

## Management tips from Karate

*Karate is not just a martial art. Knowing its fundamental philosophy gives managers unique insights to combat challenges in the market place*

*By Seamus Phan and Ter Hui Peng*

What has the specific school of Karate known as Goju-Ryu got to do with marketing? We have been trained in Goju-Ryu Karate as teenagers. As kids, we didn't quite understand the philosophy behind the martial art. We knew that Karate was meant as a defensive skill, not an offensive one. Some people made the mistake of learning Karate so that they can run others down. However, even as kids, we understood the age-old Chinese saying: "There is always a higher mountain." But the deeper philosophy of Karate came to us when we revisited the subject while doing philosophical research.

Goju-Ryu Karate was derived from ancient Chinese and Indian marital arts by Master Miyagi Chojun (1888-1953), as a highly systematic discipline combining both 'hard' and 'gentle' movements. Later, Shinto priest and yogi, Master Gogen Yamaguchi gave the five basics of Karate: Master the Basics, Move Quickly, Have a Calm and Sound Mind, Be Nimble and Be Smart. Applied in the market place they can make a big difference.

### Five secrets of Karate for marketers

- **Master the Basics:** In marketing, or any business field, if you haven't built your foundation, whatever else you attempt to build will be shaky and futile. For example; if you haven't done enough research into your and your competitor's strengths and weaknesses, whatever advertising, public relations, direct mail, or events you attempt to create, will not be based on sound principles, and will fail.
- **Move Quickly:** If you are not fast and efficient today, not matter how large or small your business is, you will not survive. If you have the right products, the right channels, the right markets, but you are just a tad slower than your competition, you are dead. After all, there is little differentiation between products and services of different companies, and the last frontier may be speed.
- **Sound and Calm Mind:** A calm marital artist will ALWAYS defeat the strongest raging person. No rage, aggression, or brute strength will help a person or a business succeed. When you are angry, your mind is clouded and cannot make sound judgments. When you are calm and sane, however, your clarity of thought will allow you to



defend or progress in dimensions and speed like never before. If you face a critical business decision and you are flustered, composure before attempting to make a decision helps. You will thank yourself for it.

- **Be Nimble:** Large businesses are facing tremendous competition from nimble and smaller players today. Small businesses can transform and change their decisions and movements quickly, thereby averting potential disasters. Conversely, large businesses often have heavy bureaucratic structures with many layers of management to burden the speed of decision-making. For large businesses to succeed hierarchies must be reduced, with flat management structures and employee empowerment. In effect, large businesses must behave like small businesses in creating nimble and effective work groups.

- **Be Smart:** Karate can be taught in katas (dance), or through face-to-face sparring. If you are attracted only to the dance without the sparring, your movements will be graceful but lack field-tested ability. Likewise, in a business, if it important not to stick to the past glories, past methods of working, or past processes, just because they worked before. Always be prepared to find new perspectives to tackle new and old problems, and be open to learning from others, including people you perceive to be less experienced or learned. There is ALWAYS something to learn from everybody.

### BitZen

Most of the martial arts started with a philosophical and meditative background, rather than mindless aggression. Rather than dwell on the likes of 'The Art of War' and other war cries for your business practices, why not take a step back and take the meditative perspective, even through principles of Karate? You will then notice not only the beauty of the dance of your business, but converge in a calmness that will only take your business further and healthier. And yes, you will live longer and happier too.

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