

## The Best Tool For The Job

Written by MT Staff  
Friday, 01 April 2005 00:00

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What do Peter Drucker, the management guru, and Bruce Lee, the late martial arts master, have in common? Not much on the surface, but both were paradigm busters. Both came up during preparation for the luncheon talk I gave at the Reliability Centered Maintenance Managers Forum last month in Clearwater Beach, FL—Drucker during research into management science and Lee during a break watching TV where I caught a piece of his biography on a cable channel.

Drucker, in his 1954 book *The Practice of Management*, outlined a new approach for managing all types of businesses. It was Management by Objectives (MBO) and it reigned supreme during the 1960s and beyond.

MBO is made up of five principles:

- Cascading of organizational goals and objectives
- Specific objectives for each member
- Participative decision making
- Explicit time period
- Performance evaluation and feedback.

MBO also introduced the SMART method for checking the validity of the objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time related.

Lee, using techniques from many fighting disciplines, developed an innovative martial arts style that more closely approached actual hand-to-hand street fighting than other styles. He called it Jeet Kune Do—Way of the Intercepting Fist.

He was instrumental in revolutionizing the sport of karate, leading it toward a full-contact sport. Steve McQueen, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Chuck Norris were among his more well-known students.

What did they have in common besides developing a revolutionary style? They both had a similar perspective about what they were doing. They realized that there are many techniques for fighting and managing, but the participant who has a wide skill set and can recognize when

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each is appropriate is best prepared to deal with whatever life serves up.

Lee's style evolved into what he called the Style of No Style. Being somewhat of a philosopher, he noted that "having no way as the way. Having no limitation as your limitation" and "to float in totality, to have no technique, is to have all techniques."

Forty years after developing MBO, Drucker said, "It's just another tool. It is not the great cure for management inefficiency. MBO works if you know the objectives; 90 percent of the time you don't."

They are both saying that we must hone our skills and strive to understand the problem before we commit to a solution, and then select the best tool for the job.

[Robert C. Baldwin](#) , CMRP, Editor