

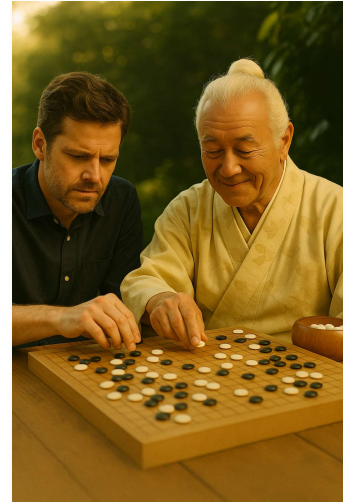
Leading strategically like in the game of Go – a shift in perspective for modern management

In an increasingly complex, interconnected, and dynamic world, leaders are faced with the challenge of developing strategies that are not only designed for efficiency and goal achievement, but also for impact, flexibility, and long-term influence.

In this context, it's worth taking a look at an unusual model of thought: the Asian strategy game **Go**.

Go is a board game from Asia that is over 2,500 years old. It has extremely simple rules – yet it offers an extreme strategic depth that even challenges artificial intelligence.

But what makes this game so special? And what can leaders learn from it for their strategic actions?



From Goal Achievement to Influence

In traditional "Western" management, thinking in terms of goal systems dominates: Strategies are geared toward defined results that can be measured through KPIs, roadmaps, and targets. Success is defined as achieving a predetermined goal.

Go, on the other hand, has no clearly defined goal in the Western sense. It's about **building more space and influence** than your opponent—and doing so with as little loss as possible. It's often better to let go early in order to gain a stronger position elsewhere.

Go thinks in terms of effect, not goal achievement.

Strategic momentum:

The measure of strategic success is not goal control, but impact management.

From Control to Contextual Competence

Traditional leadership relies heavily on control: planning, structuring, responsibilities, and processes are intended to reduce complexity. But in dynamic environments, these systems quickly reach their limits.

Go players don't orient themselves according to rigid procedures, but rather the entire playing field. **Every move** changes the situation—and **requires a new decision**. It's all about having a feel for the right moment, for balance, and the importance of positions.

Leadership in the Go sense means: observing the space, sensing opportunities, acting at the right moment.

Strategic momentum:

Anyone who wants to lead must be able to observe the context and react intuitively – instead of rigidly controlling.

From Measures to Principles

In many companies, strategy is confused with catalogs of measures. It's about initiatives, programs, checklists. Everything seems to be planned out – until reality intervenes.

Go works differently: It's **principle-oriented**, not tied to concrete rules. Those who play Go follow basic ideas such as balance, timing, influence, proximity, and distance. These principles provide orientation – without rigidity.

Go is principle-led, not action-led.

Strategic momentum:

Principles give leadership depth – and enable situational action with clarity.

From Competition to Coexistence

Western management is often characterized by a competitive mindset. Market share, differentiation, uniqueness – the image of the company as a competitor shapes many strategies.

Go presents a different picture: Two players share the same playing field – **they grow alongside each other**. The goal is not to destroy the other, but to secure sustainable space for themselves.

Modern leadership requires participation rather than maintaining power.

Strategic momentum:

Modern leadership does not mean displacing others – but rather creating spaces of coexistence.

From Planning to Adaptive Thinking

Strategy in traditional organizations is often plan-based. But hardly any plan survives the first reality. Markets change, teams evolve, conditions shift.

Go is a game of adaptation. It requires a **constant willingness to correct course**. Every new stone shifts the balance—and requires new decisions. It's not sticking to the line that counts, but **actively responding with a strategic perspective**. Here, one can also see parallels to "agile project work" with sprints and feedback.

Go requires: Leading in uncertain environments, but with inner clarity.

Strategic momentum:

Strategy is not a plan – but a playing field that changes with every move.

Some Go principles applied to leadership

1. Positioning instead of dominance

Go: It's not the fight for the center that decides – but clever positioning at the edges.

Leadership: Strength comes from wise choice of position, not from asserting power.

2. Influence instead of control

Go: Go rewards the establishment of zones of influence, not complete occupation.

Leadership: Leadership means setting the framework and enabling impact, not controlling everything.

3. Timing instead of tempo

Go: A well-placed stone at the right moment is worth more than many uncoordinated moves.

Leadership: It's not speed that counts – but the conscious, appropriate impulse.

4. Coexistence instead of annihilation

Go: The goal is not to defeat the opponent – but to gain more territory.

Leadership: Sustainable strategies allow for balance, not confrontation.

5. Less is more (move efficiency)

Go: An ideal move fulfills several functions simultaneously, e.g., influence and protection.

Leadership: Use your resources so that they have an impact on multiple levels.

6. Flexibility instead of clinging

Go: Go: Those who focus on a local region lose sight of the bigger picture.

Leadership: Successful strategists think in terms of alternatives, not fixations.

7. Being able to let go

Go: Sometimes it's better to abandon a weak group in order to grow elsewhere.

Leadership: Retreat is not a defeat – it's a strategic move.

8. Balance between proximity and distance

Go: One piece alone is weak – too many in a small space make you vulnerable.

Leadership: Good distance promotes cooperation and flexibility.

9. Pattern recognition

Go: Good players see patterns – not just pieces.

Leadership: Leadership requires an eye for dynamics and structural interactions, not just isolated cases.

10. Long-term thinking

Go: Many moves only become effective later.

Leadership: Strategy is a game of impact – not immediate success.

Conclusion: Go as a model for strategic leadership

Playing Go teaches you:

- not to have to control everything,
- to let go to win,
- to prioritize timing over speed,
- to think long-term instead of reacting short-term.

For leadership, this means: Strategy does not mean knowing everything – but remaining agile with clarity and focus.

**Go is not a power game
– it is a game of
influence and impact.**

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