotze, Kamal Kasana, Kaneez Fatima, Karl Scotland, Kenneth Wingårdh, Kristoffer

Berg, Kyle Byrd, Larry Zhong, Lars Schneider, László Popovics, Laurie Secq, Lauris Muzikants, Leandro Ostera, Linda Franzén, Lou Hayes, Jr, Lou Leone, Lucas Gonzalez, Ludovic Claude, Luis Herrera Benítez, Magdalena Pokorska, Magnus Edlund, Magnus Schön, Mahlin Standar, Malcolm Silberman, Manish Andankar, Marc Habenicht, Marco Manca, Marcus Guest, Marcus Hammarberg, Maria Ericsson, Maria Kristiansson, Marika Gartelius, Mario Lucero, Mark Gilbert, Mark Landy, Mark McCann, Mark Menzel, Martin Burns, Martin Shelford, Mason L’Amy, Matt Anderson, Matthew Skelton, Matthew Thompson, Mattias Åhlander, Matt Mims, Max Luka, Mayank Dhingra, Meltem Ozdemir, Mia Kolmodin, Michael Göthe, Michael Leow, Michael Litton, Michael Shnayderman, Michał Mazur, Michel Löhr, Mikael Vesavuori, Mike Cardus, Mina Boström Nakićenović, Mónica Madrid Costa, Nasser Ghanemzadeh, Nelson da Costa, Nicolas Pelloux-Prayer, Niki Cy, Niklas Angmyr, Nikos Batsios, Nuno Rafael Gomes, Ola Berg, Olivier Duquesne, Omar Khawaja, Omer Chaudhri, Osman Gundogdu, Pablo Lischinsky, Patrick O’Connell, Patrick Oké, Patrick Ruess, Paul Anderson, Paul McBride, Paul Morgan, Paul Rose, Pawel Kaminski, Pete Cohen, Peter Kerschbaumer, Petter Blomberg, Petter Weiderholm, Philip Ebuluofo, Philip Peroni, Piotr Gamracy, Prasanna Krishnamoorthy, Quentin Hartman, Rajiv Shah, Ralph Richter, Ravi Kunapareddy, Reda Hmeid, Retha Prinsloo, Reza Nazarian, Richard Brillantes, Richard Ramsden, Richard Thompson, Richard Veryard, Ritika Mittal, Rixt Wiersma, Rob England, Robert Wunsch, Ron Donaldson, Rudiger Wolf, Rui Vale, Rupade Sindhayach, Ruth Malan, Saeed Sobhani, Sascha Brossmann, Sean Horgan, Shane Steinbauer, Shireesh Kurapati, Simon Almström, Smrutiranjana Sahu, Srinivasa Vivek Jothiprakash, Stefano Roncoroni, Stephan Sutter, Stephan Willemse, Steven Klimowski, Sumire Sato, SunDeep Mehra, Takateru Shimbori, Tanamiranga Ralaindimby, Tessa Rowan, Than Naingoo, Thiago Olson, Thomas Huynh, Thomas Ploch, Tiani Jones, Tomas Björkholm, Tomas Tulka, Tom Asel, Tony Caink, Treston Hawkins, Tristan Slominski, Tshivhidzo Makungo, Tunde Lawal, Ulf Lindberg, Umama Aysel, Vadym Kazulkin, Vanessa Åsell Tsuruga, Vedat Güven, Viacheslav Katsuba, Victor Sollerhed, Woody Zuill, Xavi Pérez, Yagmur Konuslu, Yanick Andrade, Yanick Jair Andrade, Yves Stalgies, Zach Denney, Zain Jaffer, Zeljka Sotra, Zevannya Maddyna, Zhongping Zhang and Zoltán Dankó.

5. *Momentum*



Sun Tzu

WAYS OF ORGANISING is similar for large and small organisations:
group people with a suitable mission
in suitable structures of suitable size.

WAYS OF OPERATING is similar for large and small organisations:
use a suitable setup
and communicate using suitable channels.

THE SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATION
delivers the surprise as well as the expected;
moves like a millstone crushing an egg,
strength against weakness.

WHEN ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS
first do the expected,
then surprise to succeed.

Skilled combinations of surprise and the expected are
as infinite as heaven and earth;
as inexhaustible as rivers and seas;
ending only to begin again like day and night;
dying only to live again like the four seasons.

There are only five notes on a scale,
yet combining them give more melodies than can ever be heard;
there are only five primary colours,
yet combining them give greater variation than can ever be seen;
there are only five cardinal tastes,
yet combining them form more flavours than can ever be tasted.

Momentum

arises only from the surprising and the expected,
yet combining them form more ways than can ever be known;
each brings on the other, like an infinite cycle.
Who can exhaust all possibilities?

TORRENTIAL WATERS TUMBLE ROCKS THANKS TO **MOMENTUM**;
the swoop of a diving falcon kills the prey thanks to timing.

For skilled **leadership**,
momentum is massive and timing tight:
momentum is like a drawn crossbow;
timing like a released trigger.

IN TUMULT AND TURMOIL,
the **organisation** avoids **chaos** and stays **formless**.

In **clamour and commotion**,
changing **setup**, avoiding failure.

Apparent **chaos** comes from order;
apparent fear from courage;
apparent **weakness** from **strength**.

Between order and **chaos**, there is structure;
between courage and fear, there is **momentum**;
between **strength** and **weakness**, there is **setup**.

SKILLED **LEADERSHIP** CREATE **SETUPS**
to which **competition** responds.
Offering them what they will certainly take,
luring them towards the waiting **surprise**.

SKILLED **LEADERSHIP** USE **MOMENTUM**
to avoid relying on individual **capabilities**;
choose people for optimal **momentum**.

Momentum is like rolling rocks:
still on flatland, moving down slopes;
if square, they stop; if round, they roll.

The **momentum** of a skilful **organisation** is
like round rocks rolling down
a ten-thousand-foot mountain.

Boyd⁹⁰

Novelty and Snowmobiles

To examine novelty, we speak of it in terms of those features that seem to be part of that novelty. In other words, we reduce a novel pattern down to some features that make up that pattern. Different people in examining such a pattern may see differing features that make it up. In other words, there are different ways by which a pattern can be reduced hence the possibility for differing features or parts. Regardless of how it comes out, we call this process of reduction, analysis.

Pushing this process even further, we can reduce many different patterns (analyses) to parts that make up each pattern and use these parts, or variations thereof, to make a new pattern. This is done by finding some common features that interconnect some or many of these parts so that a new pattern — whether it be a new concept, new **system**, new process, new etc. — can be created. We call this process of connection, synthesis.

Now if we test the results of this process with the world we're dealing with, we have an analytical/synthetic feedback loop for comprehending, **shaping**, and adapting to that world.⁹¹

Without the intuitive interplay of analyses and synthesis, we have no basic process for generating novelty, no basic process for addressing mismatches between our mental images/impressions and the reality they are supposed to represent, and no basic process for reshaping our **orientation** toward that reality as it undergoes change.⁹²

Novelty is not only produced by the practice of science/engineering and the pursuit of technology, it is also produced by the forces of nature, by our own thinking and doing as well as by others. Furthermore, novelty is produced continuously, if somewhat erratically or haphazardly. Now, in order to thrive and grow in such a world, we must match our thinking and doing, hence our **orientation**, with that emerging novelty. Yet, any **orientation** constrained by experiences before that novelty emerges ... introduces mismatches that confuse or disorient us. However, the analytical/synthetic process, previously described, permits us to address these mismatches so that we can rematch thereby reorient our thinking and action with that novelty. Over and over, this continuing whirl of reorientation, mismatches, analyses/synthesis enables us to comprehend, cope with, and **shape** as well as be **shaped** by the novelty that literally flows around and over us.⁹³

Since survival and growth are directly connected with the **uncertain, ever-changing, unpredictable** world of winning and losing, we will exploit this whirling (conceptual) spiral of **orientation**, mismatches, analyses/synthesis, reorientation, mismatches, analyses/synthesis ... so that we can comprehend,

⁹⁰ John R. Boyd. *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*. Edited and Compiled by Grant T. Hammond. Air University Press, 2018. URL https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf

⁹¹ *ibid.* *Conceptual Spiral* p. 347

⁹² *ibid.* p. 351

⁹³ *ibid.* p. 354

cope with, and **shape**, as well as be **shaped** by that world and the novelty that arises out of it.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *ibid.* p. 364

IMAGINE THAT you are on a ski slope with other skiers. Imagine that you are in Florida riding in an outboard motorboat, maybe even towing water-skiers. Imagine that you are riding a bicycle on a nice spring day. Imagine that you are a parent taking your son to a department store and that you notice he is fascinated by the toy tractors or tanks with rubber caterpillar treads. Now imagine that you pull the skis off but you are still on the ski slope. Imagine also that you remove the outboard motor from the motorboat, and you are no longer in Florida. And from the bicycle you remove the handlebar and discard the rest of the bike. Finally, you take off the rubber threads from the toy tractor or tanks. This leaves only the following separate pieces: skis, outboard motor, handlebars and rubber threads. Pulling all this together: what do we have?



*Snowmobile.*⁹⁵

⁹⁵ *ibid.* *The Strategic Game of ? and ?*, pp. 261–264

What does this example suggest? To discern what is going on we must interact in a variety of ways with our **environment**. In other words, we must be able to examine the world from a number of perspectives so that we can generate mental images or impressions that correspond to that world. More to the point, we will use this scheme of pulling things apart (analysis) and putting them back together (synthesis) in new combinations to find how apparently unrelated ideas and actions can be related to one another.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *ibid.* p. 265

A WINNER is someone (individual or group) that can build snowmobiles, and employ them in an appropriate fashion, when facing **uncertainty and unpredictable** change.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *ibid.* *Revelation*, p. 366

WE CAN'T JUST LOOK AT OUR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or use the same mental recipes over and over again; we've got to look at other disciplines and activities and relate or connect them to what we know from our experiences and the **strategic** world we live in. If we can do this we will be able to surface new repertoires and (hopefully) develop a *Fingerspitzengefühl*⁹⁸ for folding our adversaries back inside themselves, morally-mentally-physically — so that they can neither appreciate nor cope with what's happening — without suffering the same fate ourselves.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Chester W. Richards. Fingerspitzengefühl. How long does it take? <https://slightlyeastofnew.com/2014/07/10/fingerspitzengefühl-how-long-does-it-take/>, July 2014

⁹⁹ *The Strategic Game of ? and ?*, p. 300 in

John R. Boyd. *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*. Edited and Compiled by Grant T. Hammond. Air University Press, 2018. URL https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf

Wardley

*Innovation*¹⁰⁰

There are many different things which we call **innovation** — this includes **genesis** of an act, feature differentiation of a **product** and a shifting business model from **product** to **utility**. They are very different despite our use of a single term to describe them.

*Climatic Patterns for Scaling and Innovation*¹⁰¹

NO SINGLE METHOD FITS ALL. Because of changing characteristics, there is no one-size-fits-all method or technique applicable across an entire **landscape**. You have to learn to use many approaches and so avoid the tyranny of any single one. However, expect tribes to form and endless pointless debates such as Agile¹⁰² versus Six Sigma¹⁰³ or outsourcing vs insourcing.

EFFICIENCY ENABLES **INNOVATION**. **Genesis** begets evolution begets **genesis**. The industrialisation of one **component** enables novel higher order **systems** to emerge through componentisation effects. But it also enables new features for existing **products** to appear or even the evolution of other **components**. The industrialisation of mass communication to a standardised utility such as the internet enabled the industrialisation of computing to a **utility**. I use the word **innovation** to describe all those changes from the **genesis** of a new act, feature differentiation of an existing act or a change of **business** model (e.g. shift from **product** to **utility**). The evolution of one **component** and its efficient provision enables **innovation** of others.

THE LESS EVOLVED SOMETHING IS THEN THE MORE UNCERTAIN IT IS. By definition, the novel and new are more uncertain than industrialised **components** such as **commodities** and **utilities**. The uncharted space consists of the unknown i.e. “Ere be dragons”.

FUTURE VALUE IS INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL TO THE CERTAINTY WE HAVE OVER IT. **Genesis** of a **component** is inherently uncertain but it is also the point at which a **component** has its highest future value. You have to gamble with the novel but there’s also the potential for huge rewards. As the **component** evolves, its potential for differential value declines as it becomes more ubiquitous in its applicable market. This also means that any **component** that has not reached ubiquity must retain some uncertainty and some element of risk. The only conditions where a well understood, almost risk free **component** exists that is not ubiquitous and is of high value is when there is some form of restriction on **competition** e.g. a constraint through patents or monopoly. Care must also be taken not to confuse the terms common as in “everyone has one” with ubiquity to its applicable market.

¹⁰⁰ Simon Wardley. *Wardley Maps. Finding a New Purpose* (Chapter 7). Medium, September 2016g. URL <https://medium.com/wardleymaps/finding-a-new-purpose-8c60c9484d3b>

¹⁰¹ Simon Wardley. *Wardley Maps. Exploring the Map* (Chapter 3). Medium, August 2016c. URL <https://medium.com/wardleymaps/exploring-the-map-ad0266fad59b>

¹⁰² Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile_software_development

¹⁰³ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Sigma

Many **components** have resource constraints (e.g. gold) or the market **need** is specific (e.g. wigs for barristers and judges).

*Doctrine for Scaling, Focus and Innovation*¹⁰⁴

DISTRIBUTE POWER AND DECISION MAKING. Have a bias towards distributing power from the centre including yourself. Put power in the hands of those who are closest to the choices that need to be made. Provide **purpose**, mastery and autonomy. Provide people with **purpose** (including a moral imperative and a scope) for action. Enable them to build mastery in their chosen area and give them the freedom (and autonomy) to act.

USE APPROPRIATE METHODS AND TOOLS. Try to avoid the tyranny of one. Understand that there is no magic solution and that you have to use multiple methods (e.g. Agile or Lean¹⁰⁵ or Six Sigma) as appropriate. In any large **system**, multiple methods may be used at the same time. Be mindful of ego here, tribes can form with almost religious fervor about the righteousness of their method. Have fortitude, you'll often find you're arguing against all these tribes at the same time.

THINK SMALL. Know the details, use small teams and break large **landscapes** into small contracts.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Wardley. *Wardley Maps. Doctrine (Chapter 4)*. Medium, August 2016d. URL <https://medium.com/wardleymaps/doctrine-8bb0015688e5>

¹⁰⁵ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean_software_development

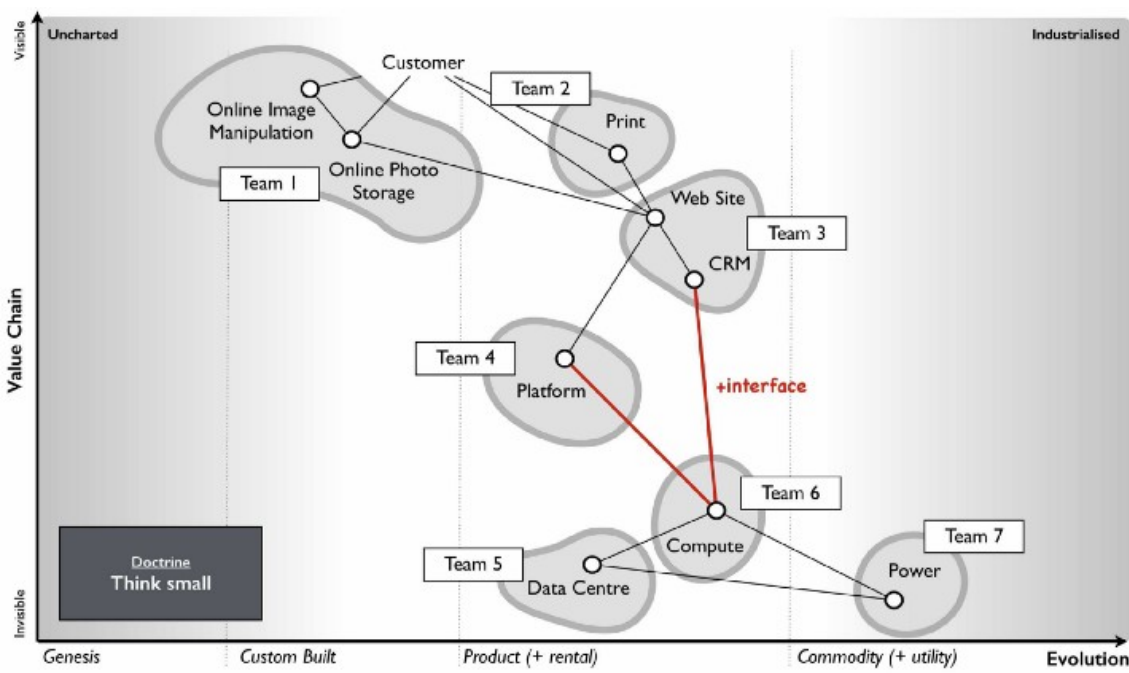


Figure 25: *Doctrine for focus. Think small, Know the details, break monoliths into components, use small teams and break large landscapes into small contracts.*

Don't be chased away by fears of complexity of management. In order to apply appropriate methods then you need to think small. You can't treat the entire **system** as one thing but you need to break it into **components**. I will often extend this to using small contracts localised around specific **components**. Knowing the details helps you manage a **landscape**. But you can take this further and even use small teams such as cell-based structures. Probably the best-known approaches to using small teams are Amazon's Two Pizza model¹⁰⁶ and Haier's cell-based structure.¹⁰⁷ Such teams should be given autonomy in their space and this can be achieved by the team providing well defined **interfaces** for others to consume along with defined boundaries often described through some form of fitness function i.e. the team has a goal around a specific area with defined metrics for delivery. **Maps** themselves can be useful in helping you identify not only the teams you should build but also the **interfaces** they need to create. Avoid big scale efforts (e.g. Death Star projects) and big departments. This can include frequent major platform re-engineering efforts or major re-organisations.

THERE IS NO ONE CULTURE. Understand that a company which plans for longevity needs to cope with not only the discovery of uncharted **components** but the use of the industrialised and the transition between these two extremes. You will need different attitudes. You will therefore create many cultures in your **organisation** e.g. explorers, villagers and town planners¹⁰⁸ have different cultures. This is not a negative and don't try to grind everyone into a single bland culture. It will not make them happy.

THINK APTITUDE AND ATTITUDE. Understand that people not only have aptitudes (e.g. finance, engineering, operations and marketing) but different attitudes. The mindsets are different. It's not realistic to think that everyone has the same attitude, some are much more capable of living in a world of **chaos**, experimentation and failure whilst others are much more capable of dealing with intensive modeling, the rigors of volume operations and measurement. You need brilliant people with the right aptitudes and different attitudes, e.g. explorers, villagers, town planners.¹⁰⁹

Explorers are brilliant people. They are able to explore the never before discovered concepts, the uncharted land. They show you wonder but they fail a lot. Half the time the thing doesn't work properly. You wouldn't trust what they build. They create "crazy" ideas. Their type of **innovation** is what we describe as core research. They make future success possible. Most of the time we look at them and go "what?", "I don't understand?" or "is that magic?". They built the first ever electric source (the Parthian Battery, 400 CE) and the first ever digital computer (Z3, 1943). In the past, we often burnt them at the stake or they usually died from malaria in some newly discovered swamp.

¹⁰⁶ "If I see more than two [American size] pizzas for lunch, the team is too big." Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in

Brandon Rigoni and Bailey Nelson. The Matrix. Teams Are Gaining Greater Power in Companies. *Gallup Business Journal*, 05 2016. URL <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/191516/matrix-teams-gaining-greater-power-companies.aspx>

¹⁰⁷ Corporate Rebels: The World's Most Pioneering Company Of Our Times <https://corporate-rebels.com/haier/>

¹⁰⁸ See next paragraph

¹⁰⁹ "Explorers" and "villagers" are new names replacing "pioneers" and "settlers", respectively, see

Simon Wardley. How to organise your teams. The dangerous path to Explorers, Villagers and Town Planners. <https://wardley.medium.com/how-to-organise-yourself-f36f084a611b>, December 2023

*Villagers*¹¹⁰ are brilliant people. They can turn the half-baked thing into something useful for a larger audience. They build trust. They build understanding. They make the possible future actually happen. They turn the prototype into a **product**, make it possible to manufacture it, listen to customers and turn it profitable. Their **innovation** is what we tend to think of as applied research and differentiation. They built the first ever computer **products** (e.g. IBM 650 and onwards), the first generators (Hippolyte Pixii to Siemens' generators). They drain the swamp and create some form of settlement.

¹¹⁰ “Villagers” is a new name replacing “settlers”, *ibid.*

Town Planners are brilliant people. They are able to take something and industrialise it taking advantage of economies of scale. This requires immense skill. You trust what they build. They find ways to make things faster, better, smaller, more efficient, more economic and good enough. They create the **components** that explorers build upon. Their type of **innovation** is industrial research. They take something that exists and turn it into a **commodity** or a utility (e.g. with electricity, then Edison, Tesla and Westinghouse). They are the industrial giants we depend upon. They build Rome.

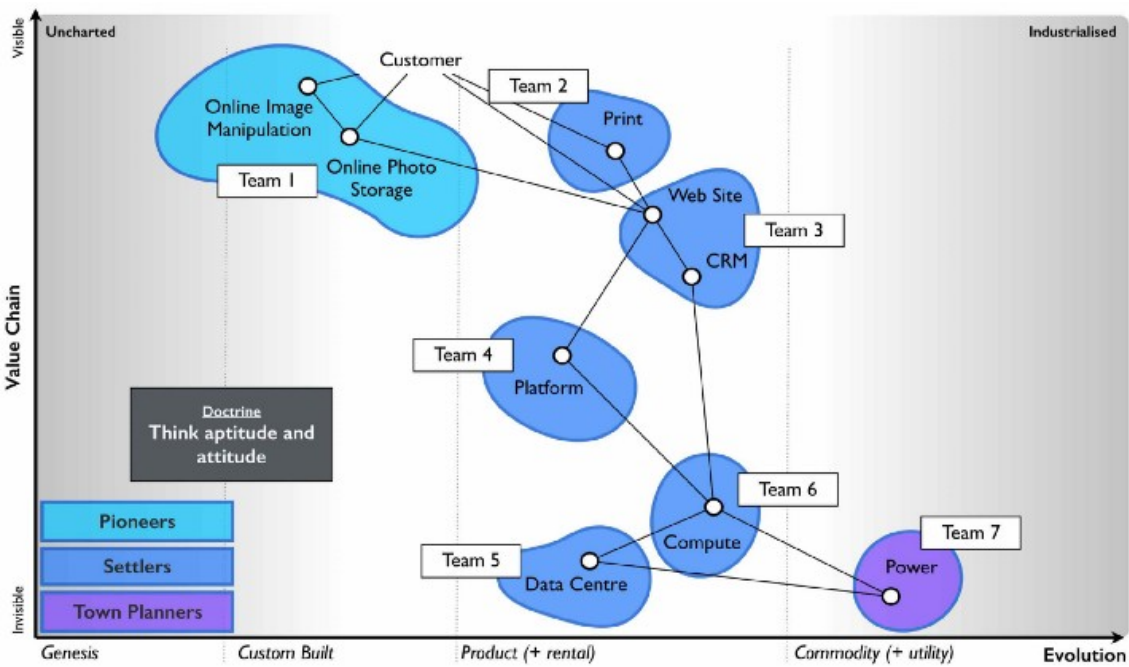


Figure 26: Doctrine for focus. Think aptitude and attitude

A BIAS TOWARDS THE NEW. Whatever you do will evolve. So have a bias towards the new, be curious and take appropriate risks. Be willing to experiment.

Sources

- Hermann Balck. *Translation of Taped Conversation with General Hermann Balck, 13 April 1979*. Battelle Memorial Laboratories, 1979. URL <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA160511.pdf>.
- John Bessant. *Riding the Innovation Wave. Learning to Create Value from Ideas*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2017.
- Scott A. Boorman. *Three Faces of Sun Tzu. Analyzing Sun Tzu's Art of War, A Manual on Strategy*. Cambridge University Press, 2024. With the collaboration of Sun Jianyuan.
- Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen. Disruptive Technologies. Catching the Wave. *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1995. URL https://www.academia.edu/39373428/Disruptive_Technologies_Catching_the_Wave.
- George E.P. Box. Robustness in the Strategy of Scientific Model Building. In R.L. Launers and G.N. Wilkinson, editors, *Robustness in Statistics*, pages 201–236. Academic Press, 1979.
- John R. Boyd. *Conceptual Spiral* Briefing at Air War College or Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, September 1993. URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPvJgiznBRk>.
- John R. Boyd. *The Essence of Winning and Losing*. Edited by Chet Richards and Chuck Spinney, 2012a. URL https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/essence_of_winning_losing.pdf.
- John R. Boyd. *New Conception for Air-to-Air Combat*. Edited by Chet Richards and Chuck Spinney, 2012b. URL <https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/newconception.pdf>.
- John R. Boyd. *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*. Edited and Compiled by Grant T. Hammond. Air University Press, 2018. URL https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf.

Glossary

accord

Adapting to and **shaping** a situation to take full advantage of the current **conditions** and using the possibilities of the situation to succeed by fulfilling one's **purpose**. This requires **agility** and **foreknowledge**.²²³

Yīn (因) means to avail oneself of, to make the best of, to rely upon.
72, 98, 121

agility

Ability to shift from one **orientation** to another in order to cope with new or unforeseen circumstances.²²⁴ The ability to adapt to and influence situations more skilfully than **competition** including timely break out of successful — but non-sustainable — patterns.²²⁵

Part of IOHAI, ingredients for vitality and growth.
10, 44, 92, 122, 135, 155, 164, 167

anchor

The **user need** in a **Wardley Map**.²²⁶
23, 47, 103, 168, 173, 182

appreciation

Recognition of worth or value, clear perception, understanding, comprehension, discernment, etc.; includes the ability to **monitor**.²²⁷

See also **appreciation and leadership**. 89, 121, 155, 167, 170

appreciation and leadership

Appreciation used together with **leadership** as an alternative to **command and control**.²²⁸
89, 155, 167

assessment

A valuation of the current situation and **conditions** based on **purpose**, **leadership**, **landscape**, **climate**, **doctrine**, **capabilities**, **training** and **clarity** of **feedback**; informs choices of **gameplays** in a **strategy**.

²²³ Sun-Tzu. *The Art of Warfare. The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-Ch'ieh-Shan Texts*. Translated, with an introduction and commentary, by Roger T. Ames. Ballantine Books, 1993

²²⁴ John R. Boyd. *Patterns of Conflict*. Edited by Chet Richards and Chuck Spinney. Defense and the National Interest, 2020. URL <https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/patternsofconflict.pdf>.

Enhanced video recording including slides and edited transcription: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTJqobjK8EUB1Z9ZqGnaZx_6y4_pMBUWH.

Original video recording without slides: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLf3KMLcvYv-dtUKUG2xcKAC3fLyS6AYB>

²²⁵ Inspired by “Behendigkeit”, see

Chester W. Richards. All by Ourselves. <https://vimeo.com/146524156>, November 2015a; and Chester W. Richards. All by Ourselves. <https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/allbyourselvesv2.pdf>, December 2015b

²²⁶ Simon Wardley. *Wardley Maps. Getting Started* (Chapter 6). Medium, August 2016f. URL <https://medium.com/wardleymaps/getting-started-yourself-e1a359b785a2>

²²⁷ p. 253 in

John R. Boyd. *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*. Edited and Compiled by Grant T. Hammond. Air University Press, 2018. URL https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf

²²⁸ *ibid.* p. 251

Index

- according with stakeholders, 72, 98, 121
- action, 18, 22, 25, 26, 29, 33, 56, 57, 62, 63, 66, 82, 89, 91, 124–126, 137, 145, 146
 - coherence of, 90
 - freedom of, 90
 - independent, 73, 88
- actions
 - by leadership, 18
 - competitors', 81, 99, 127, 144
 - enemy, 146
 - followers', 91
 - harmonised, 10, 77, 100
 - incoherent, 100
 - leadership's, 99
 - probable or possible, 146
 - rather than words, 121
 - stakeholders', 18
 - sudden/sharp, 79
- activities
 - harmonised, 73, 88
- activity, 33, 48, 64, 73, 78, 87, 90, 92, 93, 101, 103, 114, 128, 134, 136
 - higher order, 135, 136
 - new, 138
 - novel, 136
 - successful, 135
- adaptation, 10, 20, 22, 28, 33, 45, 46, 52, 56, 62, 72–74, 77, 80, 83, 85, 87–91, 93–95, 114, 115, 119, 121, 126, 129, 132, 135, 136
- advance, 70
- Agile, 37, 65, 66, 107
- agility, 10, 44, 80, 92, 107, 122
- Amazon
 - two pizza model, 66
- Ames, Roger T., 13
- analyses/synthesis, 22, 62, 63
- analysis, 21, 22, 62, 63, 124
 - HR and financial, 115
 - sentiment, 127
- anchor, 23, 47, 103
- Andrezak, Markus, 1, 14
- Apple
 - vs Blackberry, 140
- Apple (company), 137, 138, 140, 163
- appointment, 43
- appreciation, 89, 121
 - and leadership, 89
- aptitude, 29, 67, 68, 81, 111
- Art of Change (book), 9
- Art of Leadership (book), 9, 10, 168
- Art of Strategy, 10
 - reader's guide to, 11
 - summary of, 10
 - visualisation of, 11
- Art of War (book), 9, 13, 180
- assessment, 10, 17, 19, 29, 33, 51, 61, 89, 121, 144
 - rapid and concise, 122
- attitude, 25, 67, 68, 111, 137
- Auftragstaktik (German), 91
- autonomy, 56, 66, 67, 82
- AWS (Amazon Web Services) Lambda, 106
- Babylonian clay tablet, 116
- battery
 - Parthian, 67
- Behendigkeit (German), 92
- being someone
 - or doing something, 92
- Beng, Ooi Kee, 13
- Berkshire Hathaway (company), 127
- Blackberry
 - vs Apple, 140
- Blackberry (company), 137, 138, 140
- Blitzkrieg (German), 146
- Blockbuster, 34, 56
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, 113, 146
- Boorman, Scott A., 13
- Borg, 106, 107
- boyd, 22
- Boyd, John R., 2, 9–11, 20, 33, 44, 52, 62, 73, 78, 88, 101, 113, 122, 134, 146, 167
- Bruya, Brian, 13
- Buffet, Warren, 127
- business, 10, 29, 93, 105, 115, 124, 126
 - algorithm, 81, 127
 - model, 34, 56, 65, 135–137
 - need, 107
- performance, 29, 81
 - setting, 9
- campaign
 - counterguerrilla, 146
 - guerrilla, 146
- capability, 10, 11, 18, 28, 42, 51, 61, 98, 106, 107, 112, 137
- car, 95
- change, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29, 34, 46, 48, 55, 65, 72, 73, 81, 89, 93, 98, 125, 128, 140, 141
 - adapt to, 33, 73, 88, 93
 - anticipate, 24
 - artificial barrier to, 56
 - avoid, 98
 - common forms of, 56
 - constant, 94
 - cope with, 94
 - disruptive, 134, 137
 - economic, 36
 - exploiting inertia to, 38
 - exponential, 141
 - future, 58
 - gradual, 135, 141
 - in components, 115
 - in landscape, 114
 - in physical conditions, 94
 - inertia to, 35, 38, 55, 106, 134, 135, 138
 - market, 38, 57, 58, 83, 116, 124, 129
 - of communication patterns, 121
 - of practice, 56
 - of rhythm and pattern, 88
 - outside comfort zone, 46
 - perception of, 30, 73
 - rate of, 10, 44
 - shape, 73, 88
 - situations, 76
 - speed of, 56
 - sustaining, 137
 - technology, 48, 73, 83, 129
 - to avoid anticipation, 120
 - to secure unpredictability, 120
 - unpredictable, 64
- chaos, 43, 45, 61, 67, 99, 111

List of Figures

1	Calligraphy: <i>Shèng</i> (Hisayo Oki)	3
2	A reader's guide to The Art of Strategy (Erik Schön, Simon Wardley)	11
3	Calligraphy: <i>Dào</i> (Hisayo Oki)	17
4	The OODA "loop" sketch (John Boyd)	21
5	Example of a Wardley Map for an online photo service (Simon Wardley)	23
6	Examples of climatic patterns (Simon Wardley)	24
7	Examples of doctrine (Simon Wardley)	25
8	Examples of gameplay (Simon Wardley)	25
9	The Strategy Cycle (Simon Wardley)	26
10	Climatic Pattern: Everything evolves (Simon Wardley)	27
11	Climatic Pattern: Characteristics change (Simon Wardley)	28
12	Calligraphy: <i>Sù</i> (Hisayo Oki)	31
13	Climatic Pattern: Inertia increases with past success (Simon Wardley)	34
14	Categories of inertia and countermeasures (Simon Wardley)	35
15	MttR: Mean time to Respond (Simon Wardley)	36
16	Doctrine: Remove bias and duplication (Simon Wardley)	37
17	Calligraphy: <i>Shèng</i> (Hisayo Oki)	41
18	Ecological resilience for sustainability (Holling and Wardley)	46
19	Doctrine for success: Focus on user needs (Simon Wardley)	47
20	Calligraphy: <i>Xíng</i> (Hisayo Oki)	49
21	Interactions (John Boyd)	52
22	Examples of climatic patterns for setup: Anticipation and prediction (Simon Wardley)	55
23	Calligraphy: <i>Enso</i> (Hisayo Oki)	59
24	Snowmobile (Polaris Inc.)	63
25	Doctrine for focus: Think small (Simon Wardley)	66
26	Doctrine for focus: Think aptitude and attitude (Simon Wardley)	68
27	Calligraphy: <i>Shuǐ</i> (Hisayo Oki)	69
28	Calligraphy: <i>Zhēng</i> (Hisayo Oki)	75
29	Essence of moral conflict (John Boyd)	79

What is strategy?

Why do you need it?

How do you do it?

THE ART OF STRATEGY provides timeless answers to these eternal questions. It is a modern reading of **Sun Tzu's** *Art of War* using the lenses of **John Boyd** (OODA Loop inventor) and **Simon Wardley** (Wardley Map inventor) who were influenced by Sun Tzu.

Each chapter gently transforms *The Art of War* into a modern business setting and includes material from Boyd and Wardley in separate sections to complement and clarify Sun Tzu's terse, poetic text.

You will discover new thinking patterns and visualization tools that will help you and your organization succeed together with your stakeholders.

"THE summary and independent look on modern strategy right now!" Markus Andrezak, strategist

ERIK SCHÖN is a strategist, executive and change catalyst who has successfully led global organisations for over 25 years. He is the author of the widely acclaimed **The Art of Leadership** and **The Art of Change**.

YOKOSO PRESS

