

# Heroic Leadership Principles™

Leadership System of the Ancient Warrior Sages

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***“When Calm, Prepare for the Storm. When Chaotic, Remain Tranquil.”***

16<sup>th</sup> century Japanese Samurai<sup>[1]</sup>

## Heroic Leadership

The topic of leadership seems to be everywhere these days. Whether on television, radio, newspapers, the web or the next table at your local Starbucks, everyone is talking about it. To be more specific, it is the *absence* of leadership in our elected officials that seems to be driving the conversation.

Many individuals have carried the distinction of being labeled a great leader. The most overlooked of these leaders are the warrior sages. Throughout history there have been great men and women who embodied superior leadership qualities. Many of them were powerful warriors who led their people to victory when their rights and freedom was at stake. Because these leaders used both wisdom and strength in leading their people to victory they were called warrior sages!

It's important to note here that those using wisdom and strength to defeat an enemy (or fight for a cause) did not necessarily take up arms. True wisdom grants you the ability to assess the appropriate means of achieving success. In the case of 20<sup>th</sup> Century leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, non-violence was the path they chose. Had they taken up arms against their perceived enemies, they certainly would have met with defeat. To deny that they were great warriors endowed with strength and wisdom is to deny the tremendous courage, fortitude and passion with which they led their respective followers to victory. On the other hand, if arms *weren't* taken up against a tyrant like Adolph Hitler, the allied forces would have met certain defeat during World War II.

Wisdom in leadership does not always dictate the same response for every situation. A wise leader remains free of conceptual restraints, and thus has all options at his or her disposal. Each and every situation is unique. Only wisdom can determine the correct action for any particular challenge. A wise leader never depends on cookie cutter solutions. Wise decisions are made according to circumstances, and require awareness and insight. This is the very essence of wisdom. In 500 B.C. Sun Tzu, the great Chinese general stated the optimum path to victory this way: *“Those who win every battle do not exhibit the highest skill; those who are victorious without ever engaging in combat are the most skillful of all!”*<sup>[2]</sup>

## These are not times for the weak-hearted!

There's no doubt we live in troubling times. People are losing their homes, their jobs, their security and their faith in our leaders' ability to turn things around. Threats to our survival are inherent in the human condition. Regardless of a shaky economy or prospects of terrorism, the inevitability of disease and death has been our lot since the beginning of human existence. From

this perspective, nothing much has changed. However, as our world has grown more and more complex, we find ourselves at the mercy of social and economic conditions that appear to be beyond our control. Uncertainty seems to be the order of the day. As far back as most of us can remember we've never seen a time when courage and wisdom were more needed!

According to a publication from the US Army War College: "The undeveloped mind, when bombarded with information and external stimuli, quickly loses the ability to decide and the courage to act until the moment of crisis. The developed mind can part the shadows of chaos, disorder and confusion to create a vision and pursue it with conviction, keeping the organization on the proper azimuth to achieve its purpose. We can learn from the ancients that acquiring the full spectrum of courage (intellectual, physical, and moral) requires the continuous development of mind, body, and soul."<sup>[3]</sup>

This statement is mirrored in one of India's classics: "One who is not thrown off balance by either good or bad events, just as a mountain remains unmoved by the illusory flood waters of a mirage, is known to have attained wisdom."<sup>[4]</sup>

## True Leadership

Crisis and the way it's dealt with, is how we generally define leadership these days. The greater the crisis, the greater the opportunity of being defined as a heroic leader. However, heroic leadership can also be defined by growth and prosperity. This is especially true when one must confront and overcome impediments to growth and prosperity. Let's not forget that growth and prosperity bring with them strength and stability. These often act as preventative measures against many crises. To paraphrase *Sun Tzu*, the prevention of crises is superior to fighting the battles that often accompany them.

The principles that guided history's great warrior sages are equally effective in achieving success for the challenges of everyday life. As counter intuitive as it may seem, the lives of great men and women like Theodore Roosevelt, Helen Keller, John D. Rockefeller, Amelia Earhart, Jackie Robinson, Steve Jobs, Andrew Carnegie and many others, all embody the spirit and principles similar to those employed by ancient warrior sages.

History has left us with the stories of many great leaders that can certainly be given the title of warrior sages. They are soldiers and they are scientists. They are titans of industry and they are politicians. They are doctors and clergy. They are mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers - they are sons and daughters. They show up in every walk of life. Many of them never held a sword or gun in their hands. However, many have stood out over time and their names remain legend among their varied cultures. Their acts are retold in historical books, essays and conversations. They were heroic in every sense of the word!

Along with the retelling of their stories, we're left with a documentation of the principles that made them successful. These principles, when put into practice, are transforming in nature and provide us with a framework for meeting whatever challenges arise before us. Their effectiveness is not only applicable to the field of battle, but to business, athletics, science, medicine, government, personal relationships and just about any area of life imaginable.

## Benefits of Heroic Leadership

Institutions, whether they are small businesses, associations, corporations, foundations, military complexes or governments all need individuals with heroic leadership qualities in order to achieve the success they seek. The principles culled from the lives of historic warrior sages provide the fix that many are looking for. Although these past leaders represent diverse cultures, their principles are universal in nature, and transcend time, place, language and customs. They are as fresh and relevant today as they were a thousand years ago.

When these principles begin to take up residence in our lives, we find that we too have begun to develop heroic leadership qualities that make us innovative, driven, and focused. They bring about an inner strength, determination, clarity of vision and a renewed sense of purpose. They enable us to see what's needed to efficiently accomplish the task at hand, as well as provide us with the skills necessary for bringing others on board.

When our leaders begin to develop some of these qualities, the institutions they govern will have a much greater pathway to success. Such institutions will not only achieve and surpass their economic goals, but will put themselves in a position to be recognized for excellence in their particular sphere.

Presenting a system for developing leadership qualities in the context of warrior sages creates an extremely compelling learning environment. Introducing these unique personalities along with anecdotes from their lives will inspire others to want to emulate some of the noble characteristics they embody. Along with hearing their exploits, people can also learn simple techniques that will give them a direct experience of the effectiveness of some of these principles.

Recognizing the great need for those currently holding positions of power to acquire heroic leadership qualities, we needn't look any further than the warrior sages of the past. These men and women have left behind powerful and effective tools capable of transforming each and every one of us into a heroic leader. The application of these tools can put us back on course toward greater success and prosperity. Then perhaps, the conversations we hear regarding leadership will be suffused with joy and enthusiasm.

To learn more about the authors and Heroic Leadership you can visit them on the web at [www.heroicleadership.com](http://www.heroicleadership.com).

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1. *Yagyū Munenori (2003) The Life-Giving Sword. Kodansha International.*
  2. *Sun Tzu (1991) The Art of War. Shambhala.*
  3. *Christopher Kolenda (2001) Leadership: The Warrior 's Art. Army War College Foundation, Press.*
  4. *Ramachandra K. Bhagwat (1954) Jnaneshwari. Samata Books.*