

The review

A trove of classic ideas for the modern manager

The Mind of a Leader

Benjamin Holk Henriksen
and Fredrik Lassenius
Video Arts

Prices vary according to
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What makes a classic? *The Art of War*, attributed to the ancient Chinese warlord Sun Tzu, and *The Prince*, by the 16th-century Florentine politician Niccolò Machiavelli are two of the most widely quoted and referred-to books of all time. Modern editions of both books abound, and they are continuously in print.

But why are management thinkers still so fascinated by these centuries-old texts? The answer lies in the fact that many of the ideas they discussed are still as relevant today as they were at the time of writing. Sun Tzu's reflections on the factors that make for success and failure and Machiavelli's musings on the nature of power and leadership lead many of the management challenges we face today.

Can the lessons of these ancient texts be teased out and made relevant for the modern executive? That is the stated mission of Benjamin Holk Henriksen and Fredrik Lassenius in *The Mind of a Leader*, a comprehensive and imaginative two-part interactive work available online or on DVD.

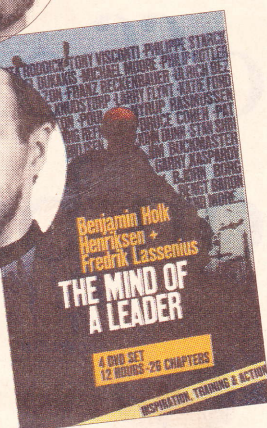
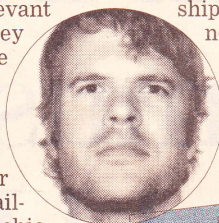
The material is suitable for middle and senior level executives, and is probably most relevant to those newly arrived in leadership roles or aspiring to move into more senior roles.

classic ideas and modern themes is clear and compelling.

A chapter on the use of consultants begins with Machiavelli urging princes not to use mercenaries as they "are not influenced by affection, or by any other consideration except their small payment" and therefore cannot be trusted to act in the best interests of the state. Lego CEO Jørgen Vig Knudstorp then comments that companies have to be equally careful in using consultants, who may put their own interests ahead of those of the client. The discussion then turns to how consultants can be used to best advantage and with least risk.

The dominant theme that pervades the series is that some things in leadership and management never change.

There are some flaws. The production, especially in Part I, is often ponderous. We are



Class acts: Holk Henriksen (top) and Lassenius have come up with a useful tool

treated to endless lingering shots of a portrait of Machiavelli.

But the main complaint is the restricted access. This is a very interesting work which anyone could watch and understand, and the chapter structure

Part I is devoted to *The Prince*, while Part II covers *The Art of War*. Each is organised in thematic chapters keyed to a chapter in the original. To give something of the flavour, chapter titles in Part I include "Readiness, Opportunity and Action", "Outsourcing and Strategic Alliances" and "Preparation for Bad Fortune", while those in Part II include "Mission and Vision", "First-Mover Advantage" and "Utilizing the Media".

Selected portions of the original text are then discussed by a wide variety of talking heads, including corporate leaders such as Ulrich Bez, chief executive of Aston Martin, and Acer founder Stan Shih; academic heavyweights including marketing guru Philip Kotler and political scientist John Dunn.

The linkages between

makes it ideal for browsing. Yet producer Video Arts has chosen to focus on the training market only. This is certainly a useful training aid. However, individuals cannot simply go to the website and order a copy. If you want to watch these programmes, either online or on DVD, you will have to get your organisation to buy a licence, and licences, we are told, start at £750.

This is very short-sighted. There is an immense amount of knowledge in these programmes, and it would be a shame to keep it locked away.

Morgen Witzel

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