

Book Review

The Chinese Tao of Business

The Logic of Successful Business Strategy

Authors: George T. Haley, Usha C.V. Haley and Chin Tiong Tan
 ISBN: 0470-82059-4
 Publisher: John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd

"The Tao of Chinese Business" paints a broad picture of Chinese business strategy. Its eye-catching title may raise questions like: Why Tao? Why not Confucian and Buddhist philosophies; not to mention history, society and politics?

But don't worry; all these influences are included to develop a comprehensive, sure-footed account of the problems and possibilities of doing business with Chinese companies and markets.

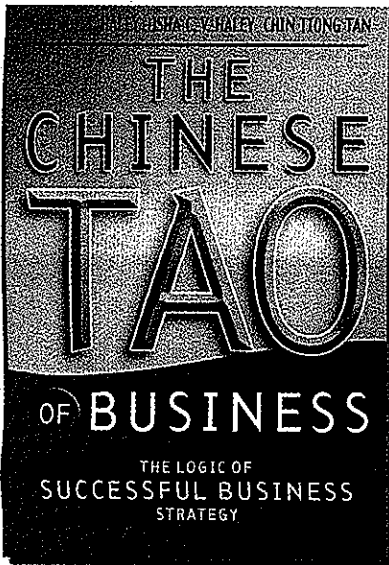
Although Tao (literally "the way") is only one of the philosophies that underlie traditional Chinese thinking, it has become inextricably interwoven with Confucian and Buddhist ideas.

The authors call this philosophical melting pot "neo-Taoism," and use it as the basis for studying the "ancient, civilizational chasm between Chinese and Western philosophical thought."

On its own, such an analysis could be very abstract and academic. But when combined with a broad overview of Chinese history, interviews with leading Chinese businessmen and illustrative case studies, the end result is a very perceptive and readable analysis of Chinese business strategy.

Anyone who has worked in China will recognize the underlying credibility of the picture that emerges.

Authors George and Usha Haley are professors at the University of New Haven, in the United States, and Chin Tiong Tan is provost at Singapore Management University. The



three are widely published and have conducted many projects and studies in Asia.

As they assert "Chinese markets introduce a bundle of contradictions for Western managers," their insightful exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese companies, in relation to their Western counterparts, help to deal with such contradictions.

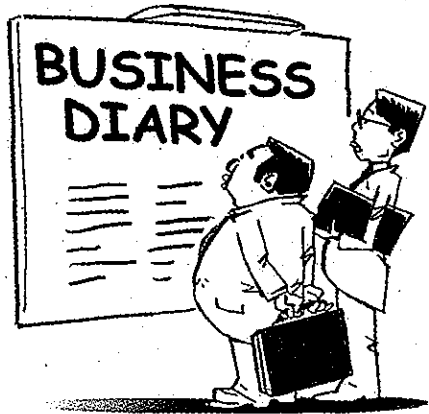
The authors repeatedly show admirable cultural awareness and sensitivity. The discussion of *guanxi* (trusting relationships) in China emphasises that *guanxi* is not just "jobs for the boys."

Instead, it comes from a business ethic based on trust rather than litigation. In the same way, contextual morality is clearly distinguished from the more dubious concept of situational ethics, with its implication of flexible standards.

As we are told, "Chinese ethical and moral standards are generally inflexible, but can vary according to the context."

Yin and Yang are well-known as the "harmonious interplay of opposites in the universe." "The Tao of Chinese Business" takes this concept seriously, and explains how Western companies can succeed in China - and how Chinese companies can succeed overseas.

To bring everything together harmoniously, a new strategic planning model is outlined that synthesises the best of Chinese and Western thinking. The book is recommended reading for anyone working or competing with Chinese companies.



TUESDAY, January 25

CHANGSHA - The New Year Shopping Fair will be held at the Hunan Provincial Exhibition Centre (to February 5).

WUHAN - The Wuhan Business Exhibition for Daily Life opens at the Wuhan International Exhibition Centre (to February 5).

WEDNESDAY, January 26

FRANKFURT - ChristmasWorld and PaperWorld 2005 opens at the Frankfurt Exhibition Centre (to January 30).

FRANKFURT - Beauty World 2005 opens at the Frankfurt Exhibition Centre (to January 30).

LAS VEGAS - Surfaces 2005, an exhibition of floor decorations and related materials, opens at the Las Vegas Exhibition Centre (to January 28).

HONG KONG - The concert entitled "An Evening With Sting" will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

DALIAN, Liaoning Province - The Ninth Dalian Spring Festival Commodities Fair will be held at the Dalian Xinghai Convention and Exhibition Centre (to February 4).

SHANGHAI - The Shanghai International Exhibition for Procurement of Electric and Electronic Ma-

chinery Components 2005 opens at the Shanghai Intex (to January 28).

THURSDAY, January 27

WENZHOU, Zhejiang Province - The Trade Show of Wenzhou Brands begins at the Wenzhou International Convention and Exhibition Centre (to February 3).

XIAMEN, Fujian Province - The Xiamen Job Fair starts at the Xiamen International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

FRIDAY, January 28

XI'AN - The First Domestically made Auto Show during Spring Festival will be held at the Xi'an International Exhibition Centre (to February 6).

SATURDAY, January 29

SHANGHAI - Career Forum Shanghai 2005 is scheduled to open at the Shanghai International Convention Centre (to January 30).

HONG KONG - The Education UK Festival opens at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (to January 30).

OFFENBACH, Germany - International Leather Goods Fair Offenbach 2005 opens at the Offenbach Exhibition Centre (to January 31).

WEATHER FORECAST

Day	City	Beijing	Shanghai	Guangzhou	Shenzhen	Chongqing	Xi'an	Max	Min
Monday		1-6	6-3	18-12	18-13	8-6	6-2	Max	Min
Tuesday		1-8	6-2	19-12	18-15	8-6	6-4	Max	Min
Wednesday		2-5	7-0	16-13	16-14	10-6	8-5	Max	Min
Thursday		0-6	8-1	14-11	13-10	12-4	8-3	Max	Min