Ten Lessons from the Military to Markets

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Thirty years of bloody conflict had frustrated the peoples of Sri Lanka, and its economy. Conflict, death and destruction, and a brief period of negotiation and calm, only to be disturbed by another, yet more ferocious, blast, and then a battle, followed by death and destruction. This, indeed, was the sad saga of the country, for three long decades.

The LTTE was intransigent and they were considered invincible. These twin reckonings proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to peace and calm in the island. Eelam War IV did the seemingly impossible. It broke the back of one of the most feared terrorist organizations in the world, the LTTE, and then, annihilated them in toto, within a short space of thirty months. How was it possible, and what core military strategies made it possible? Importantly, is it also possible to translate these winning military strategies into market strategies?

Here are ten such winning strategies - from the Military to Markets.

1. Begin by defining your role and scope.

From the Military …

Two key conclusions reached at the outset of Eelam War IV, importantly, framed the role and scope of the military. The first conclusion was that the, "LTTE will not take the talks to a finish," that is, the LTTE’s unwillingness and inability to see negotiations with the Government of Sri Lanka
(GOSL) as a viable option. The second conclusion: "The LTTE can be finished". That is, the LTTE's invincibility was a myth. Given a concerted effort and a robust strategy, the GOSL reached the conclusion that, within a space of around four years, the LTTE can be militarily defeated, and in fact, annihilated as a fighting outfit.

These two inter-related conclusions that clearly formed the bedrock of the military strategy were reached on the basis of intimate knowledge of the enemy's ideology and its capability. Predicated on the two conclusions, the pivotal role of the military was: "Eliminate the LTTE" (not merely fight, nor weaken) and the scope was: "Wherever they are". The attendant single-minded focus on playing that role (notwithstanding the multiple costs and the ideological opposition) did become the logical consequence of the aforesaid twin conclusions that were reached. The defined role and scope, then led to the setting of many a specific goal and path. Moreover, in working out the path, the steps to be taken and the milestones to be achieved were set in specific terms. The larger tasks were neatly broken down into sub-tasks and so on.

To the Market ...

First and foremost, one needs to figure out the organization's strategic role and scope. "Who and where you want to be?" (role and scope) are the twin questions that need to be answered, in depth. Then, only then, should you ask, "Where do you want to go and how do you get there?"(goal and path). In order to be able to ask these critical strategic questions, the Customer, Collaborator, (including suppliers), one's own Company and the Context (in which you operate) should be carefully analyzed. Moreover, the fifth C (competitor analysis) should figure markedly. Here, knowing the competitor's ideology and capability are key factors.

Figuring out the competitor's thinking pattern and belief system or competitor ideology assessment (CIS) is often not attempted deliberately. An analysis of the competitor's response patterns, over time, in multiple situations, and a reading of the ideology and life styles of the competitors' key decision makers could make such an assessment possible. Although the past behaviour of the competitor is not always a reliable predictor of future action, a deep-going understanding of his ideology, does help predict likely responses to competitive moves.

Conversely, competitor capability assessment (CCA) is done periodically by many organizations, through the adoption of frameworks, such as SWOT. Here again, the strengths and weaknesses of the competitor vis a vis one's own organization must be seen as factors that are structural and intrinsic to the organization. They are not readily alterable in the short or medium terms. Opportunities, on the other hand, are those environmental/market factors that the organization can exploit, given its strengths. Threats are those external factors that make the organization vulnerable, given its inherent weaknesses.

"If you want to eat an elephants, break it up into small pieces," is a dictum that helps one to view a gigantic task without being overwhelmed by it. The breaking down of the larger tasks into integral parts and consciously dealing with some parts, rather than others, during a given period of time, is an effective and time-tested approach to planning and executing programs of action in organizations.
2. **Gather strategy-critical intelligence, not mere information.**

*From the Military …*

Not only did strategy-critical intelligence uncover the LTTE's deep-seated ideology and unexpressed intentions, and its fighting capability but it also pointed to the LTTE’s key targets and its implementation plans. For instance, the commanders predicted with exactitude how the LTTE would attack the military forces in many locations throughout Eelam War IV. Moreover, many of the targets that the Sri Lanka Air Force attacked and destroyed, including the annihilation of the LTTE’s Thamil Chelvam were identified via military intelligence.

The Intelligence Unit was restructured prior to the commencement of Eelam War IV. Many of the new recruits (replacing senior officers) did not have long years of intelligence-gathering experience. They were picked mainly from the infantry. “A “nose” for intelligence and an unwavering commitment to the task were the twin attributes that dictated their selection, forming a small team that did an extra-ordinary job. Importantly, the team knew the kind of information that was critical to the core strategy, and it did not waste time and energy collecting general information, which would have been, at best, incidental and “nice to know”.

*To the Market …*

Gathering strategy-critical intelligence, and not mere information is a lesson to be learnt by business organizations. If, for instance, the objective is to increase one’s market share, then the source of additional business and how to capture it becomes strategic. Now, collecting that information which will help win that incremental business ought to be the focus and no other. A directed and concerted effort to collect such information should then ensue.

Depending only on external research agencies without setting up a team of people within the organization who have a “nose” for market insights and intelligence-gathering, and a passion to do so, may well be a mistake. Collecting strategy-critical intelligence must be a continual exercise carried out by a dedicated team, and not only by an outsourced *ad hoc* one.

3. **Select your top performers for top positions and back them to the hilt.**

*From the Military …*

The best people for the clearly defined role of “eliminating the LTTE” were not selected on the basis of their experience and seniority alone. In fact, the most battle-hardened officers were not favoured, largely because of their experiences associated with fighting the LTTE on previous occasions, which may well have hindered, not helped, adopt a new strategy.

Merit or performance was the basis of selection to key positions. Although, a gazette notification in 1980 allowed Army commandes to promote officers on the basis of merit, rather than seniority, it was never implemented. A *mainstream* and a *common stream* were created for promotion. High-performing officers placed in, say, seventh or tenth in the hierarchy were
brought in to the mainstream, and were moved up to command important formations and occupy pivotal positions at Army Headquarters.

In the frontline, too, performance was the principal criterion for selection of officers. Over 1500 soldiers were promoted as Second Lieutenants, on the run, as it were. These structural changes not only created a strong performance culture within the Army but also ensured that those who were promoted moved forward with renewed motivation and passion. Failure would place them in the "common stream", which spelt a career reversal, not to mention the loss of face, so critical in the Forces, in particular.

**Backing the best team:**

It is one thing to pick the best men; it is another to support them unreservedly. Each soldier who faced LTTE cadres knew full well that he was backed by large numbers in the battlefront. Ammunition and equipment necessary to wage war against the enemy were never short. An increasing fighting force spelt the significant manpower that was at hand. The markedly enhanced defence budget, enabled the procurement of requisite arms and ammunition. Armed vehicles, tanks and the newly introduced multi barrel rocket launchers (MBRL) made a significant difference to firepower, giving the Army an advantage it never had before.

Company commanders were engaged in ground-level strategy formulation. They knew precisely what was going to unfold and why. The section leaders got involved too. This served to enhance the overall knowledge and combat power of the entire Division. The General Officer Commanding knew exactly what was happening on the ground. Hence, supporting the best team, went beyond providing men and equipment to fight. It embraced keeping everyone engaged, involved and informed, which in turn made every member of the team feel important and empowered. Indeed, when things did go right, the Army Commander shared the glory. And when the Army suffered heavy casualties, as in Muhamale, for instance, the Commander took the blame himself.

**To the Market …**

Selecting and promoting employees on the basis of their competence and indeed, performance, over any other criterion, does three key things, among others. First, the creation of an overall performance culture in the organization. The primacy of performance is thus established. Second, the implied, but real possibility of a promotional "roll back", and the associated culturally sensitive sentiment of "shame", if one falls short, makes employees endeavour to remain in the mainstream, at any cost. Third, the relatively junior employees promoted to senior positions become markedly visible in their positions and, importantly, in their performance. The motivation to succeed, therefore, is likely to be extremely high.

Making your promoted employees and others believe that they are amply supported both materially and morally, and that they are very much a part of the "design process" of things to happen, will help ensure total commitment to the task at hand.

Once a strategy has been worked out, after a great deal of analysis and deliberation, not
supporting the execution of that strategy with the requisite resources, whatever they may be, spells, not only a strategy-failure, but also a waste of the inadequate resources that have been deployed. Getting your best team together and backing them to the hilt, both physically and emotionally, is indeed a vital lesson, managers can ignore at their own peril.

4. Win the support of all those who matter.

*From the Military …*

As a leader, winning the support of his core team and that of others in the organization is absolutely necessary. In fighting Eelam War IV, there was the congruence of organizational vision and personal purpose. The Sri Lankan Army’s vision was to defeat, in fact, annihilate the LTTE. This was the self-same purpose of every officer and soldier. A miss-match between the two would have put the whole military strategy in jeopardy. Any conciliatory action on the part of the top brass, even symbolic in nature, may have cast doubts in the minds of the soldier in regard to the increasingly tough stand the GOSL was taking against the LTTE. For instance, in early 2006, during the second round of peace talks, the LTTE wanted a helicopter to take their leaders from the North to the East. At the Security Council meeting, this proposal of the LTTE was rejected. If a helicopter was, in fact given to the LTTE at that time, to move their leaders, an unintended message would have been sent to the soldiers. Indeed, everything communicates. Thereafter, when the talks between two parties ceased altogether, there was no ambiguity about the vision. All words and deeds pointed to it, and to no other.

The support of H.E. the President, the Defence Secretary and the Cabinet in the pursuit of the military offensive is well known. The Navy, Air Force and the Police extended their support in a significant way, and in an integrated fashion.

The Police Special Task Force took control of the East, in particular. The Police general cadres took over rear areas such as Mannar, Silaturai and Madu. The Air Force attacked vital targets in the North and launched co-ordinated offensives with ground troops of the Army. The Navy kept the Sea Tigers at bay, and destroyed many enemy ships that were transporting arms.

Healthy relationships were established with allies. While material and moral support was received from China, Russia, Pakistan and others, the support of India was critical to the whole mission. Any serious apprehensions of the Indian Government would have made the forward movement of the Army very difficult, if not impossible. The political interests of many Tamil Nadu parties in backing the LTTE made the Central Government uneasy. A simple move by the GOSL paid off. A small and top-level bilateral body was established to maintain constant contact and avoid any misinformation or misunderstanding. The particular body had on the Sri Lankan side, Senior Presidential Advisor, Mr. Basil Rajapaksa, the Defence Secretary and the Secretary to the President. On the Indian side, the National Security Advisor, Foreign Secretary and Defense Secretary formed the team. This unique arrangement prevented any strain on the relationship between the two countries. In fact, it proved so successful that the Indian leadership is now considering replicating the model in its relations with other countries.
Winning the support of the general public, and correcting false and misplaced information, was another key aspect of winning the support of many who mattered. Indeed, the negative campaigns launched in various quarters had to be addressed. It is, with this in mind, that work relating to the design of the defence website started. The website titled www.defense.lk was a resounding success and it almost single-handedly fought the propaganda war of the LTTE. The defence website, while helping to present situations, as they actually were, also helped to motivate the local population and the Sri Lankan Diaspora. It became the most visited Sri Lankan website.

At the outset, there was a general opinion that increased military operations in the North would result in massive death and destruction in the South, especially in Colombo. Such attacks on key targets, both economic and civilian were prevented, by and large due to the effective measures that were adopted. The extensive search operations and checkpoints though unpopular, had to be set up in order to avoid a backlash that would have exerted immense pressure on the military to call off its offensive.

In winning the support of the people, the choice of language and effective communications played a key role. During the final stages of Eelam War IV, in particular, expressions such as “fighting terror” were supplanted with “saving the people” and “humanitarian mission”. This entailed the repositioning of the “warrior” as a veritable “saviour”.

Moreover, the information flow to the public at large was well managed. The need to know (NTK) principle was often followed. Information regarding casualty figures and setbacks were carefully and situationally released. Indeed, a good job of Perception Management was done with respect to key publics.

To the Market …

Aligning the organization’s vision with the individual’s purpose is key. The employee’s identification with the organization, depends largely on this score. The personal values/belief system and that of the organization must be congruent. The larger role of the organization in society must be one that the key employees in particular, not only endorse, but also subscribe to. This is a key human resources management function.

For an organization’s particular division, winning the support of the CEO and the senior management for a given project is, of course, vital. The strategic value of such a project must be clearly communicated. Moreover, all communication channels must be kept open for the organization as a whole to know how the project is moving and the progress achieved on an ongoing basis. Internal customers and suppliers must be fully “on board” with the project. Their engagement and total commitment to the delivery of given outputs would be a key to the success of a project or a longer term program of activity.

Managing stakeholder perceptions in winning support is another key lesson to be learnt. What information to provide (and not) and how is a critical question in this regard.

Key influencers, be they regulators, state policy makers or on occasion, competitors, and
often, the collaborators, must be kept abreast of what’s going on in order that miscommunication is avoided. The importance of interest groups to lobby and influence policy makers, and to champion a commercially significant common cause, cannot be over-emphasized.

5. Provoke the enemy to err strategically.

From the Military …

The LTTE started off in the early 1980’s as a small but vibrant fighting unit, and for longer than a decade, functioned primarily as a guerrilla outfit. Sporadic “hit and run” attacks were commonplace, while exploding bombs in locations that created casualties and confusion among the people. The abominable suicide bombers were an “invention” of the LTTE. Thereafter, the LTTE, while not altogether abandoning their guerrilla operations, especially in the jungles, began to develop in the mould of a conventional army. They started to defend and protect land and developed their fire-power as a typical conventional army would. The Sri Lanka Army, on the other hand, always fought a conventional war. That’s what they were and that’s what they did. Hence, it was a direct confrontation, over a long period of time. The LTTE’s increasingly ambitious project made them transcend a guerrilla operation, while the Army attempted to overpower them in a terrain they knew less than the enemy did.

There was a shift of strategy in Eelam War IV. From deploying large formations in the battlefield, small teams were deployed. Conventionally, the Army fought on the chief supply lines, which were around twenty kilometers long. This was changed. Small teams, comprising four to eight men, away from main supply lines and in thick jungles moved forward and confronted the enemy at multiple points. This put the LTTE off balance, and got them to commit the strategic error of a radical shift from a guerrilla outfit to a full-blown conventional army, markedly weakening the former mode, their critical point of difference vis a vis the Sri Lankan Army. Consequently, the LTTE avoided the Army in the jungles. Importantly, the artillery procured by the LTTE which accounted for almost 70 percent of its expenses, proved irrelevant and ineffective in the new theatre of war.

Once the key areas were captured by the Army and the critical entry points were opened, through the adoption of the new strategy with small teams along wide fronts, the LTTE could not counter the brunt of superior fire-power, the air power and the man power that were at the disposal of a nation’s military outfit, fighting a conventional battle. The LTTE failed to sustain its offensive in the wake of the heightened assaults by the Army.

To the Market …

Departing from an organisation’s competitive strengths that are rooted in the collection of inter-connected capabilities, by adopting a strategy that does not make it superior nor differentiated vis a vis one’s competitor, is a recipe for defeat. The Sri Lankan Army by becoming a veritable guerilla outfit situationally, provoked the LTTE to abandon altogether what it was inherently good at, and take on a role that they could not excel in, in the wake of a potentially
more powerful national outfit. Interestingly, even in the face of defeat, in the final stages of Eelam War IV, the LTTE refused to revert to being a guerilla outfit and perhaps, go underground, for a while.

For instance, a company whose competitive advantage lies in operating in a narrow segment of an industry and offer "more value for a higher price" value proposition may be provoked by a competitor, whose value proposition is akin to "less value for a lower price" in relation to the industry, as a whole. When the latter attacks the former player's narrow industry segment, a knee-jerk reaction on its part to lower price in order to ward-off the mass-market player is fraught with danger. It amounts to abandoning the strategic position, and indeed, the stand of the company. A change of role and scope in the face of competitive pressure is a denial of one's identity and position, although a careful change of the goal and path to keep competition at bay, may be prudent, on occasion.

6. Surprise and disorient the enemy.

From the Military …

It is typical to identify the enemy's weak areas and attack them while leaving the strong areas to be fought out another day. The Sri Lankan Army surprised the LTTE by doing the exact opposite of this typical approach. It confronted the LTTE's strongest positions. The Army Commander of Eelam War IV said, "During the Jayasikuru operation launched to liberate Jaffna years ago, I observed that when we attacked the LTTE's most formidable strongholds, they became very weak. With this in mind, we commenced our assault from the A9 road, the Madu road, Mannar and the Mullaitivu jungles. Sometimes, it took us four to five days just to take control of one or two kilometers. But the results were good. We minimized our casualties and increased the losses of the enemy. At the end of 2007, we were operating 35 battalions on all fronts and the LTTE had to react to our plan. We were engaging them every day, 24 hours a day, weeks and months on end. We maintained our assaults in all conditions. In pouring rain and floods, in the hot sun and drought, we kept the momentum going, until we achieved victory."

Fighting at night was never the case for the Army. However, many major operations this time were carried out at night. The LTTE never expected this. In the past, it was the LTTE that had struck at night. The Army's increasing ability to fight at night got the LTTE on the back foot, and made them defensive.

In addition to taking on the strongholds of the LTTE, at unexpected times and places, the Army launched several operations simultaneously on various fronts. This was something the Tigers never thought the Army was capable of. For instance, while one Division would work its way down the coast, two other Divisions advanced eastwards, across the land, towards Puthukudiyiruppu. Upon accomplishing this, the attempt was to link up with the Division that was working its way down to the coast. Meanwhile, another Infantry Division, advanced through the jungle of Mullaitivu and Oddusudan.
The multi-prong and multi-front attacks were not expected by the LTTE. They put the LTTE off-balance, and in total disarray.

**To the Market …**

Unconventional though, attacking the competitor’s strengths and strong-holds first, and making multiple and simultaneous competitive moves could confuse the competitor, making it vulnerable.

A strong competitor, for instance, may have a distinctive and a differentiated benefit that it has been offering its customers, over a long period of time. Now, an attempt to dislodge this competitor by either making a proposition that is superior to its strong point of difference, or challenging its value perceptions of it, in the minds of the customer, could put the competitor in disarray. Once you succeed in doing so, then the weak areas or the competitor’s points of parity with the rest in the industry could be dealt with, to the detriment of the competitor. In like manner, one could first attack a competitor’s strong markets, say, geographically.

Going first for the strong areas/points, and launching multiple and simultaneous attacks on the competitor, is the lesson that can be translated from the military to markets, as they become appropriate, situationally.

### 7. Make the enemy defensive and never let up.

**From the Military …**

Throughout Eelam War IV for almost three years, more often than not, the LTTE was on the defensive and reacting to the moves of the Army. The Army retained the initiative and engaged the enemy with all its force and surprise attacks. The pressure brought to bear on the enemy was never relaxed.

As was described earlier, pinning the LTTE down on many fronts, all at the same time, denied them of any respite to regroup and to gather its resources. The LTTE was compelled to be engaged on many fronts, and they could not, as they did in the past, retract and regroup. The thrust was never weakened nor abated. It was this kind of continuous thrust that compelled the LTTE to be eventually confined to a narrow strip of land, surrounded by the sea. This isolation made them extremely vulnerable, and the Army then were able to confront them head-on and totally destroy the enemy with the superior man and fire power at its disposal.

**To the Market …**

"Attack, stop and attack" or a "flighting" strategy is commonplace in business. A concentrated, short-duration attack on the competitor with a heavy burst of a campaign, and then being silent for a while, before taking on the competitor again, is dictated, in part by cost considerations, and also by reasons related to the perceived effectiveness of a discontinuous program of action.
A more continuous, competitive thrust, called “pulsing”, is the alternative approach. Here, the continuity of low weight-level competitive activity, is reinforced periodically, by waves of heavier activity. A “pulsing” strategy draws upon the strength of continuous activity, and keeping the pressure on the competitor, not giving it breathing space to marshal its resources and reserves.

The lesson from the military is the possible effectiveness of “pulsing” strategies as opposed to those that are “flighting”. The contextual relevance of the organization’s strategy, “flighting or pulsing” has to be determined by the organization, taking into account an array of factors.


*From the Military* …

Importantly, previous Eelam Wars, over two decades, had one central measure of performance and success. That was the land mass that was captured from the LTTE. “How many square kilometers of a particular territory have we captured?” was the question that indicated the success or failure of a military campaign.

The experience of capturing land mass was that, although it helped to keep the enemy at bay, soon after the land capture, the task of holding the captured land, proved to be costly, both in terms of the men who had to be stationed, and importantly, the casualties that ensued, when the LTTE regrouped and attacked the captured areas with renewed ferocity.

In Eelam War IV, a different measure of success, indeed of performance was determined. It was not a matter of land mass, but the number of LTTE cadres that were killed. From “land to kill” proved to be a pivotal shift in focus and measure of success.

It is important to note that “fight to kill” is rooted in the overall strategy that was adopted: Eliminate the LTTE, not weaken them, nor keep them on a defensive mode, so as to reasonably engage them in a process of negotiations with the Government of Sri Lanka. Importantly, this time there was a clear fit between the overall strategy and the performance standard/measure.

A shift of the critical performance standard or measure, in line with strategy, it may be argued, was a key to the success of the military victory of the Forces. A single-minded focus on the number killed, and making it the central measure of performance evaluation, is to be noted. For instance, when the Commander decided to retain five battalions or 2500 troops and consolidate his position in the East, and at the same time, deploy 5000 troops in the North in early 2007, not only did it surprise the enemy, but they were also bemused by the slow pace with which the Army progressed in the Northern theatre. It took eight months to progress four kilometers. But the focus was to spot and kill as many LTTE cadres as possible. This also enabled the Army to keep the number of casualties low. The slow march forward, but with an eye on destroying as many cadres as possible, and not capture as much land as possible, made the public and the media, at large rather unhappy. The expectation was rapid progress in terms of land capture. The new performance standard of “kill not land” dictated the actions of the Army which clearly paid off, in the final count.
To the Market …

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are used by many organizations to set targets and monitor progress. These measures are typically related to performance outcomes, such as turnover, and net profit (top and bottom lines). But they are not controllable, by definition. They are consequences. The drivers of performance are the Value offered and the Price charged, in so far as the customer is concerned (topmost line) and expenses (middle line). Setting performance-driver KPI’s, and not merely, performance-outcome KPI’s, is a key point to note. You manage drivers and manage for outcomes.

Importantly, setting KPI’s that emanate from one’s core strategy is a critical lesson to be learnt from the military success. What is your overall strategy? If it is to capture market share, for instance, then what are the key drivers (not outcomes) of the expected performance? They should constitute the critical KPI’s, and not those that are conventional, which will be monitored anyway, through typical financial analyses.

9. Establish direct command and co-ordinate at the top.

From the Military …

The Army Commander of Eelam War IV kept the key divisions and formations under his overall control. He directly commanded some key Divisions. A direct chain of command was established, which went down to the grassroots.

He visited the battlefield on a regular basis. He was visible and involved. “I ensured that a particular Division or formation will not fail simply because of the incompetence of a single individual directly in-charge of it”. Moreover, the overall co-ordination and synergizing of operations happened at the top, not elsewhere. Simultaneous attacks through co-ordinated offensives became the hallmark of the new strategy. It all had to be done and synergized at the top.

Given the long years of experience in the battlefield, the Army Commander had superior knowledge of the terrain and the enemy, in relation to that of many who were in key positions in the battlefield. The recognition of this fact made the Commander a “hands on” leader, directing affairs directly, without delegating them, on occasion, and being directly engaged with those in-charge of particular operations in the formulation and execution of strategy, at other times.

The “hands on” approach made the Commander remove key officers and replace them with others, on the run, as it were. The intimate knowledge of what was unfolding made him appreciate the need for flank protection, when it was required, relocate counter-attack forces, and importantly, ask key questions from those in the battlefront that often challenged their assumptions about the enemy and its maneuvers. Importantly, this “hands on” approach by the Commander helped him adopt emergent strategies when pre-planned deliberate strategies did not seem prudent, given the unexpected emerging ground situation.
Another key aspect of planning and co-ordinating at the top was the use of satellite technology, in particular. The identification of military targets and the LTTE cadres was largely possible because of the use of modern and cutting-edge technology.

To the Market …

Don’t be an “arm chair” leader but a “behind the wheel” leader! When the leader has superior knowledge of a particular area of activity, not making full use of it in his direct engagement with operations, is a waste of a vital resource. The often espoused leader-role hinders such a direct approach.

Being on the field, at the scene of action, and managing by being there, walking around or otherwise, is a leader-behaviour that pays off. Importantly, co-ordinating and aligning multiple formations to forge ahead, were done at the top with the direct involvement of the Commander himself. This is another lesson. If the view from the top provides the vantage point of vision for co-ordination and alignment of multiple competitive moves and activities, then such moves must not be delegated, but made by the top brass of the organization. The popular notion of strategy and policy formulation at the top and overall co-ordination being left to the lower levels to handle, may well be dysfunctional and, in fact, flawed in many a context. This approach, however, need not necessarily thwart delegated power and authority being exercised by others.

Importantly, a “hands on” leader-role helps organizations to bridge the planning and implementation phases. The separation of the two—planning by those at the top and implementation by others, often fails in complex settings, where emergent rather than deliberate strategies work.

The use of modern technology as your aid rather than your master is another lesson to be learnt. Once the strategy is in place, appropriate technology helps its implementation, in no small measure. It is, however, no substitute for strategy itself.

10. Play it straight; it drives performance.

From the Military …

The army is an expensive organization. Expensive purchases are made and the operations of the army are expensive too. The transparent tender procedures, and clean-up of logistical operations from inefficient and corrupt practices proved effective. On the other hand, the appropriate and effective arms, ammunition, battle tanks, and armoured carriers got purchased as a result of the transparent procedures. There was no compromise on quality and effectiveness when it came to vital procurement. The measures paid off, and importantly, they impacted on performance positively.
To the Market …

Conformance to standards, good governance, and high levels of performance are often seen as being independent of each other. The positive impacts of conformance on performance are often ignored.

A transparent procedure, as was evident, enabled a positive outcome. The morally upright leader has a distinct advantage of pushing through his performance agenda. His source credibility is heightened and his acceptance enhanced. When punishment is direct, clear and transparent, the punished may fall, but the others will rise. Punishing the deserters became a strong deterrent to those who perhaps contemplated to desert the Army in the heat of the moment. Indeed, the clarity and transparency of the modes of reward and punishment, devoid of hidden agenda, makes the whole organization function better.