

**Application 1.1:** Chess and business strategy by Miguel Illescas (\*)

Chess is an age-old game, considered to be the paradigm of intelligence in general and of strategy in particular. Banks, car manufacturers and other businesses constantly use it as a catchword. Chess involves the recreation of a military engagement, whereby the game provides the players with the opportunity to become generals, in command of an army of pawns and pieces that move about the board, according to a pre-determined set of rules. As luck plays no part and the difficulty inherent to the game lies on the boundaries of the limits of human intelligence, chess is in a position of superiority over other similar practices. This game, a combination of sport, science and art, provides a three-pronged educational tool of enormous practical value: intellectual training (memory, logic, etc.), character building (decision-making, dealing with success and failure, etc.) and instruction in values (respect for rules, the opponent, etc.).

Although tactics and calculation are major components of chess, the real skill lies in mastering its strategic concepts. On a strategic level, chess provides two types of instruction: generic and specific. The main generic aspects involve the need for an in-depth analysis of the present: a player needs to assimilate as much information as possible regarding the current position and assess it thoroughly before going on to study specific moves. Working with analysis and multiple scenarios, as well as developing a strategic mindset, are also some of the many contributions this game makes.

There are also many and varied examples of specific instruction, and a clear parallelism may always be drawn between the strategic moves in chess and strategy in general, which means they are of great value when applied to the field of business strategy. The following are certain examples of specific instruction:

- **Pre-empting an opponent's move:** inductive and deductive procedures; each move responds to a plan, our plan informs our move, whereas we aim to deduce our opponent's plan from their moves. Plans need to adapt to each new circumstance through a process of analytical reassessment and feedback.
- **Exploiting weak points:** strategy of amassing forces; following the expected stalemate between attack and defence, freedom of action is used to open up a new front that the opponent cannot defend in time.
- **Principle of control of the centre and the actions in it:** rebuffing attacks on the flanks by means of a timely counterattack through the middle. Stabilising the centre before undertaking flanking operations.

The world champions are also the foremost exponents of the development of chess strategy. Steinitz said: "The right to attack belongs to the side that has a positional advantage", Lasker: "The aim is to find the best move against a specific opponent, bearing in mind their characteristics and playing style" or Capablanca: "Exploiting an advantage is one of the main weapons of the stronger side: the aim is to seek ever greater and more permanent advantages". Thus, for centuries, the strategic laws that govern the world of chess have gradually been laid down. These laws can be extrapolated to any field of human endeavour in which there is a battle of wills fought through intelligence. Such is the case of business strategy.

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