

# Target

Business Wisdom from the Ancient Japanese  
Martial Art of Kyudo

by **Jérôme Chouchan**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Mention the word *target*, and several visuals may come to mind. In business, a target may be number on spreadsheet or a highly desired customer. For others, sports goals come to mind—touchdown, hole-in-one. When presented with a target, people have an irrepressible desire to take aim and hit it!

Author Jérôme Chouchan, a successful French businessman in Japan, aims for success. As a master of Kyudo, he utilizes a bow and arrow. In *Target*, he applies lessons learned from Kyudo to modern business. Kyudo, a traditional martial art governed by strict rules, has as its core purpose self-development and a pursuit of the perfection of the human being. Business may focus on the brutal chase for profits. Chouchan, through Kyudo, moves us deeper.

*Target* shows that business can be successful from a conventional standard of metrics, as well as spiritually meaningful when it is practiced with a mindset that has a deeper aim than solely sales and profit. In this modern age, where there is a pressing need for meaning and fulfilment in the work place, let *Target* challenge you to a different path.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to discover and aim for the heart of the customer.
- The Kyudo lesson: Right shooting always results in a hit.
- How decision-making affects every part of business.
- Habits to improve your business AND your life.

At first glance, archery and business seem to be worlds apart. Surprisingly, learning the spirit and wisdom of traditional Japanese archery helps the modern businessperson navigate through today's challenges.

## Principles for Hitting Your Target

People are born with an irrepressible desire to aim for and hit the target. In archery, this means hitting your target with your arrow. Kyudo literally means 'the Way of the Bow.' Let's explore this Way.

### You Don't Reach a Target; A Target Reaches You

This saying teaches the importance of "right shooting," which results in a natural hit, instead of constantly striving to hit the target. In business, the "target" is the customer. The secret of business success is not reaching the target, but the target reaching you. For this to happen, the feelings of the customer and the actions of the company have to become one. When you become one with the feelings of the customer, the distance between the business, the product, and the customer disappears, and success is achieved.

### A Pure Heart

The secret to producing a hit is for managers and employees to forget about themselves and face the customers with "a pure heart." It is beneficial to train oneself to listen to what customers have to say without thinking of personal gain and to tackle work with a selfless heart. Everyone takes pride in the way they do their work and the way they think; it is a natural urge. Don't let those ideas become an obstacle to the vital task of listening to the feelings of the customers or understanding the opinions of others. Chouchan relates this story of leading the luxury brand, Godiva, to make its brand more accessible to the Japanese customer. "When we decided to sell Godiva chocolates at 7-Eleven, some people were opposed to the idea because they felt that it would damage the brand's image. But, without this step, customers who lived in an area without access to Godiva shops could only buy the products through the internet. We wanted those customers to have easier access to the brand and enjoy a sense of luxury. Godiva made an arrangement so that the customers at convenience stores could receive the product in the same Godiva shopping bags provided in the Godiva shops. This made it a more luxurious experience for the customers. For convenience stores, this arrangement was unheard of, but they accommodated the request, resulting in sales growth of the Godiva brand.

### Right Shooting Always Results in a Hit

Chouchan once asked a sales director at Godiva, "What do you look at first when you visit a shop?" She replied, "I check if the shop is nice and clean." Most sales people look at sales, profit, traffic, and conversion rate." This director not only looked at the numbers, but also paid attention to how the products were being sold and the process of it all. She saw the shops that were clean – and therefore appealing – also had good sales performance.

The philosophy underpinning the art of Kyudo is all about placing value on the process, the correct spirit and form, not just the outcome. During a Kyudo exam, archers are observed by the judges from the moment they enter the Kyudo practice hall until they leave. This includes their posture and movement as they wait and walk, and how this is performed in a harmonious rhythm with other archers.

The principle of "right shooting always results in a hit" encourages the employees to be creative, cheerful, and positive because they don't have to worry about their sales results, which can be very unstable. They are free of stress and can take more initiative at work. Instead of worrying about results, they are able to put their best effort into performing, resulting in better engagement of employees.

### Right Shooting Results in a True Hit

In the Kyudo examination, you can fail even if the arrow hits the target. For example, at the moment of releasing the arrow, by looking at the movement of the hands and the body, the judges can see if the archer is in the proper state of mind and energy or if he has been overcome by the desire to hit the target. The world of business can follow the same process. As Kyudo instructs us in the art of correct shooting, we must think about "correct" management in business.

What constitutes the right posture in business? This seemingly elusive goal can be achieved by thinking about the customer, the employee, and by performing business tasks with a high morale.

Are your products of good quality? Are they priced appropriately? Are they being sold in the right places? Is proper service being given? These are questions to ask yourself and your employees.

## Lessons from Kyudo and Japan

In the world of Kyudo in Japan, the correct approach entails a fight against yourself. It has nothing to do with your

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competitors or the circumstances you are in. The focus is upon you and

the target. You are fully responsible for the outcome. In this thought lies the wisdom to establish and develop oneself and the key to improving your relationship with others.

### **There is No Such Thing as a Perfect Shot**

A Kyudo archer aims for a perfect shot but knows there is no such thing. This is the difference with modern Western archery, where a bull's-eye shot is perfect in itself. In Kyudo, the aim is for better form and a purer spirit in shooting. This endless quest is the soul and spirit of Kyudo.

The key to success for any new project is to move it forward, in small, incremental steps. In Kyudo, through one shot at a time the archer gradually builds form. Shooting is an iterative process, learning from each shot, and shooting each new shot with a higher aspiration than the previous one. This learning and growing process is as relevant in business as it is in archery.

### **The Moment the Arrow Leaves the Bow**

Kyudo teaches about the importance and the quality of the moment. The entire outcome of the shooting is dependent on the instant of the release of the arrow. The proper timing cannot be planned, and archers may fall into the trap of two types of weakness: *hayake*—releasing too soon or *motare*—releasing too late.

These weaknesses can also be experienced in business and in making decisions. For example, *hayake* is when you rush to a decision without taking the time to get the required information and input from your team, and *motare* is when you look for certainty and consensus and procrastinate, missing the right timing for making a decision. *Motare* is frequent in large organizations, and the delay of the moment of decisions is a strong barrier to innovation.

In Kyudo, the release of the arrow is followed immediately by a hit or a miss, so it is a natural process to understand the importance of good and accurate timing.

However, in the office, there is no such single moment of seeing the immediate effect of the decision. The effect—the fruit of the decision—happens in the marketplace a long time after the decision has been. As a result of this cycle (decision and effect), managers put much more priority on the content of the decision rather than on its timing, whereas in principle, when making a decision, the timing is as critical as the decision itself.

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## **How to Make Your Work Meaningful and Enjoyable**

In work, in hobbies, and in life, knowing why we are doing what we are doing is very important. The answer to this “why” is what we call our mission. In Kyudo it's said, “The bow builds the man.” The great mission of Kyudo is not to hit the target or to get better at shooting, but to perfect the human nature in learning to shoot an arrow. And this mission is what provides deep meaning and joy to the art of Kyudo. It is the same with work: if the company has a meaningful mission, and you are in agreement with their values and purpose, then you can feel joy in your work.

### **The Right Inner Intention**

Right intention means that to shoot and hit the target, the inner and outer man should be in harmony. You must first of all have your inner intention right, straighten out your outward appearance, and treat the bow and arrow with care. Applying this to a company means that in order to make those outside the company—the customers—happy, you should try to make sure that the workplace is a happy environment and that the workers are happy too. There is a saying in Kyudo, “The bow builds the man.” The great mission of Kyudo is to cultivate people through training and practice. The mission of all businesses should also be to cultivate people.

### **The Important Things are Sensed**

In Kyudo there is another saying, “The bow is understood through personal experience.” The first level of experi-

ence is with the mind; this is where you understand what has to be done. The second level is with your body when it reaches some understanding and can perform the shape that the mind had asked of it. The third level, which is called “Chi” (knowledge), is when the mind and the body work regularly in harmony, and because of the stability of the shooting, the desired form is yours. This level can be achieved only through intensive practice and repetition of the same movements.

Training for the corporate environment is the same as in practice for martial arts: the critical factors are repetition and content to bring forth the form in the body of the organization. When training activation reaches a certain level, we can see the staff naturally exhibit the desired behaviors in their daily actions. The leadership team of the company is the spirit of the organization. Its influence permeates the whole body of the organization, in the same way that the archer directs his mind and vital energy to his whole body to perform a proper shooting. The Japanese proverb, “fish start to perish by the head,” is often quoted to describe the responsibility of the top management for sustaining a healthy organization.

doing, we can expect the individual to lead a fulfilling life, grow into their full potential and perform better at work. Today, work-life balance is still an issue for many companies. Chouchan relates, “At Godiva Japan, we support our employees in having a good work-life balance, and they are very grateful for this. For example, Fridays are called ‘Happy Fridays.’ After two o’clock, the employees go out and visit our shops or do something fulfilling for their personal life. Through this practice, we encourage them to feel and experience the importance of activities outside the office. As we are in the business of providing happiness, this is a beneficial practice for both the individual and the company. It is often by walking around in town that new ideas and services for the consumer can pop up.”

For those who are on a path of self-development, as we have seen with Kyudo, every obstacle should be seen as an opportunity to perfect the character and grow. In a fast-moving, globalized world, inspiration from ancient wisdoms and arts has relevance to business now more than ever. This is a journey that each of us can embark upon with sincerity and determination. Progress along the Way will improve the man, the company, and society as a whole.

## How to Live a Fulfilling Second Life

In Kyudo, it is fundamental that the left and right arm work in balance to draw the bow and then release the arrow with the hands moving equally in a straight line to the left and the right. Applying the metaphor of this balance to the workplace, it can be said that these two forces between work and life should complement each other harmoniously, just as the left and right arm do in Japanese archery. In so



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