

MAPS

Traditional Karate Research Paper & Articles

Andries Pruim

Introduction

In writing a book, especially a martial arts book, one must rely on a myriad of sources for our information. Even then, a research document like this one must be considered a "living document" as it needs to be updated regularly due to the constant changes in the Martial Arts World. While we focus first on the history of "Karate", we also researched and wrote about the growth of the Martial Arts Industry together with its Business implications.

In completing research for Karate-Do: A Simple Path we have utilized a variety of books, various on-line sources as well as visiting Japan on a number of occasions in order to occasions talk with individuals who have willingly supplied their knowledge in order to accomplish the task of writing this book.

When accumulating the information for this effort, it became obvious that there were always at least two versions of any historical fact which were pertinent to the true detailing of all martial art history. In many cases within this work, we will try to give both (or all) versions and allow the reader to decide on which story to believe. We had to acknowledge this dilemma and the decision was made to portray the information and versions which were the most accepted by the leading scholars of the martial arts.

With high regard to the intellect of the reader, this book tries to eliminate those traditions and legends which were a little far-fetched, unless it was for the sake of establishing the reasons for the portrayal or development of any individual or martial art. This in-depth study into the roots of the various arts and especially Karate-Do will hopefully enable the reader to appreciate their own art/style even more.

Many philosophies, traditions, and personal interpretations will be presented here. But even with all the various Karate styles, there is still an underlying philosophy that gains the respect of every fellow martial artist. This philosophy will be the basis on which this book is written.

We must all realize that there are many paths on which enlightenment and discovery can be attained. If the knowledge which the martial artist has gained throughout their training makes that person a better human being, then we must acknowledge that person's efforts and their "style". We must also respect their decision on choosing their own path.

Competition in the western society is one of the main driving forces that exist in our daily lives and careers. Unfortunately, this same attitude is not always healthy when the same force is in conjunction with most martial arts training. Competition, while healthy at times, can become an aggressive attitude just to satisfy an over inflated ego.

With this in mind, we will not stress the competition between the styles, but rather we will show the relationship that connects all the styles. We will explain the history, traditions and techniques of a broad range of styles which in turn will highlight the great talents involved with Karate-Do.

With the rapid spreading of different styles of Karate (and other Martial Arts) over the past 40 years, many new students and fans have been brought into the world of martial arts. This influx of the more sophisticated student will continually bring out the quality instructors that our varied systems can produce. It is hoped that the reader will use this book as a reference manual that can be used to satisfy the curious minds of dedicated students of Karate-Do.



KARA	TE	DO
Empty	*hand*	*way*

Modern Karate's Beginnings

In today's Martial Arts market there are a myriad of styles or schools to choose from. These various institutions teach everything from Tai-Chi, Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Kickboxing to full contact MMA.

All martial arts have their various followers and supporters and each are effective if performed correctly. In this research document we will not present to you what *we* consider the 'best' or 'worst' but rather we will simply detail a single chapter of the martial arts, namely: Karate.

While Karate (or Karate-Do) is quite popular these days, but this is due primarily to its commercialization, through several movies and television series. Unfortunately, not all of these performances portray Karate in a positive perspective, including those who take advantage of unsuspecting students to either make a name for themselves or some quick profits.

Karate in its purest form is a traditional and time-honored martial art. Most schools that are located in North America teach Karate this way and do justice to the Art. These instructors are aware of the centuries of thought and effort that were an integral part of the development of Karate - before the Art even reached the North American shores.

Karate was first introduced to the North American market by American Serviceman, who were stationed in Japan and Okinawa after the defeat of the Japanese in the second world war. After Japan surrendered in 1945, the American army led by General Douglas MacArthur, occupied the islands of Japan and Okinawa.

Some of the first actions the American occupation forces carried out, upon arrival in Japan and Okinawa, was to close all military schools and organizations. This also included all the martial arts schools. It was for this reason that all the great martial art masters went back home to earning a living in some other way.

Most also continued to train with their students privately. A great deal of secrecy was necessary. Fortunately, through persistence, the talents of these great men eventually became known to the American soldiers stationed in Japan and Okinawa.

The first instruction of Karate to an American was on Okinawa, and for good reason. The Okinawans have always been an oppressed people and yet throughout the centuries have been also known as friendly people.

The Okinawans have had many travelers, traders, and oppressive leaders in their history. It was for this reason that their philosophy took on a very diplomatic edge. It mainly consisted of trying to look at all aspects of life and to live a good safe and simple life.

When the United States invaded Okinawa, they were not the first invading army to do so and therefore the Okinawans accepted the new change in government with resolve. When the American army finally took control of Okinawa they did so at a great expense to the civilian population. A great number of Okinawans were homeless and did what they could to continue their lives. Unfortunately, there were instances where an individual had to give up some dignity and honor in order to survive.

This was the same case where he majority of the American Soldiers are concerned. Some of the soldiers were keenly interested in learning as much karate as possible in the shortest period of time. In order to do so, they would buy their ranks. Most of the instructors resisted but not all. Okinawa was devastated by the war and the need to survive was difficult and sometimes undignified.

Fortunately, most of the training received by the soldiers were of high caliber both on Okinawa and Japan. It was this quality training that was brought back to North America, where after a few short years, it became very popular.

Even though karate became well known and popular after the second world war, it is generally accepted that other Asian Martial Arts were practiced in North America many years prior to this time. These arts actually appeared in North America along with the First immigrants who came over from China in the mid nineteenth century.



Early Chinese Immigration

The first known appearance of the Chinese in California was around the City of San Francisco in late 1848.

China at this time was in a state of chaos. She had just been soundly defeated by the British in what has become known as the `Opium War'. The Chinese government, already fraught with corruption, was ordered to submit to demands imposed upon it by the western powers. These conditions as well as other natural calamities, made living in China so difficult that many were willing to try and improve their fortunes by working in a strange new land. Chinese immigrants went to many parts of the world including a harsh unfriendly land called California.

Most of the immigrants were men who would leave their family to make their fortunes. It was the intention of most of these men to come back to their family with enough money to live comfortably. The Chinese traveled to many new lands and were well aware of those lands that brought fortune and wealth. Soon a new land was being talked about. A land far across the great pacific. A place called California

It was here in California that many of the Chinese immigrants soon came. When gold was discovered in 1849 at Sutter's Mill near San Francisco, news of this discovery was quickly spread back to China.

The first arrivals from China to California were lucky enough to make themselves a comfortable fortune. They returned to their homes in China as rich men and told many tales of this land with mountains of gold (Gum San). At the end of 1851 there were approximately 4,000 Chinese in California, by the end of the very next year this number rose to 25,000.

With this large, influx of men, not only did they bring their strength but also their culture and traditions. As the Chinese were a very civilized and ancient society (and because living with white American prospectors became very dangerous) they soon formed in organizations known as "benevolent societies".

These benevolent societies began to organize the man-power that the new Chinese immigrants were capable of providing. These societies actually took reasonably good care of the new immigrant. They would set him up in one of the many railway gangs, provide the food, transportations and also be the go between for the employer. Therefore, the new immigrant would receive his pay from the mining companies or the railway companies via the benevolent society. Of course, by the time the money got down the actual worker, each hand it passed through got its share.

Eventually these societies became so lucrative that they also began to supply entertainment for the mostly male population of new immigrants. These "entertainments" included gambling and prostitution. Once the profits began to soar, professional gangs came over from China to reorganize the situation.

These gangs were called 'Tongs' (or Triads) and were very powerful as well as ruthless. Tong members would eliminate rival members very effectively using a minimal of weapons. It is from these professional Tong members that Kung-Fu (Chuan Fa) first arrived from China.

A person in North America could only learn this art if he was a member (in good standing) of a Tong or society. Even though most Tongs tried to keep their abilities secret, there were many instances where they displayed their talents.

When the Chinese immigrated to North America, they eventually found themselves in isolated sections of the towns and cities. These "Chinatowns" were the only safe haven for the Chinese to wander freely and un-harassed. It is also within these communities that most Tong wars occurred, with very few outside witnesses.

Fortunately for history's sake, there were instances where witnesses were present and there is some evidence of the recognition of an unarmed martial art being displayed by certain individuals in Chinatown.

Below is a picture of an event that took place in Weaverville, California in 1854. This was an actual Tong war that occurred between two rival Chinese Miners Societies. Knowledge of this battle was known to almost everyone for several weeks before the actual battle.

There were several occidental witnesses this battle, including one American who died after he shot into the group of fighters. Accounts indicate that these individuals were very proficient with the spear like weaponry. This basically confirms the utilization and exposure of Asian Martial Arts in North America prior to Twentieth Century.



Another obvious recognition of martial art abilities in the Chinese immigrants is apparent when we examine a bill that passed by the city of San Francisco in late 19th Century. The Chinese who first immigrated to North America found the life a great struggle with adjusting to a whole new world as well as facing many instances of prejudice. At first the hard-working life was tolerable, with jobs that included mining and railroad work.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long before prejudice forced the Chinese from these, what were considered quite lucrative jobs. They were forced into accepting jobs which made earning a living even harder than before. It went to such an extreme that the only jobs available were those not wanted by anyone else. Even as such, it was their intelligence and diligence that would eventually bring the Chinese living standards a little higher.

In early San Francisco, the city initially began as a city of tents and in fact was populated mainly by men. Due to its rapid growth the city required individuals to perform regular household chores and other various cleaning duties. It actually became a considerable problem of its day.

In addition, it was due to the lack of fresh water around San Francisco that the Chinese eventually got into the business of laundering. The Chinese saw the vacuum and filled it.

It was in this successful business venture that we saw one of the first acknowledgements of a Chinese fighting style in North America. With their successful business bringing the standard of living higher in the Chinese community, they obviously wanted to protect it.

So when resentment started to build against the efficiency of the laundry men, the Chinese business leaders made some small preparations. They were a few instances where an Chinese laundry man was severely roughed-up while weighted down by his laundry load. The Chinese, who would pick-up and deliver the laundry, usually carried their load in two large baskets. These men would carry their baskets at the end of a pole, which in turn was placed upon their shoulders.

In order to defend themselves, some of the Chinese started to learn a Chinese martial art of the pole (Kan in Chinese, Bo in Japan). When assaulted by resentful militant laborers, they began to use their staff to ward off the thugs. These laundry carriers actually became so efficient that ordinance came into effect *prohibiting the Chinese laundrymen from carrying poles.*

For this reason only one basket could be carried and this had to be carried by hand. The civic officials of early San Francisco, without realizing it, historically recorded one of the first authentic acknowledgments of Asian martial arts arrival in North America.



Karate's connection to China

On the other hand, Karate itself, was still a very secret and unknown art on the islands of the Ryukyo Archipelago. This group of islands is located just south of Japan stretching towards China. Today we know these islands as the prefecture of Okinawa. At the time of the Second World War, Okinawa was part of the Japanese empire and it was these islands that the United States first invaded during their final conquest of Japan. Therefore, it wasn't until the defeat of the Japanese forces in 1945 that American servicemen became knowledgeable in the Art of Karate.

What was unusual though was that karate was actually known and practiced on the island of Hawaii as early as 1920. It never really made the jump to the mainland as one might have expected. This was due to the diverse population of the islands and especially its large Japanese/Okinawan population. Organizations and athletic clubs would regularly sponsor karate masters from Okinawa and Japan.

One of the earliest to demonstrate and lecture was a Shuri-Te master named Yabu Kentsu. He demonstrated at a small YMCA in the Japanese community of Honolulu which was attended by local Japanese and Okinawan spectators only.

These special interest groups were a very tight knit group of individuals and even though they sponsored many karate masters to come and lecture in Hawaii, they allowed only a select few to watch. Between 1920 and 1935 many great karate instructors came to Hawaii and demonstrated their art.

Amongst these were the aforementioned Yabu Kentsu, who returned to an extended visit in 1927. Also included were Zuiho Matsu, Kamesuke Higaonna, and the famed founder of the Gojo-Ryu Karate, Miyagi Chojun whose demonstration was one of the first to be witnessed by occidentals in addition to the local Asian community.

Surprisingly, even though the Japanese population still had some contempt for those things Okinawan, Karate was not one of them. Karate was introduced to the Japan as recently as 1922 and since this time has become extremely popular. This introduction of karate was due mainly to a successful demonstration led by a school teacher from Okinawa, Funakoshi Gichin, who was also a leading Master of this indigenous form of combat known as Karate.

When Funakoshi began to lecture in Japan in the 1920 ‘s, the art of karate finally took off in popularity until the Japanese couldn't get enough of it. Funakoshi Gichin, (of whom we will discuss in detail in a later chapter), being one of the foremost experts of this new empty-hand self-defense decided at a certain point in his life to stay in Japan proper at the urging of his wife and his new Japanese students.



Funakoshi took it as his mission to pass on the art of Karate to the Japanese people. With him from Okinawa came many other masters of karate. Some of the first who came to Japan were also some of the greatest instructors who have existed. They were:

*	**Gichin Funakoshi**	**1922**	**(* surname shown here last)**
	Choki Motobu	**1922**	
	Kanbun Vechi	**1924**	
	Kenwa Mabuni	**1927**	
	Chojun Miyagi	**1928**	

It wasn't long until there were well over 200 Karate schools proliferating the art throughout Japan. Interestingly, even though Karate formally introduced to Karate in the 1920 ‘s, there was a private demonstration of Karate in 1917 at a famous martial arts hall in Kyoto called the Butokuden.



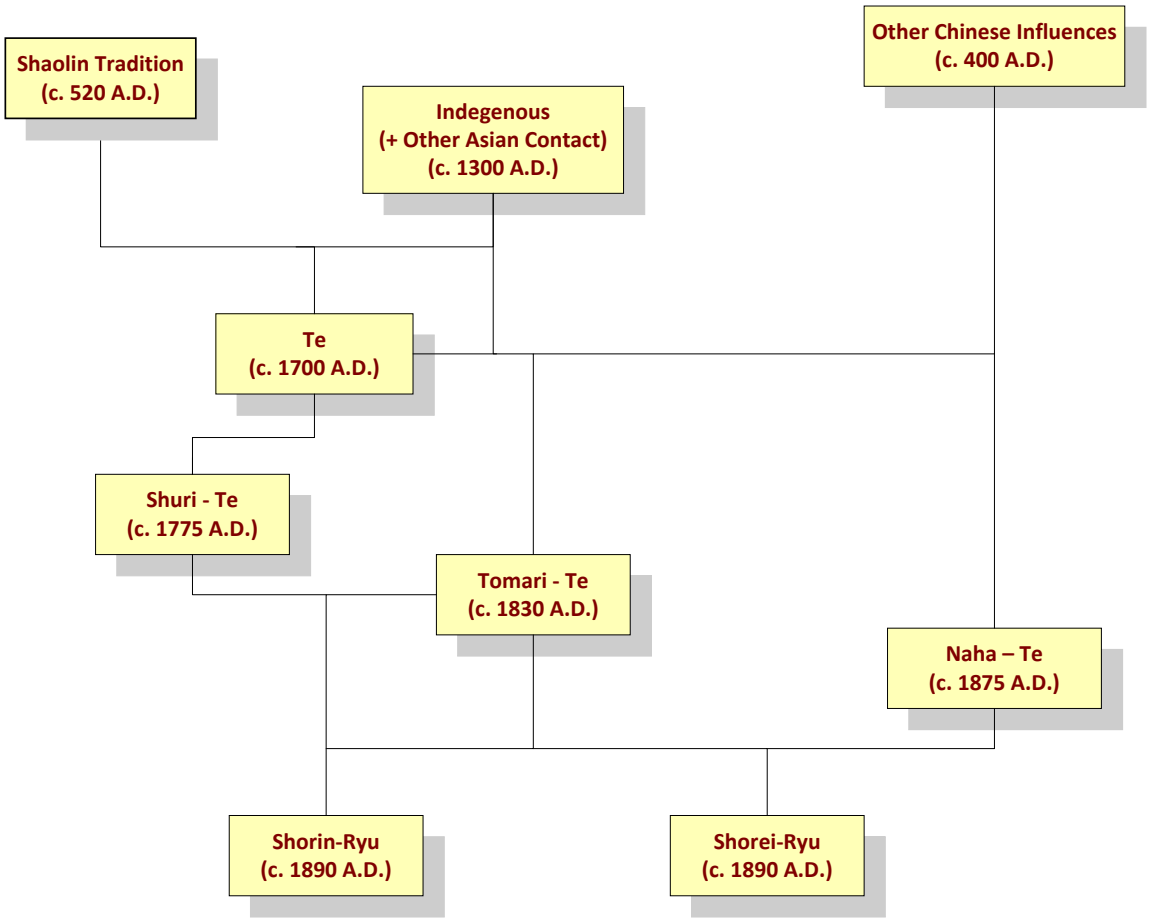
This great building was the Japanese military arts school in Kyoto. The organization that ran the Butokuden was called the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (Great Japan Martial Arts Virtues Association). This organization could trace their roots to the eighteenth century (A.D.) and had their headquarters built near the emperor's palace in 1899. Unfortunately, at this point in history the Japanese still looked down on everything Okinawan and so Karate remained virtually unknown to the Japanese people.

This was all to change in 1922 when Gichin Funakoshi put on his demonstration at the National Athletic Exhibition that was being held in Tokyo.

Funakoshi, as previously mentioned, along with many of the Karate masters were from Okinawa, the largest of the Ryukyo islands. The style of "Shotokan Karate" was a name given to Funakoshi's art by his students. The style which Funakoshi taught was actually a combination of two main styles that he had learned. These two, quite dramatically different styles were called Shorin-Ryu and Shorei-Ryu.

As can be seen in the following chart even these two styles were developed from an art simply known as 'Te'. Te was the indigenous unarmed combat techniques that were taught on Okinawa.

Style Geneology



It was the various rulers of Okinawa that contributed to the development of Karate. Initially it was the ruling family that first unified Okinawa and in turn the conquering Japanese invaders who both forbade the possession of any weapons by the general population. The decree was one of the main reason for the suppressed inhabitants to learn this form of unarmed combat training.

The island of Okinawa is midway between Japan proper and the great civilization of China. Many seagoing merchants stopped in the port cities of Okinawa, mainly to rest and re-supply. Naturally some of these sailors eventually stayed in this friendly land.

When the original King of Okinawa pledged allegiance to the emperor of China, many cultural exchanges took place. It was around 1350 AD that Okinawa became a tributary of China. King Satto of Okinawa was more or less forced to once again acknowledge the Emperor in Peking in 1372.

It was at this historical point that formal trade routes were set up along with an official exchange of envoys. It was through these exchanges that the introduction of a systematized form of fighting called Chaun-Fa (Fist Law) was presented to the Okinawans.

The Chuan-Fa (Kempo in Japanese) that came from China were of various styles but the majority of these had their origins in the same location, namely the Buddhist Temple of Shaolin. This temple, located in the central province of Honan was eventually destroyed and it was the survivors of the Shaolin Temple that secretly taught their art to others. These survivors formed organizations (or benevolent societies) which were brought together for the sole purposes of overthrowing the tyrannical government, which incidentally was responsible for the destruction of the Shaolin temple.

The originator of this martial art form is thought to be a simple monk named Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma, who was the 26th patriarch of the Dhyana Sect of Buddhism, traveled from India to China, originally to merely spread the word of Buddha. In the next chapter we will detail the beginning of the art that eventually developed into Karate.

BODHIDHARMA



In the early part of the Sixth Century, the head of a certain Buddhist faith in India passed away, he left his Patriarch position to his foremost disciple, a monk named Bodhitara. It was at this time that the now 26th Patriarch of the Dhyana Sect of Buddhism changed his name to Bodhidharma and made a decision that would alter history for millions of people, in many different ways.

Even though much has been written of Bodhidharma, this great priest is still thought of as part legend and part myth. This unusual, yet brilliant monk is now considered the Founder of Shaolin Style Kung-Fu (Chuan-fa). Bodhidharma is also acknowledged as a pioneer in the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Though he is considered a Patron Saint of most martial artistry, Bodhidharma, nevertheless was a very mysterious individual.

There is some evidence which supports the fact an Indian Monk traveled to China, had an audience with the emperor, and then traveled to a monastery, where he spent long periods of time in meditation. It is generally believed that this person was Bodhidharma who was known to the Chinese as Ta Mo and later to the Japanese as Dharma Taishi.

Bodhidharma is believed to have been born in the city of Kanchipuram, which is located near Madras on the East Coast of India. It was throughout his childhood in this area of India, that Bodhidharma learnt some indigenous fighting techniques. The fighting art which was learnt by Bodhidharma was known as southern-style "Kalarippayattu". Kalarippayattu roughly translates as "Battlefield Training", still exists today in some parts of India and is believed to be the oldest surviving martial art in India.

Once Bodhidharma turned to his religious calling, his use of this art diminished considerably. Bodhidharma devoted himself entirely to the Buddhist Faith and became the Patriarch without any known opposition. Even though at this point in history Buddhism had spread almost entirely throughout India, Bodhidharma's religious zeal forced him to work at spreading the word of Buddha even further.

It was after he became Patriarch that Bodhidharma decided to travel China, the most populated and the most civilized nation of its time. With his decision made, Bodhidharma started his slow journey to China, walking the entire distance. For most of the journey he walked alone with only his thoughts to accompany him. Buddhism had entered China several hundred years prior to the arrival of Bodhidharma but it was still struggling to become fully entrenched as an accepted religion.

There is record of the existence of Buddhism in China around 65 A.D. Unfortunately as its popularity grew, just like most religions around the world, it had to struggle (and at most time violently) to survive. There are records of several power struggles that ensued over the years between Buddhist communities in China and the older religion of Taoism.

When Bodhidharma entered China he traveled directly to the Court of the Emperor. Here Bodhidharma was granted an audience with Emperor Wu Ti, of the Liang Dynasty. He told the Emperor that he wished only to get permission in order to spread the word of Buddha throughout the land.

Although the word of Buddha was fresh in China at this point in history, it was still quite popular and even the Emperor was an avid supporter of this "new" Religion. It was for this reason that the new Patriarch was given such a quick audience by the Emperor. Wishing to impress Bodhidharma, the Emperor started to list all the Temples he had built for Buddhism and all the other donations he had made to this righteous religion.

However, Bodhidharma was not impressed and bluntly said so. Surprised by this reaction, the Emperor started to question Bodhidharma and when he asked Bodhidharma what he considered was the first law of Buddhism and was answered by a single word: "Nothing". The Emperor became angry. At this point, he demanded to know who Bodhidharma thought he was. Again, the reply he received from Bodhidharma was a one word answer: "Nobody".

Frustrated but still respecting Bodhidharma's spirit and devotion, the Emperor asked the Patriarch to stay at his court and to teach him the true ways. He wished to learn the reasons to Bodhidharma's puzzling replies. To his dismay, it turned out that Bodhidharma wished only to be left alone and indicated that he had come to the court only to seek permission to wander throughout China.

The Emperor granted Bodhidharma's request to spread the word of Buddha. This solitary monk then left the court and proceeded to wander throughout the vast Chinese countryside.

It was through these wanderings that many legends were told of Bodhidharma, some real and some that were just a little larger than life. One small story was concerning Bodhidharma's arrival at the Yangzi River. Being one of the largest Rivers in China, it had many ferrymen willing to take Bodhidharma across, for a small cost. Surprisingly, Bodhidharma declined all offers and proceeded to cross the mighty river upon a single reed.

There were purportedly many astonished witnesses, including a government envoy who claimed that Bodhidharma stood upright on this reed as he crossed. At the end of his wanderings, Bodhidharma came upon a Temple located in the Honan Province of Central China. This established Temple was known as "Zhongshan Shaolin Szu" or "Central Mountain Small Forest Temple". Bodhidharma asked the Abbott of this Temple for permission to stay and rest for a short time.

The Shaolin Temple itself was built in 495 A.D. at the foot of a mountain, which was situated at the midpoint of a number of major mountain ranges, hence its name. It was because of the topographical geography of this area, that this particular location was considered auspicious.

A second and more important reason for the Temple being constructed was due to the then Emperor of China wanting to build a place for a great Buddhist monk from India to live and spread the `word'. This great priest was named Batuo and soon turned this modest temple into one of the most important in all of China and so when Bodhidharma arrived around 520 A.D. the temple already had many disciples.

It should be noted here that a second "Shaolin Temple was built in the Chinese province of Fukien, but our interest and that which relates to the development of Karate lies in the original structure, as previously described.

It was at this temple that Bodhidharma was to stay for the rest of his life and would eventually create a set of exercises that would eventually evolve into Karate. Bodhidharma did not simply introduce some techniques for the sole purpose of self-defense, but rather these techniques were initially to be utilized as some exercises for his followers.

It seems that when Bodhidharma first came to the Shaolin Szu (Temple) he was left alone by the other Monks. In fact, he actually avoided all contact with them. He would simply sit near a wall and meditate all day. It is said that at one point, his meditations continued uninterrupted for nine years.



When asked for what purpose was Bodhidharma meditating while facing the walls, he replied that he was simply "listening to the ants scream." One of the other monks was so impressed that he actually cut off one of his hands as a symbolic gesture of sympathy.

Whether or not this or any of the other legends were true, Bodhidharma soon had a substantial following. It was through this form of meditation that eventually formed the basis of a new method of Religious Study. This dramatically different type of worshipping was known as Chan or Zen Buddhism.



Zen Buddhism became a religion in which the novice seeks inner peace or self-enlightenment through the simple method of meditation. (Of course, this is a simplistic way of looking at Zen Buddhism, yet many volumes are required to justifiably explain the true purpose of this religion).

Unfortunately for the Monks, this constant meditation was a little too strenuous for them. The long hours of meditation caused a major portion of the monks to fall asleep. Bodhidharma quickly noticed that most of the monks were very frail and did almost no exercise other than walking to and from the meditation halls. It was here where Bodhidharma decided that the use of the art he had learned as a youth back in India, could be beneficial.

In order to get the monks physically fit, Bodhidharma taught them some Kalarippayattu techniques. Along with these martial art exercises, he also worked the monks hard in the fields. Eventually, the monks became excellent farmers and surprisingly fine martial artists. The techniques taught to the novice monks, over the years became known as the "Eighteen Movements." These movements were of a military nature and stressed a high mental, as well as physical performance.

Living in the time of the Liang Dynasty was hazardous at the best of times. The central government was only strong around the major cities and as such, there were many thieves and highway robbers who picked on any innocent traveler or peasant.

The exercises that Bodhidharma taught allowed the monks to complete their meditations, to become physically fit, and had actually enabled them to defend themselves against those individuals trying to enrich themselves by attacking Temples and monks. Eventually the criminals, who were able to escape with their lives, spread the fame and prestige of the Shaolin Priests.

While there is still much speculation to the existence of Bodhidharma, there does exist a literary work by a citizen of Lo-yang (modern Honan) who describes an encounter he had with a monk named Bodhidharma.

There are some distortions involved with his conversations with Bodhidharma, which in turns raises some question to its authenticity or at the very least its accuracy.

Unfortunately, there is almost no mention of Bodhidharma for over four hundred years after this one record. There is some speculation to why there was no other mention of this priest and the main reason is thought to involve the age-old confrontation of new religion versus old religion.

Zen, when initially introduced was dramatically different from what was the major philosophies of the day, as such those few who adhered to its concepts would have, no doubt been persecuted. It would have been a few hundred years before this radical philosophy could attain the following to become accepted.

It must be remembered that most of the religions of the time of Bodhidharma had elaborate ceremonies and devoted much of their time to the reading of complicated scriptures. Zen, on the other hand was a simple philosophy to be enjoyed by all and would have alienated a few intellectuals at first.

We will describe Zen in more detail in a later chapter, but we can see that even if there was very little written of Bodhidharma at the time of his stay at the Shaolin Temple, this does not necessarily prove that he did not exist.

We must again reiterate that any records of Bodhidharma if they did exist were destroyed either in the first destruction of the temple in the mid seventeenth century or in the last great fire within the temple in 1928. This unfortunately eliminates any real proof to which we can turn to for securing the true position of Bodhidharma as the Patriarch of Zen.

While the existence of martial arts prior to the Shaolin Temple is not argued, it is believed that it was Bodhidharma that initially promoted this form of fighting as a spiritual development. Prior to this radical philosophy, most who learned any form of martial art did so for fighting purposes only and were fond of fighting any one, for any reason.

It is also believed that as well as introducing the concept of Zen and spiritual development (through martial arts training) to the Shaolin Temple, Bodhidharma had introduced one of the earliest uses of the individual inner force. This internal energy became known as Chi (Ki in Japanese).

This Ki was useful to the trainee both in their martial training as well as to help the monks discipline themselves to the point of ascertaining the true meaning of Zen.

The Shaolin Temple prospered for many more years as did the exercises that Bodhidharma introduced. Even after the death of Bodhidharma, the art matured and continued to grow and many new disciples entered this monastery to learn both the Art and the teachings of Zen.

It was from these simple roots that Karate-do eventually evolved. Bodhidharma taught the monks of Shaolin two methods of training that also can be found in today's Karate Training.

The first method was called Yi Jing Jin (or "Ekkinkyo" in Japanese) which stresses a series of exercises and breathing techniques which evolved into the eighteen movements. The second method was called Yi Shui Jin (or "Senzuikyo in Japanese) which was an exercise for the monks to help them develop their mental and spiritual strengths. Both methods were taught for the sole purpose of enabling the monks to accomplish the long periods of meditation and other duties assigned to them by Bodhidharma.

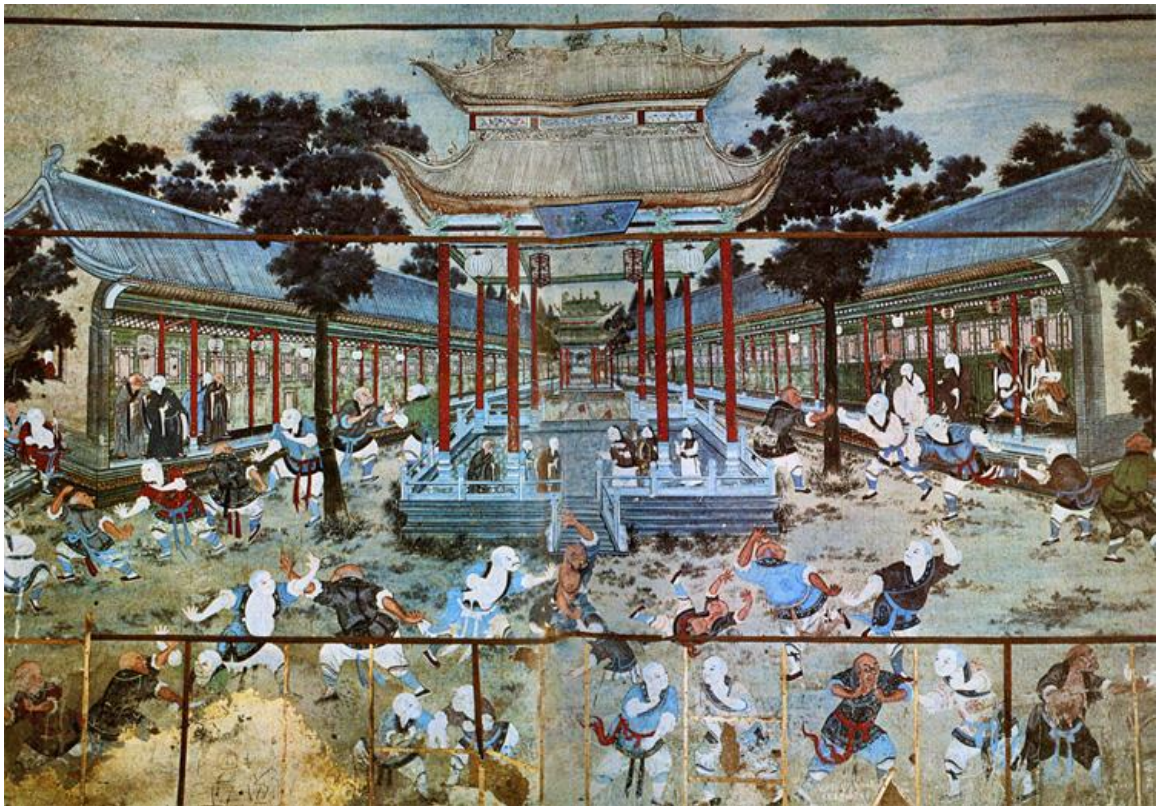
Karate-do that is taught today has the same influences that were initially taught to the monks of the Shaolin Temple over 1500 years ago. Even though many other great individuals improved and developed the Art of Karate to what it has become today, it was the genius of Bodhidharma that initially provided the Spirit of the Art.

Bodhidharma was part myth, part legend, part fact, but the spirit of this priest still lives in every martial art school that stresses the total development of an individual. Bodhidharma is just one more individual that has become part of the time-honored tradition of today's Karate Training.

Our personal striving for perfection in Karate-do is an ideal that was originally put forth by Bodhidharma, and recognition of this fact is now slowly being acknowledged by Martial Artists everywhere. We can see now that no matter what the style of Karate that an individual trains at, his or her efforts have over 15 centuries of tradition behind them.

Life After Bodhidharma

At the height of the temple's prosperity, many years after the death of Bodhidharma, the complex housed around 1500 monks. This contingent of priests also included more than 500 fighting monks.



It was the legacy of Bodhidharma that convinced many students over the years to travel to the Shaolin Temple either to learn about Buddhism and meditation or simply for the Martial Arts training.

Some who trained martial arts elsewhere also came to the Shaolin Temple for it was still known as the origin of Kung-Fu or as it is more correctly known - Chuan-Fa. One of these "martial art monks" actually developed the art tenfold when he became the head of the temple. This priest named Cheuh Yuan, with the assistance of another Chuan-Fa expert, expanded the original sets which were being learned by the novices, into various sets which were all divided into five separate animal groups.

The five in question were the Tiger, Dragon, Leopard, Crane and Snake. Each set within one of these groups contained techniques which resembled the movements of that particular animal. The studies into the martial arts aspect of the temple gave such proficiency to the monks and their fighting skills that no one would dare to challenge them.

Every priest from the Shaolin Temple was recognized and respected everywhere he went throughout China. When the Emperor heard of the effectiveness of the fighting force of this unique temple, he proceeded to hired the temple to help put down a rebellion. Unfortunately, this proficiency was also the reason for the temple's downfall. The new Emperor in Peking eventually saw them as a threat to his government so in 1674 he ordered his troops to storm the temple and burn it down, along with its all of its inhabitants.

Again the government forces underestimated the fighting force that was gathered at the temple and it was only because of a traitor inside the temple that finally allowed the victory of the government troops.

The fighting was fierce and many died with only five of the priests escaping with their lives. These five were some of the finest instructors in the martial arts section of the temple and it was this talent and skill that allowed them to escape the destruction.

The five masters became known as the "Five Ancestors" and they spread throughout China to pass on the knowledge they possessed. All five had separate styles of the exercises that they were taught, but all had the same Zen Buddhist background training.

The first thing these talented monks did was to organize the people who wished to overthrow the new tyrannical government that now sat in Peking. These "societies" utilized the martial art training to prepare themselves to fight against governmental troops. These societies became very powerful and in turn the style of training each society possessed eventually spread throughout Asia. Soon many had trained in this new self-defense but unfortunately many did not just use their training skills for purely self-defense purposes and in this way the art also spread.

One avenue that this art took in expanding throughout Asia was the way of the military. The Military immediately saw the potential for this defensive form of unarmed (hand to hand) combat. These forms of exercises became an essential part of a Warrior's training.

The military avenue also included the navy and of these Asian countries, there were many sailors who also had some training (or experience) in the martial arts (Chuan-fa).

It was from these sources that the martial art of Chuan-fa was eventually found its way to the island of Okinawa. It was here where karate was to eventually develop to what it is today.

OKINAWA

To explain why it was Okinawa (and not some other location) where this particular martial art spread to the degree that it did, one must look at Okinawa's location in Asia.



As can be seen in the map, Okinawa is part of the Ryukyu Islands (or Archipelago) and is located half-way between China and Japan. The military uses of Chuan-fa were brought to Okinawa via the movement of sailors between these two lands. The main reason for a stop-over on Okinawa was trade. China would trade with both Korea and Japan in order for rest and re-supply, they would dock in the port cities of Okinawa, it being the largest of the Ryukyu Islands.

For these reasons, the exposure of the people of this island to such a variety of customs and personalities was extensive. However, there was also another reason why the inhabitants found themselves wanting to learn some sort of martial art training and that was due to the government that ruled the island.

The island of Okinawa was finally united under the guidance of a Noble family of warriors, in the thirteenth century. The new "Sho" government had its initial problems in establishing itself, but soon the people of Okinawa were finally being ruled by one individual and his family.

King Sho Shin of the second dynasty of "Sho" kings came to power in the year 1477. One of the first decrees to be proclaimed by this new dynasty was the confiscation of all weapons. It was law now that only the government troops were allowed to bear arms. All citizens and farmers were required to bring their weapons to their local governmental offices. The Government then stores all the weapons in giant warehouses for "safety" purposes.



Without any form of normal weaponry, the only defense which the common people could depend on was the utilization of their simple unarmed bodies. Plus of course, their ingenuity.

The ingenuity and tolerance of the Okinawan people is legendary. This can be seen when one looks at its history of international trade. Okinawa has always welcome travelers and had numerous sailors that became shipwrecked on the island.

This was actually the way in which Buddhism was first introduced to Okinawa. A Japanese priest named Zenkan was shipwrecked on the island between the period of 1265 to 1274. He realized the beauty and sincerity of the people and decided to stay. It was not long after this decision that Zenkan was able to procure permission to erect a temple.

The Okinawans had many further contacts with other Japanese sailors, but more regularly it was traders from the giant neighbor to the west, the Chinese. In fact, by the fourteenth century the Emperor of China realized the potential of this small Island. In turn the Emperor's forces convinced the then king of Okinawa to subjugate his island to China, for the benefit of all.

Japan also had a considerable input to the development of Karate on Okinawa. Unfortunately, it was not a cultural exchange but rather a military confrontation.

When the warring factions of the two most powerful clans in Japan spilled over onto the Island of Okinawa, the result was an influx of highly talented individuals that required a new home to settle in.

The Gempei War, which occurred around the latter part of the twelfth century, rivaled two of the most powerful families (or clans) in Japan against each other. Unfortunately for the Taira family and all their relatives, the loss was complete and thus self-banishment from Japan proper was the only way to survive.

It is therefore thought that after the final defeat of the Taira in 1185, the samurai of the Taira clan who had estates on southern Kyushu fled further southward to avoid their rivals, the Minamoto.



It was throughout the Ryukyu Islands that these various families found refuge. Fortunately, the Taira were able seamen and were able to evade the Minamoto Clan, who were basically land based samurai. It was also their experience in Sea navigation, as well as being highly qualified warriors, that enabled the Taira refugees to settle on the various Ryukyu Islands. Their skills were in much demand wherever they went and thus were able to settle peacefully with the local inhabitants.

It is obvious that as aspects of these various martial arts skills were passed on to the Okinawans and again the culture of the this unique island was further enriched. On the other hand, as we have previously explained, the Chinese had already discovered the location of the Island of Okinawa to be of strategic importance.

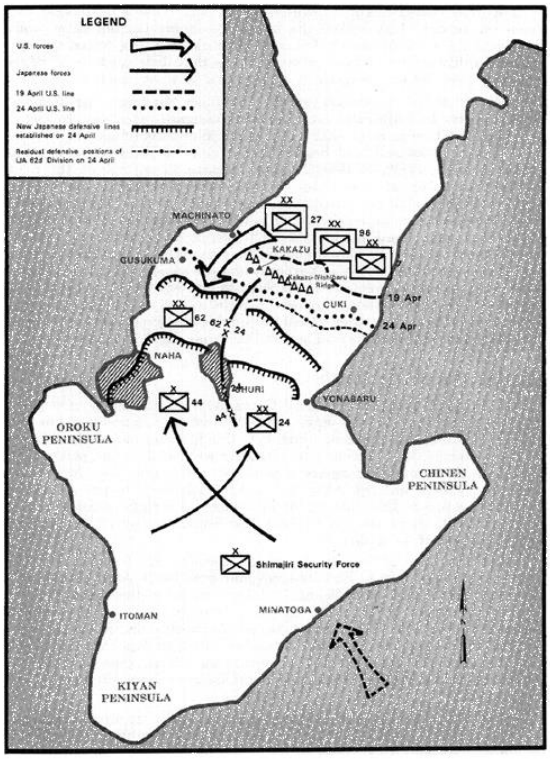
With this alliance the Emperor of China wished to show his new subjects just how much more cultured the Chinese were in comparison to the Okinawans. For this reason, he sent a contingent of families made up of many differently skilled artisans to their island. This collection of experts became known as the "Thirty-six Families" and contributed to the total development of culture on Okinawa.

Many believe that it was the military attaches (of this contingent of families) from whom the art of war was learned. This is also the reason Chuan-fa was learned on Okinawa without the Zen influence, which was the original reason for its creation. Its military applications were readily learned and perfected. To the residents of Okinawa had no weapons to defend themselves other than their mind and their bodies.

It must be noted here that the "true way" did get through to the Okinawans through Buddhist monks who has always trained the original way. Unfortunately, the Okinawans were not really that interested in religion and so the art did not pass through the communities as fast as "te" did. "Te" was the word the Okinawans were using to describe this new fighting technique. Unfortunately, Zen did not really become reconnected with Karate until it left the island and landed in Japan proper.

NAHA

Naha was and is a major seaport on the island of Okinawa as well as a very popular resting place for trading ships to and from China and Japan. It became a bustling trade Centre with many merchants and seamen. It was in this environment that Naha-te was born.



Here, in Naha, lived a young man named Kanryo Higashionna who worked for his uncle's trading business. Kanryo adored his uncle and was extremely upset one day when he heard that his uncle was beaten and mugged by a bunch of hoodlums. Kanryo immediately decided to make it his duty to protect his uncle and was determined to learn the art of Te.

Kanryo then asked his uncle to find someone for him to study with. Because of his uncle's many connections through his trading partners both on Okinawa and in China, he was assured of a qualified instructor.

The uncle was very touched at this gesture and was equally determined to find the best for his nephew (so Kanryo would learn only the best). He decided on two teachers, one in Okinawa and one in China. In China he chose his trading partner Liu lie Ko, who was considered one of the finest Chuan-fa experts of his time. It was with this gentleman that Kanryo would decide to finalize his training. While still on Okinawa he was able to train with Bushi Matsumura who was considered the best instructor of Te on Okinawa.

Bushi Matsumura was the most influential man in all of Karate's history. It was only after Kanryo became a regular student of Matsumura's that his uncle asked Kanryo to go with him on a business trip to China. Kanryo jumped at the invitation and went off to China but even he could not have imagined that it would be twenty years before he would return to his home in Naha.

When Kanryo and his uncle arrived in China, his uncle asked his friend Liu Lui Ko if he would take Kanryo under his guidance and teach him for a while. Lui lei Ko just looked at Kanryo and simply said, "Leave him here for three years." And so, it was Kanryo started training in this very different art form as well as having to learn a new language and culture. But when his uncle asked him after three years if he still wanted to stay or come home, Kanryo thought for only a moment before he chose to stay with Liu Lui.

It would be a total of twenty years before Kanryo would see his island home again. This was only after he fought a highway robber (while traveling) and sent the hooligan running. At this point Liu lei Ko told Kanryo, he had learnt enough to go home and begin to pass on the art honorably and with the respect that it deserves.

Kanryo did return to Okinawa and finally came back to his hometown of Naha. When Kanryo opened his school, many new students signed up for his style, as it was very different to the Te that they were used to seeing. One of his greatest students was a gentleman named Chojun Miyagi.

Chojun Miyagi was an incredibly diverse individual as well as a colorful one. Born in Naha, Miyagi started training with Kanryo very early in his youth and stayed until he was twenty at which time Kanryo suggested that Miyagi also go and train in China. Therefore, Miyagi packed and left. He started to train in a couple of different styles (Chuan-fa) and was able to take up the limited study of Zen.

Miyagi then returned to Naha and continued the school when Kanryo retired. Miyagi systematized the art of Naha-te and introduced breathing and other exercises that he had learned in China. When introducing some of the Chinese training techniques, he introduced the softer influences which were quite a contrast to the hard style of Naha-te. It was at this point that Miyagi changed the name of the style that he taught from Naha-te to Gojo-Ryu. Whereas Naha-te described the origins of the style, the name Goju-Ryu described the style itself. "Go" translates as "hard", whole "Ju" translates as "soft". Therefore, Goju described the hard elements of traditional Te and also the flowing style of the Chinese influence. Ryu best translates as school or style.

Miyagi was a gentleman despite his huge frame. He never used his incredible strength to harm anyone and used Goju-Ryu as a true self-defense art. There is a story about how after the Second World War Miyagi, along with the rest of the Okinawans, worked long days in the fields mainly for livelihood.

Even though Miyagi was quite famous due to Karate abilities he was never recognized harvesting in the fields. His gentle ways and deep humbleness never gave him away most of fellow workers it was actually thought that this man who, was so large yet so quiet, was afraid. Therefore, the other workers had Miyagi bring around the water and tea, a job that, as a rule, was given to woman.

Miyagi simply accepted the chore and went off to do the best job that he could. It was only after one of the longer days where it took the men too much time to put the bales of rice onto the trucks that Miyagi showed his true strength. Miyagi stepped in to help and was able to throw a single bale onto the truck where as it was taking two to three men to do it before.

Soon his feat of strength became famous, whereas he was recognized by other karate instructors who had thought that Miyagi was still in Japan. So many people came to be taught by this great karate sensei who was to pass on the at that even today is one of the largest and most popular styles in the world.

One of his greatest students was a Japanese man named Gogen Yamaguchi who was so proficient in the style that he was given the name "The Cat". Yamaguchi sensei died in 1989 still maintaining the long cat-like hair which was another reason for his nickname.

TOMARI

Tomari, was a metropolitan industrial Centre and grew up in the shadow of Shuri (which was the capital at that time). Tomari-te was a very similar style to Shuri-te but had a little different aspect to its training methods. In Tomari where there was a more blue-collar population, Te took on a hard, fierce, very physical style. The characteristics of Tomari-te were very similar to Shuri-te in the fact that they were both founded by the same man, Karate Sakugawa.

One of Sakugawa ‘s top students was a gentleman named Makabe Chokun who happened to live in Tomari. It was Makabe who continued the development of Te into the style that was to become the forerunner of most of the major Karate styles.



SHURI

On the other hand, Karate Sakugawa also had a fine student in Shuri named Sokon Matsumura. It was Matsumura who was to become one of the most impressive figures in the development of Karate. Matsumura was better known as Bushi Matsumura and it was his martial art training that was to help him get this title.

Bushi Matsumura was the first person to systemize the Shuri-te style into a definite training routine. He introduced many new Kata (or forms as we know them here). Matsumura began to teach more and more students and was the real inspiration to most of Shuri and Tomari's karate students. It was also Matsumura’s intelligence that was to get a lot of attention. One of the best stories actually includes the reason why the title of Bushi was bestowed upon Matsumura.

It was at the height of Matsumura's popularity in Shuri-te that this story takes place. You see, there was an annual bull fight that King Ko of Okinawa instigated to keep the suppressed population happy. This particular year King Ko received, as a gift from the Emperor of Japan, a magnificent bull for competition in the annual event. Therefore, to make the event even more spectacular, the king decided to allow the bull to fight one of Okinawa's great Karate masters. The choice at this time was Matsumura, who was without a doubt, the greatest empty-handed fighter on the island.

When Matsumura found that he had been given the "honor" his true martial art training came to the surface. Matsumura went to the stable where the bull was being kept and asked the attendant if he could see the bull. The attendant, who was a big fan of the great Matsumura, let him in. Matsumura made sure that the attendant had bound and tethered the bull tightly. After which he donned some battle gear and a mask. He slowly approached the bull and silently pulled a long sharp needle from his sleeve. Carefully he approached closer to the bull and with a great burst of speed, jabbed the bull in the nose with the needle.

The reaction was obvious, the bull started to bellow loudly and try in vain to attack this masked person. Matsumura simply turned away and left the stables. Then after making the attendant swear to silence about his visits, he proceeded to repeat this episode every day. Eventually the bull learned to recognize Matsumura in his gear and was extremely fearful of him.

Then came the day of the bull fight and the bull was sent out into the arena. The audience "ooooed" and "aaaahhhed" when the great beast started to snort and run about the field. The crowd also raised a great cheer when Matsumura came onto the field in his battle gear and mask.

He slowly waked across the field to approach the bull. The bull, still shuffling about, saw the approach of the man. When Matsumura came close enough for the bull to catch his scent, the bull finally recognized his masked opponent. The bull then gave a loud bellow and ran off the field. Well, as you can imagine, the entire crowd went wild and the King himself was the most pleased person in the arena. He was so impressed with the event that he proclaimed that as of that day, Matsumura was to be bestowed with the honored title of "Bushi" (which means warrior). To this day, he is known as “Bushi" Matsumura.

There were many other stories of this man, too many to tell here, but each did nothing but increase his fame all over Okinawa (and their respect). When Matsumura took over the school from Karate Sakugawa, he began to teach an incredibly large number of students. One of his best was Itosu Yasutsune, who was known throughout his life for his incredible straddle stances (Kiba-Dachi). Most people today know him through his nickname "Anko" (which was in reference to his straddle stance).



Itosu Anko made it his life's duty to spread the art of Okinawa-te to the people of Okinawa. It was at this time that Okinawa-te was beginning to be called "Karate" which meant "China Hands" due to its origins in the Shaolin Temple.

Itosu Anko proceeded to convince the Okinawan public school system to accept the art of Karate as part of its physical education curriculum. He also introduced five new katas to the public at a rate of one per year over a five-year span.

These kata were called the Pinan series. Itosu Anko did nothing but improve the art of Karate-jutsu and try to instill a peaceful purpose behind learning this defensive art form. He showed the health improving factors and the other psychological benefits.

A good friend of Itosu Anko was Azato Yasutsune who was also a great Karate instructor. It was this relationship that was the contributing factor for Itosu's introduction to a small weak child who was training with Azato. This weak child took up the art of Karate on the advice a doctor who said that the boy needed some good physical exercise. As Itosu Anko would regularly visit the home of his friend Azato, he would normally see some of the students that trained with Azato. This young student was constantly working out and impressed Itosu greatly; even to the point that he began to teach the student as well.

This young man's name was Gichin Funakoshi who eventually became the greatest of all the Karate instructors.

GOING INTERNATIONAL

Karate obtained the support of the Japanese government and eventually spread to most of the public and university schools., unfortunately, almost all of the Karate schools were closed after the Second World War. Soon the original instructors were being sought out by both the Japanese and eventually the now curious American soldiers. It must be remembered that it was the American military which initially spread the art of Karate to North America. When the Occupation Forces were stationed in Okinawa and Japan, they became aware of the reputation of some Karate masters and soon started to seek them out. It was after many of the soldiers noted the potential of the Ancient Combat Sport, that they enthusiastically took up the various Karate styles.

Eventually, when most of these soldiers were transferred back to the United States, they immediately opened schools and began spreading the different styles to the American public. After some time, these new "Sensei" were bringing their own instructors over from Japan to teach their American Students and once again the art spread rapidly.

It was when Karate started to spread internationally that the ranking system was introduced. The colored belts we so often see in Karate schools today were non-existent in early Okinawa. Back then student would start learning Karate early in his youth. The novice would train with one master and over a certain period of commitment, the master would allow the student to assist in the instructing chores.

This is the way they trained, year in, year out. After many years, the master would allow one student, who was worthy enough, to take over the commitment of leading the school; a new master would then be passing on the art.

After some time, the master of the school started to wear a black sash while the students wore a white sash. The sash eventually became a belt (or Obi). Only the instructors of the school wore the black belt while the majority of the class wore white. Of course, the belts would get worn and soiled and this showed which students were committed. Eventually the master of the school would pull aside a student who has been training with him for some time. He would then instruct the student to discard his old white belt and return to the next class wearing black. Other students would barely raise an eyebrow and the class would continue with the new black belt trying to earn his new rank.

The coloring of the belts below black was introduced to Karate by Gichin Funakoshi. Funakoshi introduced the same system that was being utilized by the Judo Federation.

Ranks below black are divided into "Kyus", usually six or more. The first Kyu being the highest, the brown belt. The rank just above the first Kyu is the first Dan (or degree). Most styles acknowledge ten levels of black with the "tenth degree" being honored only to the founder of the style.

In most of today's schools, the visitor will see a variety of colors tied to the waists of the Karate students. Most schools start with white belts, being the newest students, and the darker the color of the belt, the higher the student gets.

Once the student becomes a black belt, they usually find that training starts all over again however this time it is on a higher level. This is the fascination and desire of most of today's dedicated students. Just to be able to push themselves to their own desired limits.

Karate Histories from Te to Z

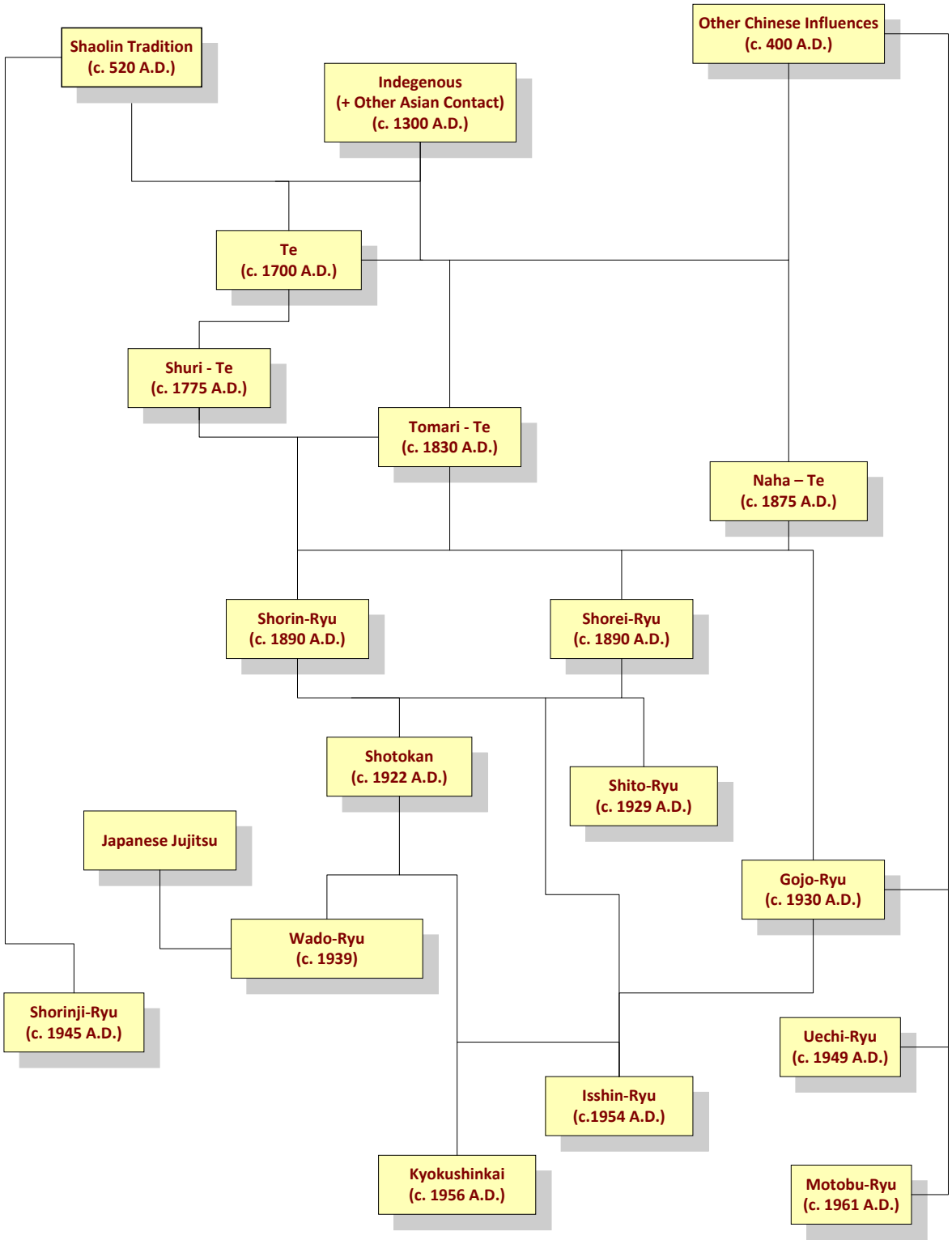
When learning karate, it becomes quickly apparent to the novice that most lessons are taught in a definite, prescribed pattern. This training routine is sometimes the instructor's personal philosophy of teaching, but in most cases, it is due to the style of karate being taught.

Most new students are not aware of the style they are learning until sometime after they begin training. Once the student progresses from the novice level to the more advanced stages of training, he soon learns about the "politics" of styles.

There are easily over 50 styles of karate practiced in the United States. What is so unusual about this is that karate actually began as three distinct styles on the island of Okinawa. In addition, it should be noted that even these three systems were developed from a single, indigenous style known simply as **Te** (hand).

This chapter will describe the development of some of the major karate styles which trace their origins back to Okinawa or Japan. There are more than 30 accepted (or authorized) karate styles in Japan or Okinawa, some were developed in Japan proper or were created by individuals who traveled to China to complete their training. Therefore, to say that all karate styles originated in Okinawa is not totally true, but the majority can trace their development through this small, highly cultured island.

Style Geneology



On the previous page we see a sample collection of various karate styles and how they evolved. To show the detailed connections between each style and its predecessor, would in reality cause lines to be crisscrossing all over the chart. This would be due mainly to the close proximity of the three main cities on Okinawa, namely Shuri, Tomari and Naha. It was these particular three cities that evolved into the main centers of early karate development and therefore there was much traveling between each of these cities over the years, including many martial artists.

Each of the styles listed had one or two major contributors who were the motivating factors in the new style being founded. Without going into great detail, we will describe the route of the development of each system. We will do this by introducing those individuals who have had the greatest impact in the formation of each style.

SHAOLIN TRADITION:

Bodhidharma, the legendary monk who traveled from India to China and ended up in a Buddhist temple called Shaolin. It was at this temple that Bodhidharma supposedly introduced both the philosophy of Zen (Chan in Chinese) as well as calisthenics that evolved over the years into karate. The estimated a date for Bodhidharma's arrival at Shaolin Temple is believed to be around 520 A.D.

Another major contributor to the development of the Shaolin fighting system was a monk named Cheuh Yan who entered the temple simply to learn this now famous fighting style. This was many years after the arrival of Bodhidharma, and yet the art had not changed very much over the years. It was Yuan who expanded the "exercise' sets that were used to train the monks and truly developed the Shaolin style onto a new level.

After the destruction of the temple in 1674, only five monks survived and it was these five individuals and their secret societies that continued to spread that Shaolin tradition.

INDIGENOUS:

It is thought that any fighting style that was developed on the island of Okinawa had always been influenced by outside sources. This may be true but evidence has been found that there was a form of fighting that was practiced on Okinawa, prior to any outside contact.

When trading ships did start to sail into the ports of Okinawa from throughout Asia, there was an obvious exchange of traditions, ideas and merchandise. It was when arguments began between the sailors and other traders that the native population of Okinawa quickly absorbed any system of fighting that was obviously effective.

OTHER CHINESE INFLUENCES:

Some styles that exist today, which claim to be karate, have origins in China, but which have had no direct link to the Shaolin style or systems that evolved from the Shaolin tradition. Some of these styles can trace their origins to individuals that existed prior to Bodhidharma arriving in China.

Te

One of the first recognized fighting systems on Okinawa was a martial art known simple as Te, meaning "hand." Te originated in the 16th century and was formed primarily because of the prohibition of weapons imposed on the Okinawan population by their Japanese rules in the late 1500s. Te is considered indigenous to Okinawa, but it is generally accepted that there was a great influence from other Asian nations, especially China.

One of the first acknowledged masters of this empty-handed fighting form was Shungo Sakugawa (1733-1815), who received a great deal of his martial art training from a monk named Peichin Takahara. Sakugawa eventually taught the style to Soken Matsumura, one of the greatest martial artists who ever lived. While the Sakugawa-Matsumura connection was the root of the majority of karate styles developed on Okinawa (and later in Japan), many other systems were created without any influence from Matsumura or Sakugawa.

Three main training centers developed on Okinawa around the 18th century. One was the ancient capital of Shuri, where the royalty and other nobles lived. A second center formed in Naha, the island's main port. The third was in Tomari. Each of these cities eventually developed its own distinct style.

Shuri-Te

Even though Sakugawa was one of the first Te masters, because he taught in the capital city of Shuri, he is also considered one of the first masters of Shuri-te as well. Sakugawa was almost 70 years old when a young boy named Soken Matsumura started training with him. Matsumura became the best student Sakugawa ever produced, and after Sakugawa 's death, Matsumura became one of the most prominent instructors of Shuri-te. It was his influence that spawned the majority of different karate styles practiced today.

Tomari-Te

Tomari was located near the small village of Kumemura (Kume City), which was inhabited by a number of military men with a variety of martial arts skills. Included among these skills were "external" arts descended from the Shaolin Temple, as well as "internal" systems that had their origins elsewhere.

While Shuri-te was influenced almost exclusively by the harder Shaolin external style, Tomari-te included a mixture of both external and internal systems. One of the first recognized tamari-te masters was Kosaku Matsumora, who taught the style in the utmost secrecy. Thus, only a few of Matsumora's students ever became prominent enough to pass on his style.

Another important Tomari-te instructor was Kokan Oyadomari, whose claim to fame is that he was the first instructor of the great Chotoku Kyan.



<u>Naha-Te</u>

Of the three major Okinawan styles of the time, Naha-te had the greatest influence from the internal systems of China, as well as the least contact with the external Shaolin tradition. The greatest Naha-te master was Kanryo Higashionna. There is evidence that Higashionna took some lessons from Matsumura of the Shuri-te style, but only for a short period. Higashionna was still quite young when he left for China where he stayed for many years. When he returned to Naha, he opened a school which emphasized breathing patterns prominent in the internal Chinese styles. Higashionna had many great students who went on to become famous in their own right, Chojun Miyagi and Kenwa Mabuni among them.





Shorin-Ryu

Shuri-te and Tomari-te eventually evolved into one style called Shorin-Ryu, which recognizes the influence of the shaolin Temple, “Shorin” is the Japanese word for “Shaolin.” It was around the Matsumura era that the two art forms blended into one style. One of the biggest exponents of this newly named style was Yatsutsume (Anko) Itosu, who was one of Matsumura’s finest students.

Shorei-Ryu

Naha-te eventually became known as Shorei-Ryu at the height of Higashionna ’s popularity. It was also at this time that the style started to change its direction slightly from being purely an internal fighting system. This was due mainly to the influence of Choki Motobu.



Even though Motobu’s style was considered Naha-te, he actually had no real connection with Hagashionna. When Motobu became the leader of Shorei-Ryu, he started to develop it in a new direction, primarily because of the extensive training he received from Anko Itosu of Shuri-te, as well as Matsumora of Tomari-te. Motobu developed quite a reputation as a tough street fighter, as well as a great instructor.

Shotokan

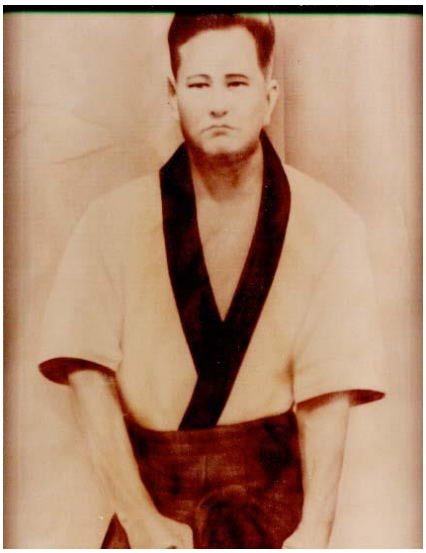
Shotokan karate founder Gichin Funakoshi was a student of both Yasutsune Itosu and Itosu’s good friend, Yasutsune Azato. Itosu learned his style of karate from Soken Matsumura, and Azato was trained by Tomari-te’s Kosaku Matsumora. Funakoshi therefore had extensive Shorin-Ryu (or Shuri-te) training, as well as a taste of Shorei-te karate. It was because of this association with these great instructors that Funakoshi was able to train under a variety of other masters as well.

It wasn't until Funakoshi was living in Tokyo in the 1930 's that he founded Shotokan. "Shotokan" translates as "Shoto's School." Shoto was Funakoshi's pen name.

Funakoshi was at the forefront of an era when the diversity of karate styles became prevalent. While not a great supporter of "specialized" karate styles, his influence helped cause this divergence.

Shito-Ryu

When Funakoshi was training with Itosu, one of this friends and classmates was Kenwa Mabuni. Mabuni eventually decided to train in a different style and traveled to Naha to train with Higashionna. Mabuni stayed with Hagashionna for many years and even was able to train, for a short period with Chojun Miyagi. Miyagi had just returned from a training session in China, and Mabuni wanted to pick up any new techniques Miyagi might have learned.



Like Funakoshi before him, Mabuni moved to Japan and founded Shito-Ryu. "Shito" was a combination of the first character of each of Mabuni's two main instructor's names – Higashionna and Itosu. Mabuni taught a combination of the hard, linear style of Itosu's Shuri-te and the softer, circular style of Naha-te. His Shito-Ryu system is considered one of the major styles in Japan today.

Goju-Ryu

The Naha-te Higashionna taught eventually evolved into Shorei-Ryu and started to resemble styles whose origins developed from the Shaolin Temple. Higashionna's original style was influenced by the fighting system that existed in China prior to the Shaolin tradition, and was on a softer plane than Shorin-Ryu. Higashionna's student Chojun Miyagi wanted to teach a style similar to the one taught by his instructor, so at Higashionna's suggestion, Miyagi traveled to China to complete his training, concentrating on the breathing techniques of the various internal

systems.

Miyagi later returned to Naha and, after a few years, traveled to Japan to teach in the ancient capital of Kyoto. Miyagi's art evolved from the Naha-te of Higashionna to what, in 1929, Miyagi called Goju-Ryu (go meaning "hard," ju meaning "soft"). It was the hard/soft combination that has made Goju-Ryu one of today's most popular karate styles. One of Miyagi's greatest students was the late Gogen Yamaguchi.



Wado-Ryu

When Gichin Funakoshi performed his various demonstrations, he usually had several of these best students accompany him. The student who assisted Funakoshi most often was Hirornori Otsuka, who began training with Funakoshi in 1926. By the early 1930 's,

Otsuka was considered one of the finest karate practitioners in Japan.



What was so unusual was that when Otsuka joined Funakoshi's school, he was already a master of shindo Yoshin-Ryu Jujitsu, but forsook that style to train with Funakoshi. After training with Funakoshi for over ten years. Otsuka suddenly left and studied several other karate styles for a short time. There is evidence that he even trained with Choki Motobu before going out on his own.

In 1939, Otsuka founded Wado-Ryu karate (wa meaning "harmony" and do meaning "way"). Otsuka combined the karate he learned from Funakoshi with his own expertise in shindo Yoshin-Ryu Jujitsu to develop a system much softer than most. He stressed the perfection of the mind over the perfection of technique. Wado-Ryu has gone on to become a popular style all over the world.

Kyokushinkai

Kyokushinkai is one of the toughest karate styles that exists today. Its founder, Masutatsu Oyama, began his training in Shotokan karate at a military school at age 14. Oyama was actually a Korean named Yee Hyung (I Yong), but changed his name when he came to Japan.



Oyama was drafted into the Imperial Army in 1941, after only a couple of years of training with Gichin Funakoshi. After the war, Oyama began training with Chojun Miyagi, but later decided to go into seclusion, travelling to Mt. Kiyosumi, where he remained isolated for over a year and a half. When he finally returned to civilization, Oyama attempted to start his own karate school, but met with only moderate success.

It was Oyama's attempts at killing bulls with a single blow that won him enough fame to open a few doors. In 1952, Oyama toured the United States in attempt to popularize his karate style. He took on all corners and never lost a match, ending most with a knockout. When Oyama returned to Japan, he founded Kyokushinkai, a hard-nosed karate style.

Kyokushinkai translates as “Ultimate Truth” and stresses heavy body contact to help students overcome fear. Competitors wore no protective equipment at kyokushinkai tournaments and most of the matches were won by knockout. Another major emphasis in Kyokushinkai karate is Tameshiwari (breaking skills). Students are required to break a number of tiles prior to receiving a black belt.

Oyama lived out his days in Tokyo, heading up a large international Kyokushinkai organization, known as the International Karate Organization. Sosai Masutatsu Oyama dies of lung cancer on April 26, 1994 at the age of 70.

Isshin-Ryu

Isshin-Ryu founder Tatsuo Shimabuku learned karate from a variety of instructors skilled in many different styles. He studied with Goju-Ryu’s Chojun Miyagi, then with Shorin-Ryu’s Chotoku Kyan, and finally with Shorei-Ryu master Choki Motobu.



It was during World War II that Shimabuku gained his reputation as a fine instructor. The Japanese officers were so impressed with his teaching that they were able to keep Shimabuku from being conscripted into the military so they could continue training with him.

After the defeat of the Japanese, the American forces stationed in Okinawa took great interest in Shimabuku’s karate and trained at his school. Some of Shimabuku’s finest pupils were Americans Steve Armstrong, Harold Mitchum and Don Nagel.



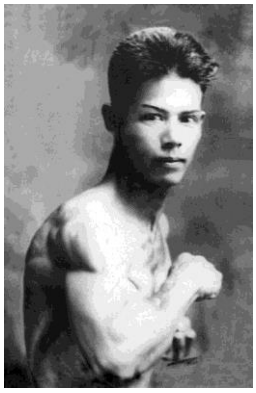
Armstrong was so impressed by Shimabuku that he was able to convince the American military to pay $5 a month to the school for every soldier who trained there. In 1954, Shimabuku founded the Isshin-Ryu system, meaning “one-heart style.”

Motobu-Ryu

The Motobu family were noble Okinawans who practiced a martial art considered so effective that it was kept very secret. Only the eldest son, was allowed to learn the family art. Choki Motobu was the third oldest son and wished desperately to learn the family style, but was not permitted. No matter how often he spied on his older brother and father, Choki never learned enough to make him effective in any real fighting situation. This is the main reason Choki eventually sought training elsewhere.

It was Choke’s oldest brother Choyu who was the actual master of this style. Choyu Motobu broke tradition and taught the family art to an outsider named Seikichi Uehara around 1940. Uehara eventually founded Motobu-Ryu karate in 1961. Even though this style is named after Choyu Motobu, it is not identical to the Motobu family art.





Although Motobu-Ryu is not well known, it does have substantial following in Okinawa.

Uechi-Ryu

Surprisingly, Uechi-Ryu karate received no influence from either Shungo Sakugawa, Soken Matsumura, or Kanryo Higashionna. The style is still considered an offshoot of Naha-te due to their similar influences and origins.

The style’s founder was Kanbum Uechi, and Okinawan who traveled to China, where he befriended a priest named Chou-Tzu Ho, who taught a style similar to that Higashionna learned. This style was called pangai-noon, which translates as “half hard/half soft.”



After almost 15 years in China, Uechi finally returned to Okinawa, although not for the purpose of teaching martial arts. Even though many knew of his talents as an instructor, it took over 17 years before anyone could convince Uechi to start teaching. Uechi first called his style Pangai-noon but eventually changed the name to Uechi-Ryu to reflect his own innovations.

Unfortunately, they style never really became popular until after Uechi's death. His son Kanei continues to teach the art, and today it is one of the major styles on Okinawa.

Shorinji-Ryu

Shorinji-Ryu karate was founded after the Second World War by Kori Hisataka and his son Masayuki. "Shorinji" is the Japanese translation of the Shaolin Temple and was the inspiration for this style. Kori Hisataka developed the system for the sole purpose of initiating an in-depth study of the art that originated from the Shaolin Temple. He was also influenced by Shorin-ji Kempo, a style said to have originated with Shaolin priests.



Dr. Kori Hisataka
1907 - 1988

The most notable Shorinji-Ryu instructor at present is Richard Kim of San Francisco.



GICHIN FUNAKOSHI

Gichin Funakoshi's name takes up a large portion of the Karate heritage. Funakoshi learned his art directly from one of the original masters of this unarmed self-defense. It was this man who developed the techniques of Karate into a "way" (or "Path"). What Funakoshi did was to bring Karate up to a new level while at the same time return the art to its origins.

The Karate that was being taught now became Karate-do. This term translates as "The Way of Karate" and has a deeper meaning than most of today's Karate students realize. The man who brought this fact to light to most of the modern world was in fact a very humble school teacher.

When Funakoshi was very young, he was a very fragile child who was always sick. Finally, his doctor put him on a prescription of herbs and told him to join a Karate school. One of his classmates had a father who was well known as a Karate instructor and so Funakoshi asked his friend if he would be allowed to join. Therefore, Master Yasutsune Asato began to train Funakoshi and develop him into a healthy, even strong individual. Funakoshi loved to learn Karate and was able to train under many different instructors including "Bushi" Matsumura himself!

Azato had a good friend named Itosu "Anko". Itsou was frequently visiting his friend Azato and noticed Funakoshi immediately. Itosu then started to teach Funakoshi as well.

Itosu's style was quite different from the style that Master Azato taught yet it was Itosu "Anko" who was responsible for teaching Karate in its truest form to Funakoshi. Itosu was greatly impressed and instantly recognized Funakoshi's talents and decided to introduce him to his own Sensei - Bushi Matsumura. Matsumura also recognized the spirit in Funakoshi and taught him many things.

Funakoshi learned karate throughout his high school career but it was always late at night and usually at the home of the Karate instructor. Once Funakoshi started working for a living he decided to go into teaching and was a high school teacher for most of his life. However, while he was teaching school during the day, he was also teaching his form of Karate at night. Due to the vast knowledge that Funakoshi had in the martial arts; he soon became a very popular instructor.

In his mid-thirties, Funakoshi tried to convince his employers of the health benefits of Karate and get it put into the public-school curriculum. Unfortunately, it wasn't until Funakoshi was fifty years old that Karate was thoroughly ingrained in the Okinawan public school's physical education programs.

Funakoshi taught a style of Karate that was a blend of the many influences he had learned throughout his training years. As an intellectual, he tried to instill a philosophy about the true meaning of Karate and he enjoyed reading, writing, and creating poems. He would sign his own poetry with a pen name "Shoto".

Shoto translates "Pine-waves" and refers to the wind blowing through the pine trees in the forests around his home. Therefore, in respect for Funakoshi, his students decided to call the style he taught them "Shotokan" or Shoto's school (Kan in this case translates as school).

Throughout his regular teaching career in the public school system, Funakoshi had a strong following of students at his night time school. However, it was not until Funakoshi was fifty-three years old before his students convinced him to quit his daytime career and put all his efforts into the spreading of the art of Karate.

Within a year of totally dedicating himself to Karate, Funakoshi was asked to perform a demonstration for the Crown Prince who was traveling through Okinawa. This was a great honor for Funakoshi. It was recognized that there were many other Karateka around who were much more technically proficient but there were none that were more committed. Sensei Funakoshi had an honest, sincere dedication to the spirit of Karate and this was the reason the community of Karate asked him to organize a demonstration.

The demonstration for the future Emperor was so successful that in 1922, Funakoshi was asked to demonstrate once again. This time it was at the National Athletic Exhibition to be held in Tokyo. This event was presented by the Ministry of Education and was the first public demonstration of Karate in Japan. Immediately after this exhibition, Funakoshi was asked to tour throughout Japan in order to give lectures and further demonstrations.

Even the founder of Judo, Master Kano Jigoro asked Funakoshi to demonstrate for him. Master Kano convinced Funakoshi to stay and teach him some of the basic of Karate. It was also at this time that Funakoshi was persuaded to move to Tokyo and continue his teaching of their art.



After only a few months, the local university adopted Karate as part of its physical education program. It was here, at the University of Tokyo, that Funakoshi started his first real Japanese school.

While teaching the Karate that Funakoshi had learned from his Okinawan master, the art took on a distinctly Japanese flavor. It was this absorption of Karate into the Japanese society that influenced Funakoshi to make a few changes that would affect Karate for all time. These changes could be described more as discoveries and in turn demonstrated the enlightenment of Master Funakoshi.

CHANGES IN KARATE

Karate, even when it was first being developed in the Shaolin Temple, was always considered an art form. But it was Funakoshi who continued that evolution to a brand-new level.

Funakoshi started to teach Karate-do instead of Karate-jutsu. The difference between the two is that "jutsu" translates as techniques or movements while "do" means "way" or "path". The Chinese introduced a philosophy of Tao to the world and "do" is the Japanese translation of this Chinese word. To Funakoshi the art had developed to the stage that Karate could become a true way of life. Thus, the practicing of Karate techniques can become a way of life for some; or at least an enjoyable portion of their lives to others.

Being a successful high school teacher as well, Funakoshi was very literate and always tried to improve Karate so that anyone could learn it. Being well read, Funakoshi was also an intellect and produced a book which introduced the re-translation of the word Karate. Funakoshi suggested that Kara-te should translate as "empty-hand" rather than its previous translation of "China-hands". This use of the characters was initially introduced in a book by Chomo Hanashiro in 1905.

In the Japanese language the word "Kara" has two meanings. Most of the original Okinawan masters translated Karate as "China-hands" because they were paying respect to the origin of the art. Now, with the influence of these new dedicated Japanese students, the art was once again reunited with Zen, which was its initial reason for being developed (thus the art is considered to have gone 'full circle' in its evolutionary development).

To further explain this concept we must examine, briefly, the development of martial arts in Japan proper. The Japanese had gone via the sword and bow as their self-defense and personal protection art. The warriors had developed the study of both the sword and the bow to almost religious proportions. This in-depth study of these two deadly weapons included much meditation by their practitioners. It was this same zeal with that Japanese student began to learn Karate. Therefore, Funakoshi developed the art to Karate-do, the way of the empty-hand.

Funakoshi also taught that the students had to repeat a single kata hundred (and sometimes thousands) of times before he could say that he had mastered that kata. He said that "the purpose of learning kata is not just for the sake of learning them but for the tempering and disciplining of oneself so it was not necessary to study indiscriminately large numbers of them." Funakoshi taught kata seriously and stressed five elements for thought when training kata.

- Kata teaches practical self-defense and technique combinations.
- Kata teaches balance and co-ordination of techniques.
- Kata aids in character development.
- Kata can develop a spiritual element.
- Kata will build stamina, determination, concentration, and patience and can lead to a unity of mind and body.

Kata - a series of defensive and offensive techniques, pre-arranged into combinations which follow certain definite patterns. Kata, which literally translates as `forms' is an exercise that is unique to the Martial Arts.

Kata is also one of the most controversial aspects of Karate Training. There exist today many schools which claim very traditional training methods and therefore practice exclusively with Kata. There also exist a number of schools which espouse the philosophy that Kata training is useless. These schools train only at free-sparring and other techniques that are successful in Sport (sparring) Competitions and other similar Tournaments. To round out their training, these schools will sometimes teach one-on-one combat-type training, but again are usually limited in their scope.

Karate-do, or the Way of Karate, encompasses three main phases of training. Learning the basics is one of the first stages. Then comes kata training and finally the Novice learns how to free fight (Jiyu-Kumite). Of these three training methods, Kata practice is the most important, as well as, the most difficult.

When training in a school that neglects Kata practice and only trains in free-fighting, it must be remembered that there are strict rules in sport competition. This includes sparring sessions or even kick-boxing matches. Therefore, practicing Kata is essential to learning self-defense techniques in a way that tournament-type of training cannot.

If an individual wishes to learn Karate as a complete self-defense art, then mastery of the Kata is "all important" to accomplish this. There are techniques in the Kata that would never be permitted in Tournament Sparring or in Kick-boxing Matches. Kata is also a Tournament sport. Unfortunately, due to the entertainment requirements in tournaments today, most Katas that are performed are not the well-known traditional ones. Even though these Kata's are not identical to the forms which were passed down through the generations of Karate-Ka, they are never-the-less, still very exciting to watch.

Training a Kata for tournament purpose is excellent practice, although the student of Karate should appreciate the origins of the traditional Kata. Practicing traditional Kata is far more fulfilling with the knowledge of how the Kata came to be. It allows the student to relate to the Kata on a new awareness level.

When practicing traditional Katas, the student will discover an enormous amount of valuable information from these Katas. The Masters of the past developed their Kata after years of training and studying a particular style of Martial Art. It was only after the individual actually mastered the style, that the Master would conceive of creating a Kata. The mastery of a style of Karate-do would bring the individual to a new level of awareness. It was this new-found insight that allowed the student to become a Master. Only then were they able to share their knowledge through the Kata.

This step-by-step transition of student to Master, and then to the creator of a Kata, is based on a philosophy called: "SHU-HA-RI".

Shu-Ha-Ri can be translated as: "Compliance, Divergence, and Transcendence". Shu-Ha-Ri is the three-level transition period in the development of the Martial Artist. This is also the foundation of a Karate student's Kata Training.

SHU

The first stage, or level, is where the student first learns the traditional Katas. The novice learns the basics of the particular style. The individual must learn the Kata AS IS, without any deviation.

This is "Shu" or "Compliance" level. The student must listen and learn. To be able to master one's patience is to be free of many stress factors. Repetition of the Kata is done again and again, without too much concern on anything other than getting the techniques and combinations is the correct order.

HA

The second level is where the novice stops being a novice and now becomes a serious student. Here is where the student learns the meaning of the Kata and each technique in that particular Kata (what is known as “Bunkai”). This is the level of "ha" or where the serious student strives to get better. At first compared only to themselves, then ultimately the student strives to become better than the instructor, which in actuality is a compliment to the teaching abilities of the instructor.

In training with the Kata, the student begins to absorb the Kata into their own unique body. Even when we train in large groups, we are all unique individuals with our own special qualities and abilities. This is the level where the Kata will bring out the best of an individual's physical attributes. The student is at the peak of their ability to learn and is continuing to expand his/her knowledge. The student starts to create a fighting style uniquely their own.

RI

The final level is the apex of the student's training. This is the "Ri" level, the final transition where the student becomes a true Master. The student has surpassed the teacher. He has trained to the point that he has passed beyond mere technique.

Very few can attain this level due to the amount of dedication required. Everything is understood, form technique to philosophy. After many years at this level, the Master may wish to share all of his acquired knowledge. Unfortunately, this is sometimes impossible due to vast knowledge acquired over the years.

One of the finest ways is in the creation of the Kata. In this medium, the Master can transmit all of the information, experience, and discoveries absorbed over many years.

For this reason, practicing traditional Kata does have its advantages. It must be remembered that one of the most difficult level is the first. When learning the first Kata the novice soon realizes the many complexities in practicing these unique forms.

The instructor is always correcting and looks for many things when teaching a Kata. Some of the most important aspects of correct Kata training are also the same points looked for when judging the Kata at any tournament.

Proper Sequencing

If the Kata is traditional then the movements (or steps) must be followed precisely. It will be judged favorably if a traditional Kata is adjusted as so to please the individual's physique. In newly created Katas (tournament katas), this same flow must still be evident.

The individual must perform the combinations in an orderly manner as to be able to accomplish the realism of a proper Kata. Each opponent must be dealt with completely and in turn, the techniques must be effective and believable.

Complete Understanding

Whether traditional or unorthodox, the performer must understand each technique and why it is being performed (Oyo Bunkai). This is the preliminary step to the application of each technique. There can be more than one interpretation of a combination. The performer of the Kata must show the realistic meaning of each technique. The casual observer must be made aware of why the performer has executed each technique. If the uninitiated can readily see the imaginary opponents, then the Kata performer (or competitor) has accomplished the task of "complete understanding".

Correct Positioning

to acquire the meaning of traditional Kata, the student must execute the required techniques in their correct form. This is the physical side of the Art. The legs and arms must be positioned correctly, along with other parts of the anatomy. Even in Modern Tournament Kata, it is this element that gets that gets the majority of all criticism.

Breathing

Along with correct physical positioning of each movement in a Kata, breathing is also considered one of the basics of proper performance. As each pattern is performed, the variety of techniques and combinations require different tensions of breathing. The individual has to show knowledge of the correct usage of inhaling and exhaling patterns. This includes one of the hardest breathing exercises: The ***KIAI***.

Rhythm

One of the most important aspects of Kata practice, is the rhythm (or timing) of each technique or combination in the Kata. Each Kata is to be performed as though the individual is in an actual fighting situation. The rhythm of each Kata is different. To master the Kata is to master the rhythm of the Kata.

Sometimes the rhythm is fast, sometimes it's slow, and sometimes it's a combination of both. Each is a lesson, that will enable the student learn the techniques of the Kata, in its most correct form. It is this rhythm of each combination, which will allow the spectator at a tournament to visualize the combat situation of the Kata.

It is the mastery of these basic requirements of Kata training that will bring the student up to the final level of the SHU-HA-RI philosophy. It is obvious, that there are many years of practice and many experiences before the student of Karate-do can reach this final level. Those who have reached this level are few and far between. Fortunately, for us, the legacies they have left behind will always keep the tradition and the honor of Karate alive for others to follow.

KATA HISTORY

SHOTOKAN NAME

Japanese Names	#	Original Names	Origin Style
1. Taikyoku	(3)	Taikyoku	Shorin-Ryu
2. Heian	(5)	Pinan	Shorin-Ryu
3. Tekki	(3)	Naifanchi	Shorei-Ryu
4. Empi	(1)	Wansu	Shorin-Ryu
5. Bassai-Dai	(1)	Passai	Shorin-Ryu
6. Kanku-Dai	(1)	Kushanku	Shorin-Ryu
7. Sochih	(1)	Sochin	Shorei-Ryu
8. Jion	(1)	Jion	Shorei-Ryu
9. Gankaku	(1)	Chinto	Shorin-Ryu
10. Hangetsu	(1)	Sesan	Shorei-Ryu
11. Gojushiho	(1)	Useshi	Shorin-Ryu

A Compendium of Traditional Karate Kata

Their Origin, History and Characteristics

Kata (choreographed fighting forms) are an integral part of karate training and have a history as full and as rich as karate itself. There are many different kata, as there are many different styles of karate. Some styles list as many as 60 different kata, some no more than 15. In the S*hotokan* karate style, for example, there are well over two dozen kata, yet Shotokan founder Gichin Funakoshi espoused the philosophy that 15 kata are a lifetime's worth of practice.

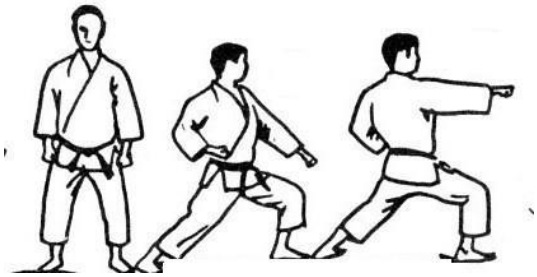
Most of the kata taught and practiced in modern karate dojo (schools) are considered "traditional" meaning they embody the spirit and teachings of the original karate masters. A number of the kata practiced in today have their origins in China around the 16th century. Others were developed in Okinawa or Japan proper only a few decades ago. The majority of the kata taught today, however, are on average 75 -100 years old.

To examine all the kata practiced today, as well as their histories, would be a mammoth undertaking. Instead, this article will attempt to trace the origin of a few sample kata. Although the forms detailed here are practiced by Shotokan stylists, they are by no means exclusive to Shotokan. Many styles in fact, use one or a combination of the kata featured here.

Most of these sample kata originated from two major Okinawan styles - Shorin-Ryu and Shorei-Ryu - which in turn were developed from a type of empty-hand combat training indigenous to Okinawa known simply as "Te". The Shorin-Ryu kata were designed to utilize quick, short techniques delivered with rapid, light movements. The kata developed from Shorei-Ryu are generally strong forms with very "hard" techniques, performed out of powerful stances.

Following is a short history of 11 traditional kata.

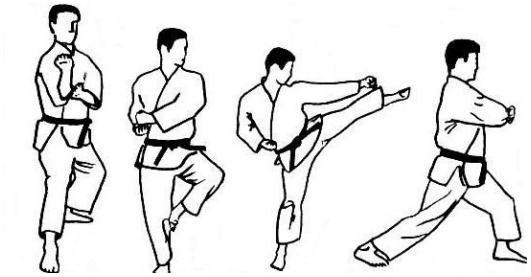
Taikyoku



Taikyoku, meaning “first cause,” is a series of kata developed by Gichin Funakoshi after years of practice and study. He wanted to put together a set of forms that would enable the beginner to learn Shotokan basics - sort of a beginner’s “first look” at the style.

The Taikyoku kata are actually based on the Heian forms, but with a number of small modifications. Although taikyoku are known as Shotokan kata, they are found in many other styles and are considered simple to learn.

Heian



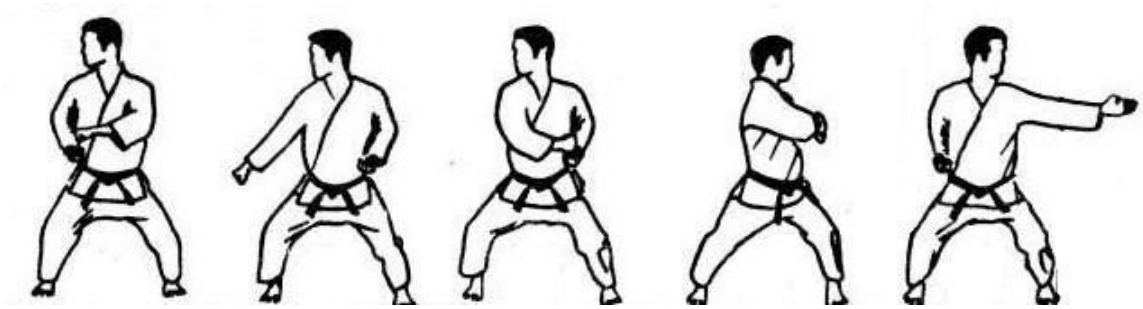
Known originally by the Okinawan name Pinan, Funakoshi is credited by many with being the first to refer to this kata series by the Japanese word Heian, meaning “peace of mind” or “peace and tranquility.” The name change was likely due to the growing national spirit in Japan at the time, causing Funakoshi and others to change Pinan to a Japanese word.

The word Heian was chosen by Funakoshi to demonstrate a philosophy of being confident in one’s kata abilities. The thought was that, if you mastered each of the five kata in the series, you could enjoy the peace of mind (mastering) the kata techniques afforded. Funakoshi also reversed the order of the first two kata in the original series.

The Pinan forms were developed by Okinawan master Yatsutsune Itsosu (better known as Anko Itosu) for the Okinawan public-school system. Itosu was one of Funakoshi's instructors and ultimately influenced him a great deal. Because Itosu considered most kata too difficult for the public-school curriculum, he developed five new forms he called Pinan, and introduced them to students at the rate of one per year.

Itosu developed the Pinan series from a pair of uniquely different kata called Kusanku and Channan. While Kusanku still practiced today in one form or another, the Channan form has been lost to history.

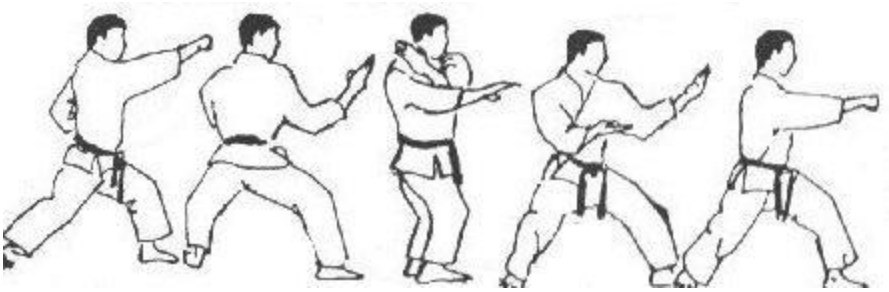
Tekki



Tekki (iron horse) was originally referred to as the Naifanchi kata. As the name implies, this series of kata is performed exclusively out of a straddle or horse-riding stance (kiba-dachi). Naifanchi was originally the basic kata for the Shuri-te style.

The originator of the first Tekki kata is unknown, but is believed that Anko Itosu developed the second and third forms. It is because of the perceived difficulty of the Tekki kata that Itosu decided to develop the Pinan series as the initial forms taught to Okinawan public-school students.

Empi



Originally named Wansu, the Empi kata translates to “flying swallow” and is one of the only forms left from Okinawan Tomari-te. Tomari-te along with most of its kata and techniques were lost to history due to the secrecy of its practitioners.

Wansu, the original name of the kata, was actually a Chinese official who arrived in Tomari around 1683 during the reign of King Shoo Tei. Wansu was highly adept at the martial arts, and this knowledge soon became known to the local population.

Little is known about Wansu, however, other than the fact he only taught a few students at a time. After only a few years in Okinawa, Wansu returned to China, leaving his students to fend for themselves. He did however, leave behind a kata that eventually became known as Wansu (and later Empi).

The Wansu kata was therefore practiced exclusively in Tomari until after 1865, when it spread to both Shuri and Naha. Funakoshi altered the original name to the Japanese word “Empi” in order to describe the upward and downward movements of the kata. These movements, along with the quick shifting of stances, are similar to the movement of a flying swallow, thus its namesake.

Bassai-Dai



There are actually two forms of the Bassai kata: Dassai-Dai (Bassai major) and Bassai-Sho (Bassai minor). Bassai-dai was originally known as Passai-Dai, but was more commonly referred to as Matsumura-no-Passai. The original Passai form was developed by Bushi (Sokon) Matsumura and was one of the first kata taught to Anko Itosu. After years of practicing the kata, Itosu developed the Passai-Sho form, which is seldom practiced today.

Even though the most common interpretation of Bassai is “to penetrate a fortress,” another translation gives a more descriptive definition of the intention of the kata. Because of the variety of techniques in the kata, one of the best interpretations of Bassai is “to break through the enemy’s defenses by shifting and finding the weak points.: Although obviously this is not a literal translation, it does ultimately reflect the true meaning of the kata.

Kanku-Dai



Kanku-dai is one of the oldest forms practiced today. The original name for this kata was Kunsanku (sometimes pronounced Ku-shanku). Kusanku was a Chinese official and martial artist stationed in Okinawa. It is not known if he was sent to Okinawa by his government to spread martial arts, or was simply on a diplomatic assignment.

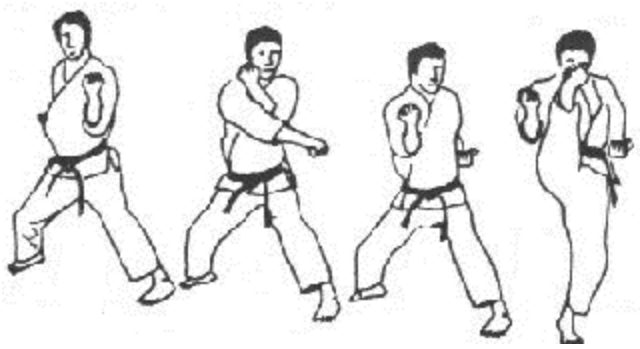
Nevertheless, he eventually stayed in Okinawa for at least five years and taught karate to many individuals, the greatest of whom may have been Tode Sakugawa.

When Kasanku was transferred back to China, he left behind many students but only one official kata, which eventually was named after him. From this form, Sakugawa developed many others as he disseminated this early style of karate.

It was, however, Anko Itosu, and not Sakugawa, who probably discovered the most from his practice of Kusanku. Around 1900, Itosu was asked to teach karate in the Okinawan school system. As Itosu felt that Kusanku kata was too difficult for elementary school children, he developed from Kusanku the Pinan kata series over a five-year span.

Kusanku ultimately became known as Kanku-dai when Funakoshi introduced this kata to his Japanese students. Kanku means “to view the heavens,” which describes the opening move in the kata whereby the practitioner literally views the sky through his hands.

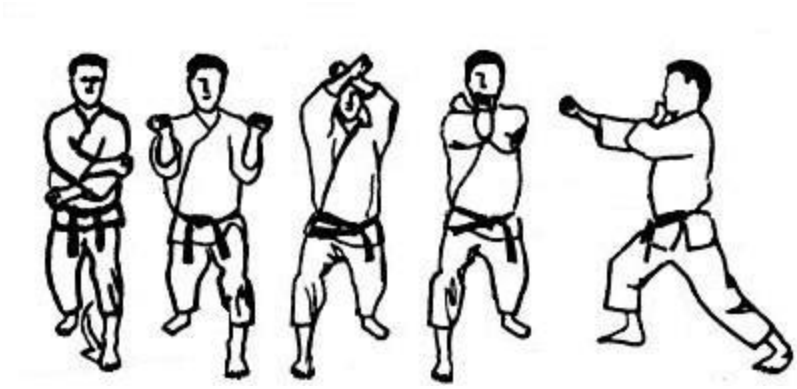
Sochin



Sochin, meaning “to keep the peace,’ evolved from Naha-te, but its actual origin is in China. Naha-te master Ankichi Aragaki left Naha to introduce his style to martial arts in the capital city of Shuri. By the time he returned, Goju-Ryu karate had become the most popular style in Naha. This is a reason that Sochin was more popular in Shuri than it was in Naha.

The version of Sochin that was later introduced to Japan was developed by Funakoshi and his son.

Jion



Jion is the name of both a Buddhist temple and a patron saint of Buddhism. The kata by the same name is thought to have developed from a Chinese monk who learned his art in a temple. The Jion form was very popular in Tomari and is one of the few kata that remain from the Tomari-te karate style.

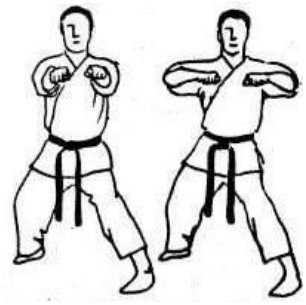
Gankaku



Originally known as Chinto, this kata was eventually called Gankaku (crane on a rock) because of the one-legged stance which is predominant throughout the form. Because of its complexity, Gankaku is one of the most advanced kata in Shotokan as well as other karate styles.

Gankaku was developed by Anko Itosu, and it is his version which is practiced in most Shotokan schools today.

Hangetsu



The Hangetsu kata, originally known as Sesan, has many crescent-shaped techniques, stances and stepping routines, which is why it was later named “half moon” (han-getsu).

Hangetsu has Chinese origins, and a similar version of the kata is practiced by Naha-te stylists. Although the Shotokan version of the kata has the same origins as the form practiced by Naha-te stylists, the applications of the techniques is very different, primarily due to the advent of Goju-Ryu in Naha.

Gojushiho

Gojushiho, originally known as Useshi, is considered the most advance kata in Shotokan karate. It originated in China, but was developed fully by the great Bushi Matsumura.

Some sources contend that Gojushiho is actually a modified form of an ancient royal dance. There may be some truth to this belief, considering that many Okinawan karate experts used to disguise their kata by incorporating them into dances to avoid detection by the ruling forces of the day.

Some styles have two versions of Gojushiho: the original is known as Gojushiho-dai, while the second version, introduced by Itosu, is Gojushiho-sho.

手 手 手 手

The preceding are but a few of the kata being practiced today by traditional karate practitioners. There are, however, many Sushi more, with equally rich histories.

Kata practice is still considered an excellent training method for traditionalists and modernists alike. For the karate masters of old, kata was the primary method of practice, the foundation upon which other skills were built, and these men spent their entire lives developing and honing their kata. The next time you begin to practice a particular kata, remember and appreciate the fact that you are learning a set of self-defense movements that someone spent a lifetime to perfect.

THE DOJO KUN

- **Strive to perfect character**
- **Hitotsu. Jinkaku Kansei ni Tsutomuro Koto.**

- **Defend the paths of truth**
- **Hitotsu. Makoto no Michi wo Mamoru Koto.**

- **Foster the spirit of effort**
- **Hitotsu. Doryoku no Seishin o Yashinau Koto.**

- **Honour the rules of etiquette**
  Hitotsu. Reigi o Omonzuru Koto.

- **Guard against rash courage**
- **Hitotsu. Kekki no Yu o Imashimuru Koto.**

These five short sentences shown above basically encompass the entire philosophy of Karate training. Karate was not just a physical endeavor but rather a total absorption of an individual's spirit into the mastery of an art.

When a novice begins Karate, the level at which they begin is almost entirely on a physical plane. This physical training will bring the novice to levels of discoveries and realizations that will cause them to make important decisions with regard to their Karate training methods.

Each one of these maxims can be regarded as a stage in the Karateka's development in this traditional martial art. To master each would be ideal for all students but the dedication and time involved makes this nearly impossible for every student to try and attain. This does not mean that because one's particular reason for training in Karate doesn't include this much devotion to the art; it allows one to simply neglect these maxims. It is still very important for each student to be at least aware of these sayings and the meanings behind them.

Karate is the discovery of self-awareness through the process of attaining physical excellence. When the original Sensei began to develop Karate, they saw its lethal potential. They knew that it could be used by those with only violent intentions and so stressed that those learning the art should think of themselves as an extension of justice.

It was for this very reason that Karate was taught only to a select few and in the utmost secrecy. Fortunately, through the development of the Dojo Kun and the dedication of the many original Sensei, Karate and most of its practitioners were and are respected members of the community. They have upheld the honor and traditions of the original masters, and always to the benefit of the practitioners.

The Dojo Kun is thought to have been originally developed by one of the earliest known Karate practitioners, the famous Sakugawa. Sakugawa learned his martial art, first from a monk named Takahara and then from one of the Chinese attaches that was sent to the Island of Okinawa by the Emperor of China.

The court in Peking wished to show just how developed their culture was in respect to that of the islanders; therefore, they sent a large contingent of artisans and their families to Okinawa.

This group of professionals came to be known as the "Thirty-Six Families" and did much to enrich the life-styles of the community in which they lived. These artisans were a versatile group whose variety of skills included poetry, pottery, and carpentry, as well as a myriad of other artistic, professional and military skills.

Included in these families were the military attachés who were also quite proficient in the Chinese martial arts. It was through one of these attaches that Sakugawa began to train and eventually find himself in China to continue his training.

When Sakugawa returned to Okinawa, he settled in his hometown of Shuri and opened a small dojo where he began to teach his style of martial arts to a select few. It should be noted here that even though Sakugawa had learned a soft form of Chuan-fa (kung-fu) from his Chinese instructors, the style that he taught was actually quite different. In Okinawa they still had their own form of fighting skills which were nowhere near as developed or organized like those of the Chinese. It is obvious that Sakugawa was proficient in this method and was the probable reason for his interest in learning the Chinese forms.

When Sakugawa opened his school, his teaching style combined both the Chinese influence as well as the original method he had learned in his childhood. In as much as the style that he taught was not similar to the style he had learned in China, the art and even Sakugawa himself became known as "Karate" which at that time translated as "China-hands". This is the reason why he is known today as Karate Sakugawa. In actual fact the name used was "Tode" which meant the same.

While teaching the art, Karate Sakugawa noted that he soon became a prominent figure in the community and all sorts of officials and other important people came to his dojo to seek his advice. They would ask him to settle disputes in the community and he soon realized that due to his knowledge in the art of Karate, a lot of people looked up to him.

Even though the religions of Buddhism and Shintoism were known on Okinawa, they never really caught on and only a small number of practitioners of these religions could be found. The Okinawans did, however, have a highly developed standard of morality in their society. It was this morality that set the standard of those few that were allowed to learn Karate from Sakugawa.

Eventually Sakugawa developed the Dojo Kun (or a form of it) to stress to his students that once you learned Karate and became quite proficient at it, a lot of members in the community began to look up to you and it was your responsibility to set the standards for yourself.

The Dojo Kun are just five short sentences which have both a simple definition as well as an extensive philosophical meaning. From a quick reading of any of these sentences the student will discover an instant understanding of them (even though a simple one). Though these simple interpretations can be of use to the novice, it should be remembered that it was through a myriad of thought and spirit that these phrases were conceived.

Going over these five phrases quickly, one will see why they are part of the main philosophy of all the Okinawan Karate styles.

SEEK PERFECTION OF CHARACTER:

With this sentence, it is perceived that Karate is more than just physical. Once someone has perfected a Karate technique, he realizes just how lethal the human body can be. It is with this awareness that the student must now perfect his whole character to become a better all-around person. When facing an opponent, the object of the confrontation is to subdue him...but when facing oneself, one must now try and subdue one's own mind.

When training in Karate, you soon discover that there are many levels that one must attain throughout their Karate career. In striving for these levels, the student is using both his mind and body which gives him little time to worry about egos and arrogance. Therefore, when training with one's mind, always remember to perfect one's spirit, and when training with one's body, always remember that the heart is part of the body.

BE FAITHFUL:

This phrase actually goes back to the ancient Asian philosophy of being faithful to one's lord or master but has developed into a philosophy useful even today. In the early stage of Karate development, the art was always taught to a select few and in total secrecy so the student was always faithful to his instructor or he was asked to leave.

Today it is stressed that one must be faithful to oneself and try not to deceive others. It must be remembered that only if one is dedicated and truly believes in themselves and their instructor will they ever reach those levels of accomplishment that Karate can provide.

ENDEAVOR:

A very obvious statement. Karate is not an easy art and takes as great deal of effort. It is not glamorous; there are no secrets, just a lot of practice, hard work and sweat. Therefore, if you really wish to attain those levels of proficiency you must stick to it...you must endeavor.

RESPECT OTHERS:

One of the first things that one learns in Karate is to respect others, especially the instructor. In most cases, the instructor has been practicing this art form for a very long time and you should respect them for giving of themselves to pass this art on to you. What is so amazing from learning to respect others is that one quickly learns to respect oneself. In the end you will quickly discover that by respecting others soon those around you will respond to you in a similar fashion.

REFRAIN FROM VIOLENT BEHAVIOR:

One of the most important lessons one can learn from Karate is not to use it. The greatest skill of a master of Karate is the ability of never having to use it on a fellow human being. One must realize how deadly a human body can become from dedicated Karate training so for those who learn karate techniques simply to inflict pain or injury on others are not true representatives of a Karateka.

If you can remember these simple sayings while training at (whatever style) of Karate you will have a successful and fruitful life in Karate.

Common Karate Sayings

The Meaning Behind the Maxim

As karate evolved through the years into something more than simply a fighting art, it started to gain a great deal of insight into human nature. Those individuals who imparted this effective form of combat had to acknowledge the aggressive nature of man. The more effective karate practitioners became, the more aware they became as well.

This increased awareness brought about a philosophy that actually shunned violence, unless absolutely necessary. When this new philosophy became prominent throughout karate training, a variety of sayings also became popular.

Most popular karate sayings have their origins in Zen philosophy. Originally connected with Buddhism, this philosophy eventually became a doctrine that trained the individual to examine the inner workings of his own mind. Its connection with any religion became less important than the attitude it tried to instill in the practitioner. When karate was introduced to Japan proper in the early part of this century, this Zen-influenced philosophy was slowly absorbed into training routines.

Even though many karate sayings have this Zen influence, many others were popular before the Japanese introduction of karate. It must be remembered that, in Okinawa, karate had little real Zen traditions. However, a philosophy based on common sense was deeply rooted in the teaching of karate on Okinawa. This philosophy instilled an attitude of nonviolence, the main concern being the preservation of peace. It was this simplistic outlook that allowed karate to quickly accept the philosophy that was considered the mainstream in all the Japanese Budo (military ways).

Following are a few examples of popular karate sayings, with a short explanation of each. These are not necessarily the only interpretations, but simply versions that are widely accepted. Most karate sayings are meant to have more than just one explanation.

Nana korobi ya oki (if you fall down seven times, get up eight times).



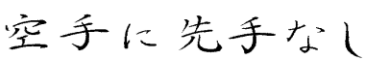
This is one of the oldest sayings used by karate instructors. It is also one of the most popular sayings in Zen. Originally attributed to the great Zen monk, Boddhidharma, this saying recognizes the imperfections in each of us, and that to err is simply human.

Karate training, like life itself, is a constant struggle where many mistakes are made. As this maxim infers, we will all make mistakes, and even though we might stumble, we should consider it nothing more than a lesson and simply pick ourselves up and try again. Each time we get up after falling, we do so a little wiser, and hopefully we will not repeat the mistake.

To try and strive through life with the constant fear of mistakes is not the message of this saying. You should not be afraid to take chances. Life is full of risks, and not all of our decisions will be correct. We should be able to humbly accept our mistakes and continue to grow.

When relating this maxim to karate training, it can be taken both figuratively as well as literally. Trying to understand the true meaning of the philosophy behind karate can be just as difficult as the workouts themselves. To try and guess is not the right way; rather, you should simply allow the training to give you true insight. If the training becomes physically difficult and you find yourself on the floor after a sparring session, remember this maxim and simply get off the floor, dust yourself off, and continue. As the saying implores, never give up.

Karate ni sente nashi (there is no first attack in karate).



This is one of the more famous of all karate maxims. It is acknowledged to be one of the finest examples of what true karate stands for.

There are many interpretations of the meaning of “karate ni sente nashi”. One of the most widely accepted notions is that there is no real advantage to the person who makes the first attack; if you are prepared for it, a defensive posture is equally as strong.

Most people, however, adhere to the most logical interpretation of the phrase: karate is a defensive art and should only be used in this context. Shotokan karate founder Gichin Funakoshi had this maxim written on his headstone at the Zen temple where he was buried. Funakoshi believed karate training changed a person’s attitude, injecting awareness, calmness and humility.



There have been many differences of opinion as to what constitutes a first attack. When an adversary throws a punch without provocation, it is an obvious first attack. In this light, karate can be used.

But there are other, more subtle definitions of what a first attack really is. If you are in a situation where it is obvious your adversary is going to strike you, some karateka believe it is acceptable to make the first physical movement. In such circumstances, the karate expert might throw the first actual technique, but the opponent has already announced his declaration of combat.

Shu ha ri (compliance, divergence, transcendance).

This is a philosophy of how an individual is to train in karate and consists of three levels of ability. It is common to use this multi-level learning process with the study of kata (forms), but it can be used in overall karate training as well. Students first learn the basics of their style, then its history and other aspects.

In the first stage of training, Shu (compliance), the student learns the style's basics and the first forms. Kata can be one of the most difficult training exercises, which is why many instructors use it to drill the novice. The students have no real choice in how the technique should be performed; they must simply listen to the instructor and learn. They must master patience as they repeatedly practice their basics.

The second level is ha (divergence), in which the novice stops being a novice and becomes a serious student. This level is usually attained at the brown and black belt ranks. It is at this level that the student learns the meaning of the kata and each technique. The student strives to become better and begins to absorb the movements both physically and mentally. The student is at the peak of his ability to learn and strives to expand his martial knowledge. At this level, the student starts to create a fighting style uniquely his own.

Transcendence (Ri) is the final level and the apex of the student's training, the final transition to becoming a master. The student has surpassed the teacher and has passed beyond mere technique. Everything is understood, from technique to philosophy.

Mushin no shin (mind of no mind).

Sometimes known as "detached mind" (mushin no kokoro), this is a philosophy that has its roots deep in Zen. It is a state of mind in which the individual tries to eliminate all unnecessary thoughts and reacts to any outside stimuli naturally.

It was through the samurai that Zen had its first influence on Japan's military arts. Zen helped samurai warriors control their emotions enough to become improved fighting men. They soon began to notice that if they meditated and tried to clear their minds, it improved their fighting arts. Zen also taught the samurai to ignore his fear of death, because if you concentrate on death or being defeated, your mind is clouded with unnecessary and undesirable thoughts. Zen helped control these emotions and allowed the warrior to shatter any barriers between himself and his weapon.

It was the brutal ways of the samurai that caused them seek a path to peace and enlightenment. Zen offered a simple doctrine that these mostly illiterate warriors could practice and attempt to master. The main discipline of Zen was to meditate, and while meditating, the practitioner attempted to clear the mind.

Once this was achieved, the individual would see a path that showed how the world was related to everything in it. When the mind was cleared of all unnecessary thoughts. It was capable of indescribable possibilities.

A 17th – century monk named Takuan taught that the mind of the beginner was identical to the mind of the master. When the beginner reacted to an attack, he did not think, for he knew no techniques. Similarly, the master had trained to a point beyond mere technique and was able to clear his mind completely when performing techniques, reacting to any attack without thinking.

The legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi also credited mushin no shin as the true answer to everything. Masashi believed that "To attain the way…accumulated practice day by day and hour by hour. Polish the two-fold spirit (heart and mind) and sharpen the two-fold gaze (perception and sight). When your spirit is not in the least clouded, when the clouds of bewilderment clear away, there is the true void."



Musashi saw the world as a cluttered mass of doctrines that hindered the spirit from finding the true path. He thought that the answer was the void, or nothingness, which enabled the masters to become so great. Therefore, when the swordsman trained, he did so with his mind completely empty of all thoughts. This allowed him to perform techniques without any hindrance; the body alone executed the techniques reflexively. By eliminating the ego and disciplining both the mind and body, the practitioner could perform techniques naturally.

Gichin Funakoshi perhaps said it best when he tried to describe the Zen influence in karate: “As a mirror’s polished surface reflects whatever stands before it, and as a quiet valley carries even the smallest sounds, so must the student of karate-do render his mind empty of selfishness and wickedness in an effort to react appropriately toward anything he might encounter.”



Budo Banker Martial Arts Business Series

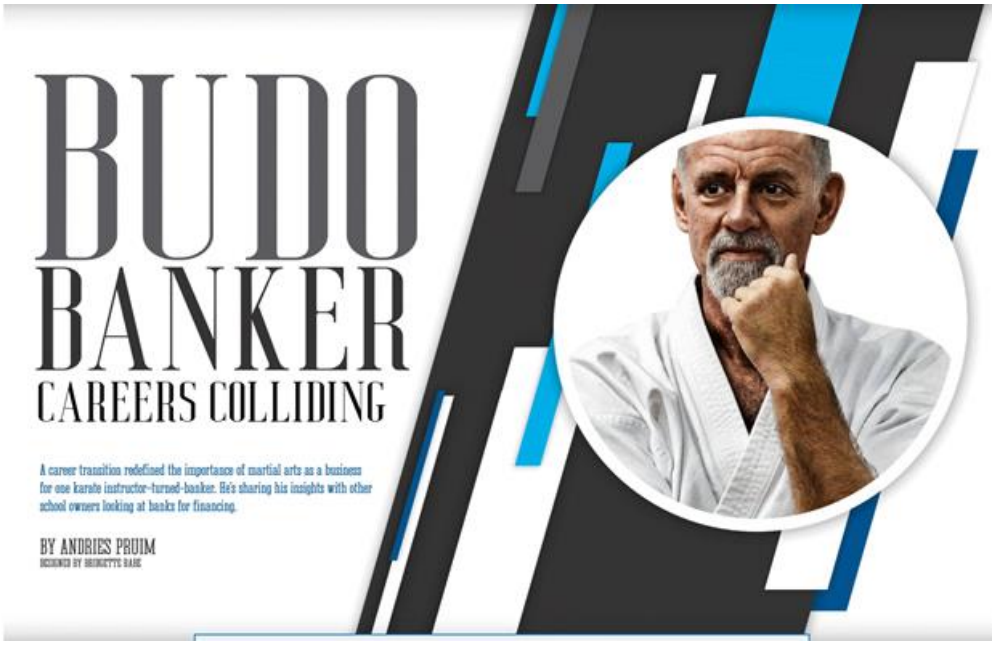
The following pages consist of several Martial Arts related articles which have been published under the Budo Banker moniker. The Budo Banker name was first used by my original editors and it just seem the develop a life of its own.

Most of Budo Banker articles focus on the business side of the martial arts, primarily for those talented martial artists who have decided to turn their passion into a career.

From the one-person operation to a multi school franchise conglomerate, the following articles provides insight to the various strategies and methodologies that are relevant in today's Martial Arts Business Industry.

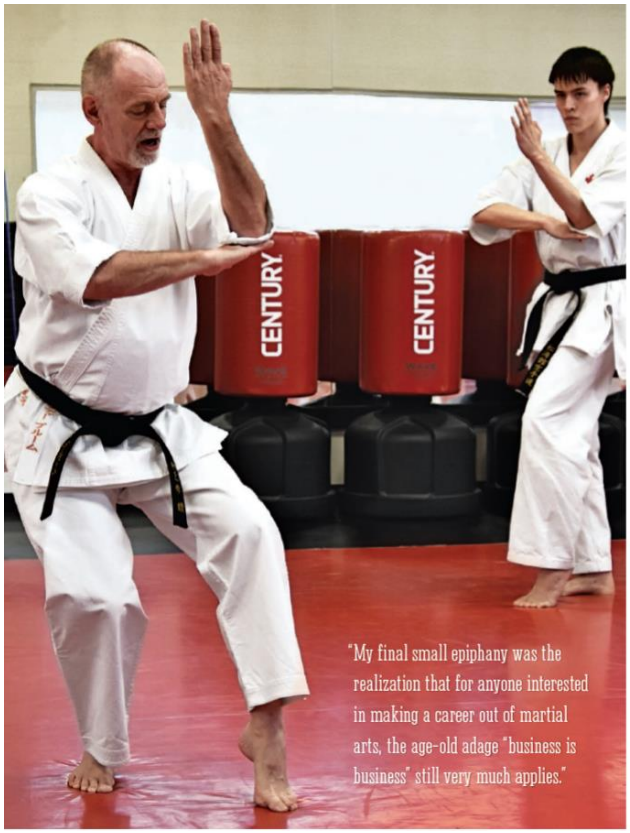
It is my simple objective to provide some of my 38 years of corporate business experience to the myriad of extremely talented martial artists wishing to make a living from their years of training and teaching.

The following articles were written over a span of 5 years starting just before the COVID Pandemic disrupted the world and caused catastrophic damage to the Martial Arts Industry. All have been published on a third-party Magazine or Blog platform (e.g.: Black Belt Magazine) and as mentioned primarily focus on the business side of the industry, with some exceptions.



Careers Colliding

A CAREER TRANSITION FROM MARTIAL ARTIST TO BUSINESS PERSON



Separate Philosophies

When you begin your martial arts training at a young age, it is nearly impossible *not* to incorporate their traditional philosophies into your daily life.

For the most part, this is a good thing! The life lessons taken from martial arts have created many upstanding, well-respected members of society. However, some of the philosophies can restrict a modern martial artist from becoming financially independent – and, ultimately, even curtail the number of people they are able to help.

There is a common misconception that teaching martial arts is a worthy cause, and, therefore, is its own reward – with or without adequate financial compensation. This has resulted in many talented martial arts instructors having to maintain a separate career outside of teaching in order to pay bills, raise a family, and (hopefully) own a home.

This practice of asking for less than what they're worth is prevalent among today's instructors. They feel that asking for reimbursement that is, in some cases, simply a living wage, would devalue the art that they are trying to teach.

This is the environment I found while studying budo, a modern version of Shotokan karate (although one that continues to instill the philosophy of being above monetary concerns). I supplemented my training stateside with over a dozen trips to Japan. There, I trained at the Honbu Dojo, headquarters of the famous 10th-dan Shotokan karate Master Hirokazu Kanazawa. Although an amazing learning opportunity from a training sense, from a business perspective, it made little sense.

It was imparted to me that if you needed money for living, you would simply take a full-time day job, *while* teaching karate during any non-work hours. Some of my peers took one or even two part-time positions in order to get by. I decided to take a position with a bank, since one of my students happened to be a branch manager for one of the major institutions.

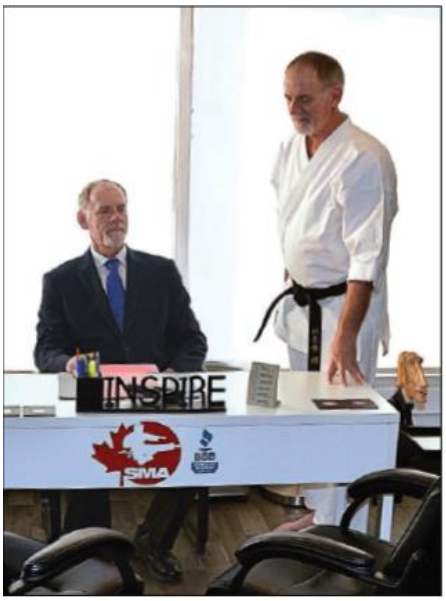
I thought that working as a teller would provide me with enough income to survive as I tried to enhance my martial arts career. What I didn't expect was for this "supplemental" income source to turn into my *actual* career! It also gave me a completely different perspective on martial arts – especially, the *business* of martial arts.

I found that my analytical side was a perfect fit for the bank. I took advantage of the opportunities this career offered, and quickly rose through the administration. I continued to teach karate three nights a week, while taking banking and lending courses to further my education.

Karate never became less important or less valuable to me. However, I did start to realize how some of the traditional values taught by martial arts were in conflict with the school as a business, and were even hurting the school's long-term viability.

It was at this point that I had to make decisions about the future of my career and my family. At first, I was able to sustain both my banking and karate careers. Unfortunately, life brought me to a fork in the road where I was forced to choose between them. I had an opportunity to significantly advance my banking career, by taking a position as a commercial lender. However, the job was in a different city.

As a married man with a new child in the picture, I knew I had to make the decision that would allow me to best support my family. Although I was reluctant to leave my school in other hands, I packed my things, and took the plunge into the world of commercial lending. Ultimately, this decision would lead me to learn more about the martial arts industry – from the "other" side.



Small Epiphanies

When we moved to the new city, I was not surprised to find that I was already well-acquainted with many of the martial arts schools there, through my many years on the tournament circuit. What *did* surprise me was that a number of them began to pay me visits when they discovered I was a business lender. Of course, these started as polite social calls to welcome me to the city. However, one by one, I began to receive financing requests.

As the new kid on the block within the bank's commercial lending department, I was closely supervised. For this reason, I had to be especially careful that any financing request I submitted for the bank's approval included standard financial statements, a business plan, and detailed financial statements. To do any less could have reflected poorly on me *and* the school asking for a loan. I certainly didn't want that!

The more I looked into them, the more apparent it became that, based on their principals, these schools could only be considered hobbies, regardless of their long-term intentions. Most of the lending would need to be based on their financial statements (to a bank, these show credit worthiness). I quickly gained insight into how schools documented their yearly income and expenses.

Most school owners tried to ensure that they paid the minimal amount of taxes possible. Unfortunately, this meant that the financial statements I was given reflected almost no profits for the year in question. Additionally, the accompanying business plans were, to be polite, somewhat unprofessional in their contents. Finally, most school owners had only nominal net worth, which, again, made any collateral options limited.

My final small epiphany was the realization that for anyone interested in making a career out of martial arts, the age-old adage "business is business" still very much applies.

Business is Business

This simple statement reflects the banker's position that no matter what product or service you offer, you must run your operation along standard business parameters. What I also realized after conversations with my commercial lending colleagues was that there was no standardized business model for a full-time martial arts school. We attempted to leverage the private school model, but the lack of a standardized curriculum between martial arts schools made this difficult.

I discovered that, too often, martial arts schools were not deemed "standardized" enough to grab the attention of their local banks – mine, unfortunately, included. In an effort to help, I personally met with and consulted local martial arts school owners. However, due to the infancy of the industry, most schools were run by a single owner with no support staff and limited business expertise. The business plans they presented to me simply fell apart upon scrutiny.

Any martial artist who wishes to make his or her passion into a rewarding career must realize that the industry we know today is considerably different from what it was as little as 40 years ago.

In fact, up until the mid-1980 's, there was not a true martial art "industry." Most schools were of the "hobbyist" variety. It was the generation of "Karate Kid" movie fans that eventually took martial arts from garages and backyards to the mainstream. This was when the martial arts industry began to start tapping into the same financial resources as other, more well-established industries.



Business Includes Banking

When I first started commercial lending at a major international bank, there was little appetite for financing any martial arts facility unless it was attached to a well-known fitness center. Even then, the focus was on the fitness side of the business, rather than the martial arts.

After many years as a commercial credit manager, I came to the conclusion that when evaluating a loan request, most lenders focus on the three basics components of lending. These are the three "C's" of credit evaluation: Cashflow/Capacity, Collateral/Capital and Character.

Even when evaluating the three "C's", lenders initially look at the first two fundamentals: Cashflow/Capacity ("How are you going to pay the loan back?") and Collateral/Capital ("What do you have to offer to secure a loan in the first place?") The importance the lender places of one of these criteria depends on the value of the other.

For example, if the security you are providing is of high value (such as the first mortgage against your home), the concern for repayment is not as high as if you were only providing an unsecured personal guarantee. This is because the value of personal residences rarely depreciates and can quickly be sold to recoup funds.

If your security value is lesser, then the cash flow analysis must be concise and convincing. There must be definitive documentation to convince the lender that your

revenue and profit figures are attainable. Leveraging my considerable time in commercial lending, I would like to provide some insights on how a banker examines your financing requests.

Most banks use a standardized template to capture the basic details of the request (see sidebar). As a business owner, you should familiarize yourself with these details before dealing with a financial institution or private investor.

Once the technicalities of the request are agreed upon (such as the amount of the loan, the interest rate, and how repayment will take place), the bulk of the banker's analysis will focus on the following three main areas of the business:

- Industry Risk
- Business Risk
- Financial Risk

This section will provide a more detailed view of the lender's analysis, which will be useful when developing your business plan.

Industry Risk

In risk analysis, the focus is on the viability of the industry and how it falls on the industry maturity scale. For most industries, there is a myriad of data that the lender can obtain from government or other official sources.

Although martial arts has been a widely available activity for many years, the business side of the industry is still considered to be in its infancy. This is because of the lack of set professional standards across organizations.

In fact, in lending terms, the martial arts industry is classified under the umbrella of physical fitness businesses. This means that the lender will likely look to the fitness industry – gyms, fitness studios, and similar operations – for statistics and comparisons.

Still, there are still several differentiators between the fitness industry and the martial arts industry. Some of these contrasts are positive, such as the self-defence and life skills taught by martial arts. In some cases, these comparisons may be unfavorable. Some martial arts schools, for example, seem anachronistic next to modern fitness studios.

Another risk factor that weighs against our industry: government statistics show that the martial arts only make the list of "top 10" interests for the five- to 12-year-old age bracket, and it's in 10th place. In all other age groups, it doesn't even make the top 10.

This is where you as the business owner, need to step up and provide your lender with quantifiable and reliable sources for your own school, as a piece of the martial arts industry. This is why it is important for you to keep detailed records of student enrollments, payments, and other financial information. It is also wise to keep an eye on industry trends. Make sure the information you present is thorough, clear and, above all, correct.

The lender will usually only do a nominal amount of research of the industry, especially if it is smaller, as is martial arts. It is in your best interest to ensure the lender has all the facts they need to make an informed decision on not just whether to support you, but the industry as a whole.

Business Risk

This section deals with your business acumen and the pertinent business climate. With respect to the latter, one aspect of the analysis will not only look at the competitive factors for your business, but at what alternative exist for the products and services you provide.

Unfortunately, the martial arts industry has quite a lot of competition – or, "alternatives." Since a majority of our clients (students) are children, the alternatives are all the other activities kids love to participate in: soccer, football, dance, gymnastics, softball… the list goes on.

Businesses survive on cash flow. It is your responsibility to convince the lender that you can generate the necessary revenue. If you are a small operation, you will have to document your abilities and experience. You will also have to *show* proof of your skills in an actual class. This is another reason to have your school well-established before approaching any financial institution for funds. This way, you will be able to demonstrate your teaching, organizational and communicative skills, allowing for a more informed decision to be made by the lender.

In addition to being able to physically demonstrate your capabilities, you will also need to show your documented knowledge. This would include not only your business plan, but a detailed class schedule and curriculum. You will also have to show that your curriculum *works*. Does it do what you say it will – that is, are students able to learn progressive skills and advance in rank?

In your plan, and throughout your discussions with your lender, you should also highlight your ability to properly hire, develop and manage a team of instructors and administrators. In other words, you will need to prove not just your business management capabilities, but your relationship management skills.

The latter also includes your salesmanship abilities. Many times, this is the martial artist's Achilles heel. However, this ability is especially paramount if you are going to "sell" your idea to your lender. If you know that you are uncomfortable "selling" your school, them emphasize your ability to hire a team that will draw in business.

Another major factor lenders will consider is your ability to market yourself and your school. You must come in with a comprehensive marketing plan, including cost and implementation. Your knowledge of both standard print media, as well the new social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) will provide the lender with confidence that you will be able to locate the clientele you need to populate your school.

Your research in this area must be thorough. You should provide your lender with evidence that you have looked into the demographics of your area, including how many other schools you will have to contend with in your area, and their success.

Finally, while the majority of the business analysis will focus on the principal, and your ability to run a business, there will be other technical aspects that will be reviewed by the lender. You must be able to analyze your success, and communicate it.

If you are not able to produce weekly stats or monthly financials, you will not be able to properly monitor the growth of your business. This is something the lender will zero in on. The lender would prefer to see a system where, if they were to request certain data (such as your active student count, revenue breakdown, or a profit and loss statement), this information could be produced immediately.

In summary, while the martial arts industry has some uniqueness to it, for the most part, the analysis of the business side will be similar to all other businesses in that the lender is considering.

Financial Risk

The financial analysis is quite straightforward. This is where most experienced lenders will focus. To be blunt, most lenders are "bean counters.' At the end of the day, it is the numbers in your business plan that will make or break your chances of getting a loan approved.

In many cases, the senior credit adjudicator will go directly to the financials provided before even looking at your request. Therefore, the figures you provide must be realistic and arguable. You should be prepared to justify each of the figures you have provided in your business plan and explain how these figures were obtained.

You will also have to contend with standard financial ratios lenders use. These are working capital (your business' immediate efficiency and short-term finances), debt/equity (total liabilities divided by equity), "CapEx" or capital expenditure (money you've spent to maintain or improve your physical property), retained profits (net income left over after paying shareholders), as well as gross profit margins (the total amount of money you have made, minus the cost of the expenses it takes to run your school).

While it is not necessary to be a financial expert at these figures, it would be good to sit down with your accountant to discuss the importance of each.

Each of these financial ratios is there to determine the ongoing viability of your business. As all business success is derived from cash flow, these ratios will provide evidence of liquidity – the ability to pay debt, grow, and produce useful services.

For the most part, the focus will be on your income statement, also known as the profit and loss statement. A good lender will scrutinize each major line of your revenue and expense statement, including your revenues streams, your facility and staff expenditures and your personal remuneration. This is why it is always best to review your business plan and your financial statements before meeting with a lender or investor.

In the end, you may find yourself having to provide a substantial amount of personal assets, as it is doubtful that the business itself can support itself entirely on its own. Also, there is the last "C" to consider – character. Your personal credit will also likely be examined. How you handle your personal finances will be viewed as an indicator of how well or poorly you will handle your business' finances – and the lender's money.

What is the Best Option?

After I left the banking industry, I accepted a position as a senior business consulting with a leading telecommunications corporation. This allowed me to gain even more insight into business processes. In the meanwhile, I continued to teach karate part-time in local schools while researching the evolving industry.

My studies included dozens of books on the business of martial arts, as well as industry publications like the MASuccess. I found this magazine to be extremely informative and insightful, ideal for any martial arts school owner. In the mid-2000's, I attended my first Martial Arts SuperShow and was encouraged by what I saw there. The business models being promoted there were, I felt, the best suited for the industry as it moves forward.

Although I was tremendously impressed by the quality of the seminars (then and now!), my favorite part of the Show was talking with all the vendors on the tradeshow floor. As a banker and business consultant, I am used to talking with enthusiastic entrepreneurs both at the small business and corporate levels. The vendors here have the spirit that will put themselves and our industry on the path for success.

During my continued research, I had the honor of talking with Frank Silverman, the very busy and ever-helpful Executive Director of MAIA. He provided incredible insight as to how the industry was changing. I was also able to talk with the late John Corcoran, editor of MA Success. He was another invaluable source of martial arts business information. I was convinced that these gentlemen and their respective organizations were on the right path to assist all martial artists in turning their passions into rewarding careers.

The Future of the Industry

Now that I have retired from my position in corporate management, I have dedicated myself to assisting local martial arts school both in teaching and business. I continue to attend the Martial Arts SuperShow when I can, so that I can continue to best serve the schools I work with. Events like the SuperShow and organizations like MAIA truly offer school owners the best path forward.

While a career in martial arts is attainable, you must decide on how much of your life you are willing to dedicate to not only your art, but to your business. The days of the martial artist teaching without adequate financial compensation are over. They were a fallacy from the outset, and certainly are today. It is not fair to you, as a school owner and instructor, to ask for less than what you are worth. To lenders, it may indicate a lack of confidence in your abilities.

A full-time and rewarding career *is* available to you but only if you remember that it is a business, first and foremost. This means you must be constantly re-educating yourself, both with respect to your particular martial art as well as to the art of business. In this way, your careers will never collide. They merge to become your one and only true path to personal and financial success.



LOAN GUIDE FOR SCHOOL OWNERS

This is where the legal name of the Business Entity is fully identified, together with any 'doing business as' names that may appear on the Business frontage.

In addition, if your business is not incorporated, you will have to provide some details as to how you are prepared to mitigated the possible personal liability in this litigious society if the business is a simple partnership or a sole proprietorship.

Your Bank Inc.
Commercial Credit Request

Client Name	New Martial Arts School and Fitness Centre Ltd
DBA:	New Waves Schools
SIC:	7991 - Physical Fitness Facilities
Risk Rating:	Usually a rating of 1 through 10 - based on some internal criteria

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes are numerical codes assigned by governments to business establishments to identify the primary business of the establishment.

Even after all these years, the classification for Martial Arts schools are still categorized under Fitness Centre which means this is where the Lender will be looking for statistics unless you can provide them with separate and verifiable resources for exclusively Martial Arts related

For the most part, these ratings are simply a quick assessment on where the credit request should be routed, especially if the rating is a "Classified Loan" category.

When the Lender breaks down the Risk Rating assessment, there is usually a matrix whereby a rating is obtained, when taking into consideration:

- Personal Credit Score of the Principals
- Personal Worth of the Principals
- Total existing debt load for both the Principals and the Company
- Security Quality
- Business/Industry Maturity

Borrowing Request Amounts

Loan Type	Existing Borrowings	Outstanding Balances	New Requests
Operating Loan	$0.00	$0.00	$10,000.00
Term Loan	$0.00	$0.00	$90,000.00
Totals	$0.00	$0.00	$100,000.00

This is the summary portion of the Loan request and details any outstanding borrowings and the total credit exposure of the business. In some cases, any personal borrowing (including personal mortgages) will be listed in order to allow for a full review of the principal's debt obligations.

In this example the new Martial Arts Business (a standard Karate school in this case) is requesting a Term Loan of $90,000 for Tennant Improvements and Equipment purchases. The Operating Line is for initial Working Capital requirements, although there will be some conditions on how these funds can be used.

Repayment Terms

Loan Type	Details	
Operating Loan	New Request	On Demand
	Interest Rate	Floating - Prime + 5%
	Monthly Fee	$100.00
Term Loan	New Request	Amortized over 5 Years
	Repayment	Payment to commence one month after drawdown $1,500.00 per month + Interest
	Interest rate	Floating - Prime + 5% Fixed - XX % for a 1 year term

This is a simplified example of repayment terms with the Operating Loan being a rotating line of credit thus requiring a floating rate to allow the Financial Institution (FI) to assess current interest rates against any outstanding balances.

For the term loan, most institutions will want to see full repayment within a 5-year period, but some longer terms can be obtained depending on the equipment being purchased. For the most part and considering the industry, be prepared for a short repayment timeline.

As for Interest Rates, this is where your negotiations skills must come into play and this time your personal business with the FI will help you get a better rate. If the business is a 'stand alone' in that it is the only business being done with the FI, then be prepared for high rates to be applied.

Conditions

1. Operating Loan is to be fully cleaned up every 60 days
2. Term Loan funding to be predicated by invoices for all equipment purchases.
3. All Security to be executed and registered before any funding occurs.
4. Personal Guarantees to be provided by all Company Principals.
5. Monthly Student Receivables Listing to be provided by the 5th business day of each month.
6. Financial Statements to be provided every quarter by 10th business day following quarter end.
7. Year End Accountant prepared Financial Statements to be provided within 60 days of year end

When borrowing business funds, most FI's will implement a number of conditions with the foregoing being a small sample of some that may apply in your case.

- Most FI's would like to see regular clean up of Operating facilities which simply means that the balance outstanding on the Operating Loan must come down to zero ($0.00) at least once every 60 days. The purpose of this condition is to ensure there is no constant residual balance outstanding which should be "Termed" out via a monthly repayment schedule.
- In most cases the FI would simply like to verify funds are being allocated properly and copies of invoices normally suffices.
- Laws are quite explicit these days as to when charges/liens are assessed against a business or property, so be prepared for the involvement of lawyers, both representing your interest and those of the FI.
- There is very little chance you will be able to obtain business funds without providing your personal guarantee and while in most cases the FI will insist on unlimited guarantees from all Principals, you should try to negotiate a limited guarantee to only the amount being borrowed.
- The remaining 3 conditions are standard financial reporting, which allows the FI to monitor the progress of your business.

Security

- General Security Agreement providing a fixed and floating charge over all assets of the Company.
- Unlimited Personal Guarantee from Principal # 1
  - o Person Net Worth: $XXX,XXX
  - o Credit Score: 800
- Unlimited Personal Guarantee from Principal # 2
  - o Person Net Worth: $XXX,XXX
  - o Credit Score: 800

This section will detail all the security being provided to support the loan.

This example reflects some very basic requirements and, in most cases, especially with a start up business, you may find that additional security will be required.

This additional security may be a mortgage over your personal residence or the assignment of some personal investments but ultimately be prepared to not only having to provide personal net worth statements, but you will be expected to pay for all of the FI's out of pocket expenses, including credit checks and appraisals.

If you are being asked to provide mortgage security, then be prepared for more appraisals and legal fees. In any case when dealing with a financial institution with respect to security (collateral), it is always best to have your own legal representative review all documents on your behalf.

The three "C's" of Lending

How most Lending decisions are made.

The standard three "C's" of credit evaluation are Cashflow/Capacity, Collateral/Capital and Character.
Each are an equally important factor in the decision-making criteria of any credit evaluation, with most credit establishments weighing the importance of each component, primarily based on its intrinsic value and this includes the Character of the borrower.

The first component of any financing request is to determine the ability to pay back the amount borrowed and this is where "Capacity" comes into play. Capacity or Cashflow is simply the amount of revenue and profit you expect your business to generate.

These figures will be reviewed carefully as they must provide sufficient profits to cover taxes, personal remuneration as well as all interest on all outstanding debts, both existing as well as the proposed new financing. While technically the Capacity (or Cashflow) calculations are based on the business, new or otherwise, but realistically, the analyst will include your personal obligations as it will tell exactly how much your will need personally from the business and whether this matches your remuneration estimates.

You will have to support your cashflow estimates with accurate historical figures or valid calculations. The emphasis here is to provide value to these figures in order to minimize the requirement of collateral for your borrowing request. The value of your cashflow estimates will ultimately emphasize the need for Collateral which is an asset that you own which could be used to "secure" the eventual repayment of the new obligation(s).

These "assets" will have to have some deemed value, which can be evaluated by a third party and not something of sentimental value to you personally. In other words, that painting of your great Grandfather may be considered 'priceless' by you and your family, unfortunately it's liquidity (i.e.: salability) may be limited on the open market, so would not be considered a quality asset to use as collateral. Property and/or Investments would be of the highest value to use as Collateral and you should also be prepared to provide an unlimited personal guarantee on any business borrowings you may obtain.

This personal guarantee is where the third (and sometime considered the most important) component of the three "C's" of lending, namely Character. While technically this category reviews your personal financial wherewithal and your past financial dealings, there is still a huge integrity factor that could sway the Lender's decision in your favour. This is especially true if you have had some financial indiscretions in the past. If these financial issues were minor and if your (verifiable) reputation within the Industry is stellar and/or you maintain a similar stature within the local business community, this again would reflect favourably with any financing request.

In other words, if the life skills we teach on the mat as Martial Arts Instructors are the same philosophies we maintain in our personal life and business dealings, this integrity factor can convince a supportive banker to believe in your dream and in turn overcome any sub-standard credit history. Those characteristics that make up the persona of an incredible Martial Arts Instructor are the same characteristics of integrity and honesty that provide the confidence to allow Lenders to feel their borrowed funds are safe and will ultimately be paid back.

The three "C's" of lending, each important in their own right and totally controllable by your commitment to the development of your Martial Arts and Business acumen. Your life long dedication to your Martial Art will carry you a long way in the general business community as long as you remain true to the "Way", both professional and personally.

Industry Analysis

Industry Analysis, viewing the business in which we live and work.

When we are building a Business Plan or even when talking with any perspective Banker, it is always advisable to be prepared to know a lot about the Industry in which you do business. This is accomplished by some research of the Industry via various resources as well as based on your personal experience.

Industry analysis per say is a process where you complete extensive research and in turn analyze the data that can help a business assess their future and formulate a purposeful plan to grow the business.

When evaluating the Industry which a business in working in, there are several metrics the analyst will review for comparative purposes. The best way to do so is by leveraging three commonly used and important methods of performing industry analysis.

The three methods for the best Industry Analysis are:

- Porter's 5 Forces
- PEST Analysis
- SWOT Analysis

These three analysis methodologies are somewhat similar but focus on slightly different perspectives. We describe each in an abridged form and as they relate to the Martial Arts industry.

Porter's Five Forces Analysis.

The framework for the Five Forces Analysis consists of these competitive forces, with analysis of these five forces giving an accurate impression of the industry and makes analysis easier.

- **Industry rivalry**
  - Determine the degree of competition among the other schools in your area.
  - Too much competition can lead to reduced profits for all the school involved.

- **Threat of substitutes**
  - Determine the availability of substitute services.
  - Substitute services can include other sports and/or activities (eSports).
  - Too many substitutes will limit your ability to raise prices

- **Bargaining power of buyers**
  - The amount of buying power your Customers maintain will have an impact on prices
  - Examples include Brand Identity (MMA vs. Karate or limited competition in your area)

- **Bargaining power of suppliers**
  - Powerful suppliers can demand premium prices and limit your profit
  - Examples include quality location availability or Capital/Equipment costs.

- **Barriers to entry (threat of new entrants)**
  - Act as a deterrent against new competitors
  - Loyalty of Student base to School and/or Brand.

PEST Analysis stands for:

- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Technological.

PEST analysis is a useful methodology for analyzing the macro point of view for Industries.

Within the Political analysis, you would be examining factors at both the Federal level as well as the Local level. From simple By-Law regulations limiting the type pf businesses allowed in a certain area, to country wide regulations due to misconceptions or particular incidents. In addition, factors like labour laws, taxes and insurance requirements also come into play.

On the Economic front, both recessionary and financial implications are analyzed, as the majority of Martial Art schools depend on the disposal income of their customers. If disposal income is reduced due to economic factors, this could also affect school profits and growth.

Social factors take into consideration forces that move the society in a certain direction, including away from athletic endeavours. In addition to competing against the eSports industry, any Social Media factors must also be taken into consideration, especially when considering potential to grow your business.

The final factor is the technological and while this would obviously take into consideration those possible substitutes, namely gaming and eSports, but it would also include other more advantageous developments. These advances in technology could include new software allowing you to improve your member tracking and communications requirements, as well as other technological mediums on which you can provide instructional options to your students (e.g.: private YouTube channels).

While the first two industry analysis options noted above will provide you with a myriad of data to analyze, the third methodology provides an excellent way to summarize your research and how best to make your research actionable.

SWOT Analysis stands for:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats.

Leveraging SWOT can be a great way of summarizing various industry analysis methods and determining their implications for the business in question.

For both Strengths and Weakness, you look to compare your business (and/or business plan) to the factors uncovered in your research and what factors you feel you have strength in combating competitive forces and those areas of weakness that will require more effort on your part to properly mitigate.

This is where the uniqueness of the Martial Arts Industry comes into play whereby its emphasis is not only on self-defence but character development as well. These Life Skills as part of the "service" being provided can be consider a strength, whereas on the other hand the now mainstream inclusion of martial arts amongst children activities (and its competitive factors) can be considered a weakness.

When reviewing Opportunities and Threats, you are now looking more towards outside factors that can inhibit the growth of your business or even threaten its existence outright.

Again, you can see Opportunities with every issue noted in your strength analysis and in turn determine very quickly how many actual threats there are to your success.

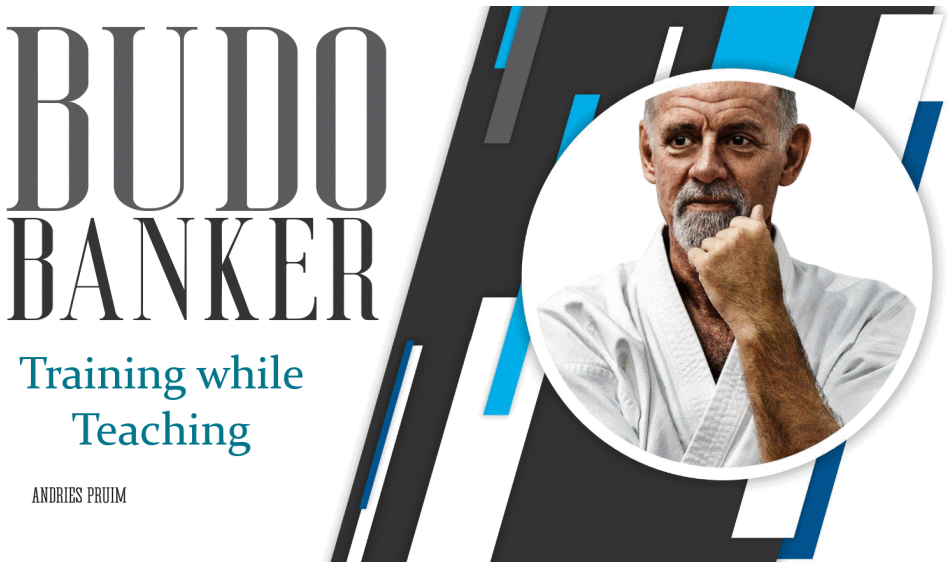
A final and separate analysis path is through the use of Risk agencies. Most financial and corporate institutions have well established agencies where they contract out this analysis requirement, with the primary emphasis being on the many risks inherent in all industries.

These agencies can range from well known corporate and government risk rating agencies like Moody's or Standard & Poor's, to more specialized agencies like the Risk Management Association, which is used more by Financial Institutions for their business and corporate lending requirements.

For example, here is the Credit Risk analysis from the aforementioned RMA site for the Fitness Industry from December 2017 (usually updated yearly):

> The gym, health, and fitness clubs' industry has grown over the last several years for two reasons. First, consumers have a new awareness about how exercise prevents obesity and improves health. In addition, an increase in consumer disposable income post-recession has increased demand for both niche studio and chain gym memberships.
>
> While gym, health, and fitness club memberships used to be fairly concentrated in the 18–34 age range, two new age demographics are taking an interest in fitness memberships: those over age 50 and teenagers. In addition, as healthcare reform continues, government and industry are strongly promoting wellness and fitness and technological improvements are making exercise more diverse, fun, and easier to manage. All of these factors are good news for the gym, health, and fitness club industry.
>
> However, to be successful, gym, health, and fitness clubs must differentiate themselves in the market to attract customers while remaining affordable; avoid potential risks associated with customer injury; and cater to a time-strapped clientele. Equipment upgrades can impinge capital and this industry does have a degree of seasonality associated with revenue: Memberships often rise in the first quarter of the year and then fall off.
>
> Gym, health, and fitness clubs typically need funds for:
>
> - Facility acquisition and improvements (lights, mirrors, lockers, flooring, etc.).
> - Hiring experienced personal trainers and training current employees.
> - Workout equipment leasing, purchasing, and maintenance.
> - Amenities like on-site nutritionists, cafes, or smoothie bars.
> - Marketing campaigns.
> - Working capital.
> - Licenses and insurance.

You can see that having an excellent grasp on the fundamentals of the Martial Arts Industry or any of its peripherally related industries will give you a head's up on your competition as well as the confidence of any Banker or supplier you will need to make your passion into reality.



While everyone enjoys participating in a class taught by a wonderful instructor (sensei), we also sometimes wonder how the sensei manages to train him or herself. Clearly the majority of their martial arts involvement now comes from their time in class. But how do they continue to train and improve, or even practice, when they are constantly moving around the class correcting and assisting their students?



This has always been the sensei's dilemma. How should he or she obtain their required training/practice, while ensuring the progress of their students?

There are many opinions on whether instructors should be "training while teaching." We can all agree that during class, most of the instructor's focus should be on the students who are paying to be there. Any debate stems from differences in opinion of just *how much* that focus needs to remain on students, and how much it can be devoted to personal training.

Clearly, there will be a difference in the amount of personal training an instructor can work in depending on the class. A sensei teaching karate to five-years-old's will get very little; while a BJJ professor teaching black belt-level class will get more. Such obvious exceptions aside, should you find yourself wondering, "How much time can I spend training in the classes I teach?" here are some general Do's and Don'ts. This list is not comprehensive to any extent; still, it does reflect what is considered acceptable in today's customer-focused business environment.

DO NOT equate "I have staff" with "I have training time."

If you operate a large, professionally run school with many full-time teachers, then the answer for the sensei should be easy, which is *NOT* to train while teaching a class. Depending on the level of your instructors, and what their long-term ambitions regarding teaching are, it may be appropriate for you to let them take the lead occasionally while you train alongside your students – keeping in mind the fact that *you* are still the primary individual in charge, and therefore will have to supervise as you train. However –

DO NOT turn the reins over to your junior instructors too often, or too much.

Imagine what the parents of your students would think if, every time they came in, they found the head instructor training alongside paying students, while lower-level instructors lead the class? If you are running a full-time school and your income is dependent on the number of satisfied students (or satisfied parents) you have enrolled, then they deserved your undivided attention and your own training should be done before or after the scheduled classes. Your school is a business and must operate as one, which means ensuring the "product" or "service" (your classes) maintains a professional air and constantly has the customer (your students) in mind. They are not there to watch you work up a sweat while the rest of the class tries to keep up.

DO emphasize student service.

Fortunately, for the most part (especially when mortgage or rent is due), martial arts school owners immediately snap back to a mindset of customer service over their own desires to maintain the sharpness of their youth. The professional sensei must still balance not only their personal training, which we all know is a lifetime endeavor, but they must also lead or supervise, on average, about 25 to 30 separate classes a week. Not to mention taking care of the business side of the operation, which again usually takes up the remaining of the sensei's available hours.

If, again, you have a large staff, the solution is self-evident. You can set up hours before or after classes, or on non-class days, for instructors to train with yourself and each other. You could even extend this invitation to advanced students, with the explicit understanding that they will be there to train *alongside* you, not *under* you.

Having the benefit of backup instructors also provides another training option. It is perfectly reasonable for you to tell your students that you will be gone for a weekend or even full week to train at a seminar or other event, leaving your junior instructors in charge. They are still getting their money's worth, because you will come back freshly inspired and with new skills to teach!

DO use training with students as a way to teach them.

So far, we have discussed large, multi-instructor, fully staffed schools as examples. The reality is that today there are many part-time operations who do not have that privilege. These schools must rely on dedicated professionals who have just finished an 8-hour work day and are now providing personal time in order to teach those who are interested in an art the sensei has dedicated a good portion of his or her to.

Very few, if any, of these dedicated instructors get (enough) remuneration for their efforts. They make enough to cover all overhead, and hopefully pay for a school party or two. They come from their full-time jobs and are willing to take the time to pass on an art form very dear to them.

In these cases, it makes much more sense for the sensei to participate in the training. This is partially because it is their best (and perhaps only) chance to train, and partially for the benefit of the students. Training with the sensei is often the best way to learn. If this school owner has no secondary instructors, he or she may rotate through training a technique with several different students, then allow them to work with less-experienced partners, rather than try to explain the technique again and again verbally to the whole class.

DO NOT neglect your own training at the cost of your students, or vice-versa.

There is a delicate balance: A sensei who does not regularly train and grow his or her own martial arts schools is of limited use to their students. But a sensei who treats class as their personal training ground is *also* inadequate. And either way, the demands of the students are still there. All teachers wish to ensure that their students are progressing satisfactorily, yet time constraints of life require that they use some of the class to continue their own training requirements. It is the perfection of this delicate balance which ultimately determines the success of these part-time schools.

DO ask for help when you need it!

It is a unique experience when you can train under an Instructor who can properly balance their own training requirements while teaching an amazing and informative class. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and is a major reason why a number of schools fail, especially when the school is supposed to be a "business". This is why there are organizations like MAIA and its related groups where overwhelmed Instructors can get support. In other words, Do NOT try to do everything on your own. There is a community of help out there ready to assist.

If you are a student, DO be understanding of your sensei's situation!

If you are training in a school run by someone who has martial arts as their full-time business, and has the resources to train outside of teaching, then you can expect their full instructional attention. On the other hand, if you are attending the myriad of small community center-based or single-man operations, you must provide your sensei some leeway in their teaching and training habits. While it is best to have the sensei walk around and watch your performance, it is also very inspirational to watch the sensei training alongside you. This also gives you something to aspire to.

We all love to "show off" our talents in class, but a sensei does not have that indulgence. He or she must demonstrate humility and respect for the students, whether training with or alongside them. Even so, there are myriad opportunities for the sensei to participate in class. They must show the business skill of being engaged while still maintaining a leadership persona.

AN EXCEPTION:

There is one instance where these rules must be set aside. That is when a Senior Shihan or Master Instructor is teaching class. These authentic masters have, on average, practiced their art for well over 40 years. The wear and tear of all that training has taken its physical toll on them. These instructors have a vast repository of knowledge, but not the flexibility, stamina, or physical abilities of their youth, and may also be suffering from injuries. You should not expect these individuals to do hands-on training with you, perhaps in any capacity. However, if you have such a Master come teach as a guest instructor at your school, you will train alongside your students.

As you can see, there is a fine balance between providing for your students and providing for your martial art. So, summarizing some of the most relevant Do's & Don'ts, which should ensure the success of your business:

Do Not

- Train in the class if you are a full-time instructor in a professionally run school.
- Allow assistance instructors to use their time teaching to show off.
- Take your senior students for granted and use them to allow you to have a personal training session (during regular classes – again, you can make exceptions during non-regular-hours training)
- Try to do everything by yourself!

Do

- Emphasize customer service by ensuring some personal attention to every student.
- Run your business as a business and get professional assistance when necessary.
- Take the opportunity to train alongside your students if a guest Senior Instructor is conducting class.
- Inspire your students by working out beside them when repeatedly demonstrating skills.

FOR STUDENTS:

The dedicated individuals who choose to make martial arts their life's journey must be admired for their dedication to their students and their arts. Those who have large schools and work there full-time and those who have other jobs and allocate their free time to sharing their art must be held in equal respect.

A sensei does so much more than lead a class of technical applications. They inspire, they support, they motivate at the exact time you most need it. An innocuous smile and a slight nod to assure you that you are on the right path can be exactly what you need to turn a frustrating day around.

If your sensei is all this and more, and especially if your class is their only training opportunity, or you have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to train with a Senior Master, allow your sensei to keep their art sharp by joining your training. This not only gives you the chance to train with an experienced practitioner, but allows him or her to continue on their own path as well. Remember, a sensei's goal is to light your way in martial arts – allow them to continue to grow and lead, and you'll both have the best experience.

Remember, in a few years, you too may take up the mantle of "sensei!" So, enjoy your journey of martial arts growth as you watch your sensei enjoy theirs.

BUDO BANKER

In Memory of Hirokazu Kanazawa



ANDRIES PRUIM

I first met Kanazawa Soke in 1991. It was the first time I had ever travelled to Japan. Being extremely self-conscious about my lack of “traditional” training, I had some trepidation attending the International Budo Culture seminar, held at the International Budo University in Katsuura, Japan.



The author (center) and Kanazawa Soke (left).

Fortunately, at the beginning of the seminar all the Budo instructors put on demonstrations of their talents. After watching some incredible judo, kendo and naginata displays, it was the karate sensei’s turn to take the stage.

I was at the IBU by invitation, having already studied karate for over 20 years. Yet when I watch Hirokazu Kanazawa perform, I was transfixed. It was obvious to everyone in the room that this was a true master of his craft. For the next 30 minutes we were treated with a display that I will remember until it is my time to move on from this earth. It also resulted in me following Kanazawa Soke and his school, which I do to this day.

Hirokazu Kanazawa Soke (*soke* is the title used to distinguish the head of a style) was a 10th Degree Shotokan Black Belt. His final ranking was bestowed upon him by the Japanese government. Kanazawa was a direct student of both Masatoshi Nakayama (Head of JKA for many years) and Gichin Funakoshi (the Founder of Shotokan Karate).

He was one of the first instructors to come out of the famous JKA Instructor program and developed Shotokan schools around the world, including ones in Britain, Canada and Hawaii. In the late 1970s, Kanazawa left the JKA and form his own organization, the Shotokan Karate International Federation (SKIF), which is now comprised of over 130 countries and several million members.

My personal experience with Kanazawa Soke began at that first demo. I returned to the same seminar for many years after that. I was eventually invited to join Kanazawa Soke for a class at his Honbu Dojo (HQ dojo) in Tokyo, where I have returned several times over the past 29 years.

Not every class I attended at the Honbu Dojo was taught by Kanazawa Soke. However, there was one night that I will cherish the most: where I was the subject of Kanazawa Soke's attention for the entire class.

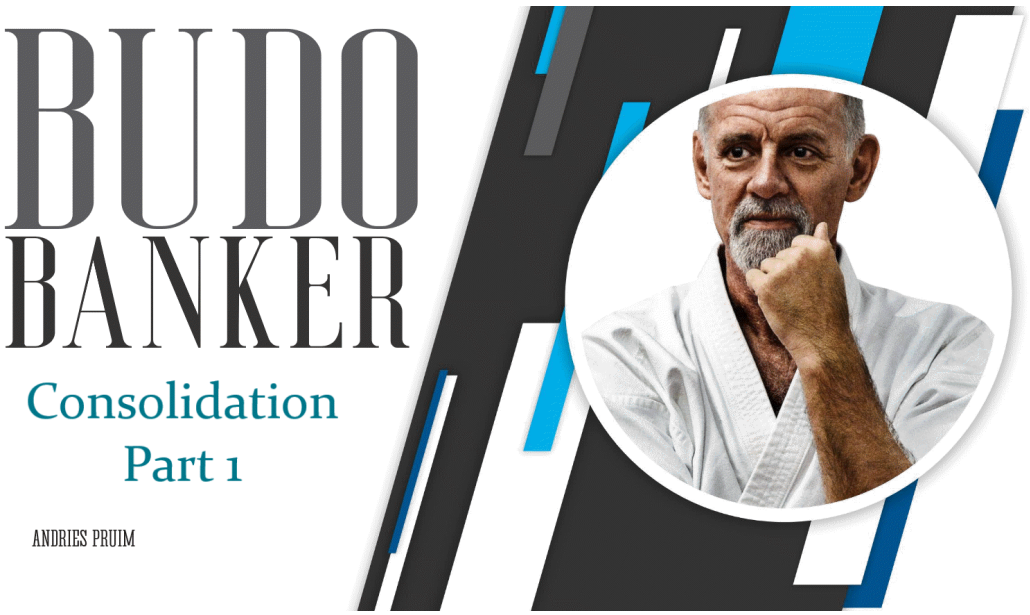
For some reason, Kanazawa Soke started to focus on everything I did and for more than an hour I received some of the finest instruction I had ever been granted in my entire karate career (up to that point). Fortunately, my wife was there and took several pictures to commemorate this night, which was the last times I was taught by the Soke:





The experience was life-altering. I do not even remember walking home that night. It is these instances in life that we must be thankful to those great master of martial arts whom we get the chance to train with.

Hirokazu Kanazawa Soke was an amazing individual. His talents at Shotokan karate and the legacy he has left will encompass generations to come. Soke's recent passing has left a huge hole in the ongoing dissemination of Shotokan karate; however, his teaching remains. The stories we students of Soke Kanazawa could tell would fill volumes. But for now, I would simply like to say to Hirokazu Kanazawa Soke: *Domo arigato gozaimashita*. Soke, you have influenced my life more than you will ever know. May you rest in peace knowing of the good you brought to this world. OSS!!



A quick starting note: I did my initial research on this subject matter prior to the COVID-19 pandemic reaching North America. However, seeing the results of this crisis only reinforced my theory: Martial arts schools must consolidate, or will perish. There may be schools that are exceptions, but they are just that: exceptions.

Inconsistent Levels of Quality

A recent graph published in MASuccess showed that around 96% of all martial arts school owners own only one or two schools. Many of those second schools are small satellite locations (and usually located in an elementary school gym or a local community center). This indicates that there is a lack of consistency with respect to curriculum, standards, quality and legitimacy.

Unfortunately, this lack of conformity has resulted in numerous lawsuits against various schools, often due to some type of negligence on the part of the school owner. Whether this negligence was due to actions of the school owner or one of the school's instructors, ultimate responsibility still falls to the owners. The increased scrutiny being placed on the school owner these days is increasing the number of "fiduciary duties" they must uphold. Simply put, a fiduciary duty is a legal obligation to act in the best interest of another. As a school owner, your fiduciary duty is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your students in a variety of circumstances and teach authentic, high-quality material, among other things.

We must then ask ourselves, "Will increased fiduciary responsibilities force conformity upon the martial arts industry?" Failing to follow these responsibilities will lead to lawsuits – and even if your school isn't hit with one, it doesn't mean you won't be affected.

Take what happened within the financial services industry, for example. In the early 2000 's, there was a dramatic increase in the number of investment advisors. Unfortunately, many of them did not foresee the 2008 recession, and as a result many of their clients lost all their fortunes.

A review determined that there were too many independent one- or two-person offices overseeing a sizeable amount of peoples' retirement and investment funds. Government agencies quickly jumped in and increased the fiduciary duties required to be an investment advisor. The new regulations required advisors to make time-consuming reports. They also required more management oversite of all advisor/client interaction. This was too much for most independent advisors to handle alone. Some were forced to close; however, a majority joined larger financial organizations. They gave up some independence, but they gained consistency and stability, and their advisors became better-able to concentrate on the welfare of their clients, while the larger "parent" organization handled the onerous required reporting.

Right now, the martial arts industry reminds me of the finance industry prior to the 2008 crash. There are far too many independent operators with varying levels of quality promoting martial arts training to the public. I do believe that in most cases, these small school are well-intentioned. However, with the increasing scrutiny being placed upon the recreational athletics world (ex. the Safe Sport Act), it would only take one incident to result in upheaval for the entire industry.

Obviously, a myriad of litigation cases will play out in various courts before solid laws can be enacted. Nevertheless, these new responsibilities will encompass martial arts instructors soon if they have not already done so. For this reason, there is a trend in our industry to standardize schools as much as possible. Franchising (or other types of consolidation) of schools is starting to get popular.

Franchise Revolution and its Effect on the Martial Arts Industry.

Franchising has become something of a revolution in today's business world. It is said that it can make a disorganized industry more organized. This is getting it noticed in the martial arts industry.

There are many studies that show it is the entrepreneurial traits of a franchisee that contribute to the success of this business model. In fact, when screening for new franchisee candidates, most franchise operations look for this enthusiasm (in addition to solid business experience) as it will lead to a more successful school.

One of the main values in franchising is clear and consistent branding. A successful franchisor has invested sizable research and marketing funds in order to develop a brand with just the right "look and feel" to contribute to the success of the business. Branding is more than just a slick logo and color scheme. It institutes standards and quality that make it hard to replicate and compete against.

In the martial arts world, we are seeing many school**s** being created under a franchise banner, as well as many existing schools converting to franchise operations. This allows them to increase their brand recognition, and provides them with an aura of professionalism, a well-defined curriculum and solid staffing structure.

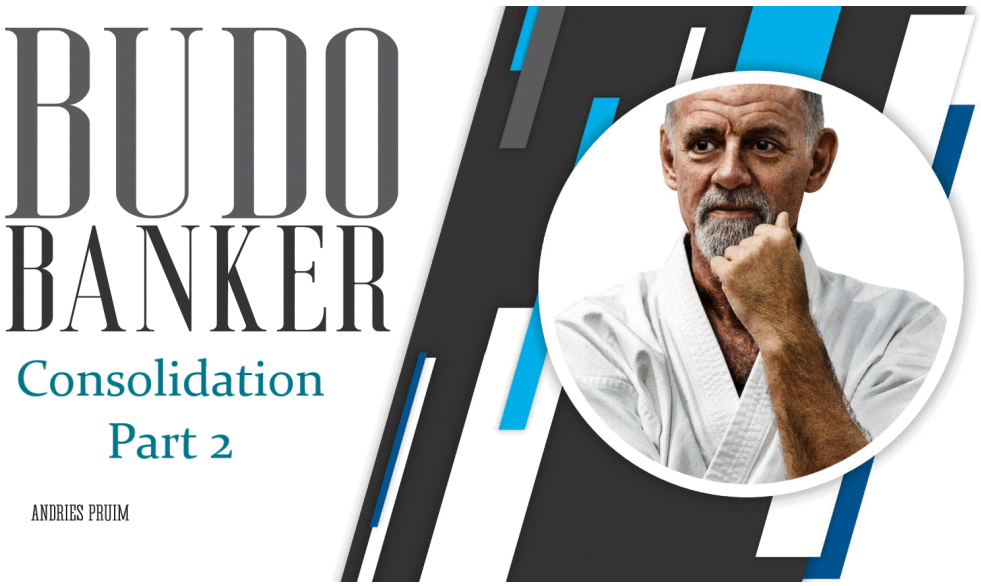
MASuccess Magazine recently features several well-established franchises and the success they have obtained in our industry. These articles showed how these franchise operations not only provided a proven business model, but stringent quality assurance requirements, including mandatory training sessions.

This somewhat 'forced' support mechanism allows the franchisee to obtain the latest industry enhancements and ensures they provide their student base with the "best practices" of the martial arts. In addition, open channels of communication between franchisees make them ready sources of information and experience for each other, which can really help when times are tough.

While franchising is gaining traction in our industry, most existing schools are usually "affiliated" with some type of local, national or international martial arts organization. These organizations also have strict rules they expect their affiliates to adhere to, but affiliates tend to have more wiggle room that franchisees and have been known to flout the rules.

The trend towards franchising over affiliations is growing due to the level of expertise required to ensure the success of a martial arts school. Of course, with the various business structures available, you as a business owner must decide what is best for you and your school.

In part 2 of our Consolidation Blog, we will explore the differences between Affiliations (like the JKA or ITF) and professional Franchising. We also examine at whether Franchising is for you, both as a business option and taking into consideration your personal ethics. Our final Blog examines the possibility of staying independent and the ramifications of doing so. We look into whether staying small and non-affiliated is still an option going forward, especially in these trying times.



AFFILIATION VS. FRANCHISING

There are benefits to both affiliations and franchising, but close examination shows a sizable difference in the control of quality. Many organizations have voluntarily made the switch from affiliation to franchise, primarily to ensure better control of product quality.

The main difference between these two organizing entities is the legal ability to enforce conformity and quality. While some associations may try to instill control through the use of gradings and association "logos," for the most part, the only true obligation the school owner has to the association is lip service. If the school owner has any disagreements with the affiliation, they need only provide nominal notice and then resign from the association.

On the other hand, the reason franchises have been successful in the past is due to the legal ramifications the franchiser can evoke if a franchisee does not adhere to the strict business model and requirements laid down by the former. This includes forcing the existing owners/franchisees out and placing a new management team in place, if need be.

We must also not confuse affiliation with licensing. Licensing is more similar to franchising than affiliation, although it shares similarities to each. Licensing is when a product, service or brand is leveraged for the purpose of increasing a business's profile. Both licensing and franchising are considered business opportunities, and thus have legal consequences. There are governmental or regulatory disclosure requirements for both, which is not the case for affiliations.

While martial arts associations require affiliated school to adhere to certain criteria, a franchise operation requires the school owner (franchisee) to strictly follow the franchise's rules. This shouldn't seem out-of-the-norm – after all, many martial artists trained in an environment of strict regulation. However, ego and a "my way or the highway" complex has claimed many owners in the past.

This is why most martial arts franchise operations look closely for a certain type of investor. Some even stipulate that the franchisee-to-be is *not* already a school owner!

In addition, many franchise operations have differing requirements with regarding how the business should be run. Some franchises want tight control on all aspects of the operations, including ranking, sales, marketing and even instructor selection. The stricter franchises are also likely to provide more support and training. Others simply provide the business model and logos, with a little bit of marketing training thrown in. If you are a martial arts school owner or potential owner and considering franchising, you need to do your homework to find one that is the right fit for your aspirations.

Is franchising for you?

Not everyone is comfortable taking responsibility for the wellbeing of not only a business, but, in most cases, the livelihood and aspirations of many others as well (employees and customers, etc.).

While a great product, service or concept can drive success for a franchise, that's not the main reason it succeeds. The success of franchises, like Century 21 real estate or Dunkin' Donuts, for example, is the result of pristine operations procedures, the professionalism of the staff and the efficiencies of delivering reliable quality in a short time. It is this perfection of a system (or process) that is the ultimate reason for its success.

This could mean that you, as a school owner, would not only have to modify your business practices, but in many cases would have to amend your curriculum and possibly the style of martial art you teach. In other words, there are a lot of considerations to be made before you know whether you are a true franchisee candidate.

The one fact I really wish to emphasize here is that the consolidation we are seeing today (whether it be via franchising or multi school ownership) has evolved from the fact that there are those of us that truly appreciate the martial arts and do not like seeing it being exploited.

Unfortunately, there are also those school owners that use the mentality of not wanting to sell out their martial art which stops them from using the myriad of support mechanisms now available to the martial arts school owner. The use of the moniker "McDojo" has caused many martial artists who feel they must remain fully independent in order to be "true to their style" and that any real business consideration is deemed beneath them.

It is true that in the past there were a few individuals that tried to exploit the rising popularity of the martial arts in order to milk as much money out of an unsuspecting public, but fortunately this trend was (and still is) quickly recognized by today's savvier customer base and shut down.

This image that you will become a "belt factory" if you consider consolidation in any form is still inhibiting many quality martial artists from becoming successful business people. The martial arts industry is aware that there any many people who simply wish to teach martial arts in a small traditional method and they are respected for doing so. On the other hand, if you are going to take your martial arts talent and develop a business around it, then your mind set must change.

This is how today's martial arts professional organizations came into being. Whether via franchising or professional associations like MAIA, these new business organizations have brought in professionals from other well-established industries to ensure the integrity of our system (and the martial arts) is maintained. The last thing true martial arts business owners want is to be thought of as trying to simply make money without concern for the student. This is why quality control is such a priority in all new franchise, affiliation or professional support groups.

What this means is that you, both as a martial artist and a business person must decide which path to take, either joining an affiliation, exploring the opportunities of a well-established franchise or remaining independent. In our next Blog, we explore whether remaining fully independent is really an option in this demanding customer centric business environment we now live in.

BUDO BANKER

Consolidation Part 3

ANDRIES PRUIM



IS STAYING INDEPENDENT AN OPTION?

There are still many school owners who choose to remain independent. Their reason – whether fully justified or not – is that by remaining independent, they will avoid teaching a "watered-down" style, or teaching solely for profit.

These independents feel that by not affiliating or franchising, they have more control over what is taught in their curriculum and how it is taught. Many schools that teach traditional styles remain independent to avoid modernization.

However valid their opinions on franchises may be, many school owners also have business reasons for staying small and independent. Many of them have realized that economies of scale do not always work out (i.e.: more/bigger schools for bigger profits). Simply put, bigger is not necessarily always better.

These successful-but-small martial arts school owners have figured out that in some industries getting bigger does not always means more money in your pockets. In other words, once you get past a certain number of students, then you find that you will need to hire instructors or office managers, which takes up the bulk of the additional revenues you are bringing in with the increased number of students.

The main success factor for these profitable small martial arts schools is business ambiance (professionalism) and customer service. Not just standard 'call center' customer service but something unique to the business. These schools treat all students/members like family and ensure the community feel is front and center within their business model. In addition, they provide the same level of service to their own

staff. Although they have fewer staff, they make sure to treat them well both financially and emotionally.

By not expanding beyond a certain size does limit potential revenue and net income; nevertheless, this doesn't seem to be problem for these unique entrepreneurs as they see profit to be just one of the benefits of their endeavors. These small business owners are very community centric and take huge enjoyment of being part of the local community. Sometimes, it's not just all "dollars and cents."

Nevertheless, as with any successful business, there has to be constant growth for success. However, an independent school owner can control this growth in a way that allows it to thrive but remain small – think of a bonsai tree. The controlled small growth can provide good-quality financial return, and provide key staff members with opportunities to improve themselves both financially and professionally (e.g.: taking on new leadership responsibilities).

However, the coin of independent ownership has two sides. Having a smaller school means sharing martial arts with fewer people. Many independent school owners have to work second jobs, or rely on a partner or spouse having a stable income to provide a majority of the money for their family. Independent schools don't have a parent company (like a franchise or affiliation) they can turn to for support in times of financial crisis.

It was written in a MASuccess article that the reason to open a second school should not simply be for profits (as it is not a great way to garner addition revenue) or ego purposes (never a good reason for any decision), but to provide your growing instructor base a place to go (and grow). Otherwise, some staff may not wait around for you to retire and will have no other recourse than to stagnate, leave, or even open a competing school.

Conclusion? No matter your model, tap into support!

As stated at the beginning, I wrote this analysis before the COVID-19 pandemic changed today's business paradigm. Almost all martial arts schools had to close and some may never reopen. So, no matter your current business model, considering today's customer-centric (and very litigious) society, not to mention the likelihood that these COVID-19 incidents may be repeated in the future, it is obvious that you need to tap into as much support as you can.

Affiliations and, to an even greater degree, franchising will provide a better chance of success for your business. Even if you are determined to stay completely independent, use nonaffiliated support groups like MAIA. During incidents like the COVID-19 pandemic, it is these well-established support mechanisms that will ensure your business's survival.

The martial arts industry must decide how its future will evolve to ensure its existence in 20 years. Are we going to the way of other similar business models (e.g.: financial planners) and start consolidating, or is the industry to remain fragmented which, when considering how many children are now involved in martial arts, could eventually result in some type of mandatory governmental oversite?

The martial arts industry is home to many amazing people – but there have also been many unscrupulous characters throughout its history. The efforts of organizations like MAIA, Kovar Systems, Premier Martial Arts, etc., have been able to professionalize the industry somewhat to the public eye. However, my concern is that the fragmented and personality-based majority of martial arts schools will cause a number of lawsuits over the next few years which could either cripple the industry or put us under tight regulatory scrutiny.

Consolidation of our industry can be our choice, or it could be forced upon us.
It *should* be our choice and we must remember to be professional about our decisions. The recent COVID disruption means that for most schools, survival will only be possible with the assistance of a support network, whether it be a franchise organization, an affiliation's concentrated effort or leveraging the amazing effort of industry organization like Century, MAIA, Kovar Systems or even someone like "yours truly," a longtime business consultant (and ex-banker) who simply wishes to ensure all those dedicated martial arts school owners survive ... and eventually prosper!



Continued lack of small business support

When I started out as a junior commercial lender, my portfolio consisted of a large number of small businesses, which in today's banking world would not even be considered for a business loan. It was near the end of my banking career when most small business owners were transferred or referred to the consumer lending department. This meant that all credit decisions were based almost exclusively on your personal finances, with your business success taking a back seat in the qualification for financing.

This lack of accommodation for the small business community is even more apparent today, especially after the 2008 recession. Most banks talk a good story about assisting small businesses, but still focus on more medium-sized business with lending requests in the $1-million range and up. Most small businesses neither need nor want this large a loan. A majority of martial arts schools fall into this range.

In my ongoing quest to discover better ways for martial arts professionals to access financing, the new disruptor on the block, namely, financial technology businesses, or FinTech's, may be the future for our industry. Although still in their infancy, these "disrupters" could be the perfect vehicle to assist the growth of the martial arts industry.

What are they?

FinTech's are financial technology platforms that are attempting to encroach on the traditional banks' territory, whether it be in consumer, mortgage or business finances. Almost all FinTech's are online purveyors of financial products, including small business loans, but a majority of these new digital banks are focused on the consumer market.

Most FinTech's are simple money transferrers (PayPal, for example). Others are purely mortgage facilitators. However, a growing number of FinTech's are entering the lending market. Essentially, they are online software platforms trying to convince the public to use their services in lieu of (or at least in conjunction with) banks.

Some of these platforms are P2P lenders, which means that the platform connects those looking for financing with those willing to make investments. These are not banks per se, as they are simply investors willing to risk their personal funds in order to get a better rate of return. The criteria for qualifications can be onerous and sometimes quite different from standard bank qualifications (e.g.: How big is your social media presence?).

Finally, there are the new FinTech banks. Commonly called "challenger banks," they are sometimes better known in the U.S. as online or digital banks. They are trying to challenge the dominance of the traditional banks and are technology-driven and customer-centric "financial institutions." Most new digital banks continue to struggle due to the highly competitive nature of the U.S. banking system.

Nevertheless, there are a number of "start-ups" that are attempting to garner a share of the sizable small business market. Some operate independently of banks but most are either derivative of the major banks or are affiliated with them in some ways. Whether it is one of these digital or online banks or a separate commercial lending platform, this new disruptor technology may be an ideal option for martial arts businesses looking for financing including equipment, working capital needs or even expansion possibilities.

These new lending-platform FinTech's will usually maintain proprietary software and machine-learning algorithms which allow them to quickly assess any credit requests. It is this use of AI and other credit assessment strategies that has allowed these virtual banks to garner a fair share of the small business banking requests.

How do they work?

The first FinTech's simply replicated the banks' application form and put them on a website. They attempted to procure new business by expediting the opening of an account, whether it be a checking account, a credit card or even a small business loan.

While most FinTech's are not technically banks, many of them leverage a relationship with a bank in the background in order to get access to the necessary funds. Whether the FinTech maintains a relationship with a bank or is self-financing (think hedge funds), the major advantage of these new financing platforms is transparency!

New FinTech's have purposely designed their online loan applications to be as simple as possible. Most of the information they request is located on other sources the FinTech's already have access to.

In fact, some FinTech's will simply gather your bank statements and any other supplier information available to them, along with some possible social media content, in order to provide a more holistic view of your company's financial performance. This way they can determine your payment regularity and how well you treat your suppliers, etc.

This transparency and rapid turnaround time in approvals has allowed these FinTech banks to make inroads into the various business lending areas. It also gives business owners a quick and honest perspective into what areas of their business they need to improve in order to obtain the necessary financing.

While several of the well-known "big banks" are slowly moving into this space, the innovations from the various smaller start-ups have resulted in many more financing options available to small businesses like martial arts schools. The future of these new digital financing models will be dictated by the market and the desires of the consumers, which means more options. This also means an increasingly extensive use of AI, more chatbots, and something that is now becoming prevalent in Europe: the sharing of all personal and business banking records.

How to choose what is right for you?

Since FinTech's are still in their infancy, there are a myriad of options available. As a martial arts business owner, you must decide on what your needs are for the foreseeable future, including all financing requirements.

As mentioned, there are FinTech's 'banks' which provide a full range of banking products as well as those FinTech's that focus exclusively on business loans. Your financing needs will dictate your choice.

If you are looking for full banking facilities, it would be best to initiate a relationship with an online FinTech lender. Some of these are actually a conglomerate of FinTech's, each with its own specialty. For example, once such entity you may have seen advertised in MA Success is North American Bancard. It maintains an umbrella of FinTech's, including lending services, digital payment options, and standard credit card merchant services.

Otherwise, if you already have some banking services and are simply looking for some term financing (e.g., equipment or vehicle/van financing), then there are FinTech's that can provide funds with reasonable repayment schedules. Even if you are only needing a small line of credit during a seasonal slow-down (like summer), there are FinTech's that specialize in providing short-term funding (and if your handling of the line of credit is as agreed to, they will almost automatically renew your funding then next time it is needed).

Qualification for funding varies amongst FinTech's but primarily they look for three major components: your credit score (and this can sometimes be contentious, and thus has nominal value in their evaluations), how long you have been in business, and your income level. Most FinTech's will then use proprietary algorithms to pull in information from all available sources (including other FinTech's) in order to provide a qualified decision. Obviously, the more information you volunteer, the faster the decision.

One of the last considerations of these new 'disruptors' is the way FinTech's have revolutionized debt recovery. When the economy goes bad, and situations are such that repayment of debt can be stressful (to say the least), there are now a number of FinTech's that use algorithms and AI (as well as the rest of your provided information) to determine the best method of repayment.

FinTech Strengths	Traditional Bank Strengths
Easy-to-fill-out applications with only minimal information required.	Well-established in community with long-term relationships in place.
Fully digitized applications which can be completed from anywhere, including social media platforms.	More person-to-person relationships allowing for more detailed knowledge of your business.
More focused on specific products so able to provide quality customer service.	Has branch locations allowing for more in-person touchpoints (which can solidify relationships).
Extremely fast turnaround for decisions, and very transparent in reasons for any declines.	Able to maintain a larger number of financial products allowing for more 'one stop' financial shopping.
Minimal security requirements.	More detailed and personalized wealth management services.
Fast funding after approvals with a large number of repayment options.	
More flexibility in approvals due to less regulatory constraints.	

Top Fintech Options?

While standard banks are now catching on to the slew of FinTech trends, we felt it would be prudent to provide our selection of the some of the top FinTech SME lending sites. The following organizations are more focused on lending to small businesses and can be thought of as leaders in their specific industry. Here is a small summary of their features:

Fintech Comparables			
Provider	Kabbage	OnDeck	iCapital Financial
Pros	Alternative lender offerring fast access to working capital.	Provides speed, convenience and looser qualifications than most banks.	One of the oldest and most reputable online lenders for small businesses in Canada.
Online Address	https://www.kabbage.com	https://www.ondeck.com	https://www.icapital.ca
Head Office Location	Atlanta, GA	New York, NY	Toronto, ON
Loan Amounts Available	$2,000 to $250,000	$5,000 to $500,000	$5,000-$250,000
Credit Score	550	600+	N/A
Mimimum Time in Business	1 year +	1 year +	At least 6 months of operation
Minimum Revenues	$50,000 Annually or $4,200 / Month over the last 3 months	$100,000 Annually	Annual gross sales over $100,000
Repayment Terms	6, 12 or 18 months	Term loans repaid daily or weekly for 3 to 36 months; lines of credit are repaid weekly.	Terms Loans repayment over a period of up to 24 months; LoC repayment is over time through a small percentage of your daily credit and debit card sales.

Provider	PayPal Working Capital	LoanBuilder (PayPal Service)	North American Bancard (Bambu Finance)
Pros	Gives businesses access to the capital they need to select businesses that already process payments through PayPal.	LoanBuilder is a small business loan service offered by PayPal. The LoanBuilder platform is also currently being marketed as PayPal Business Loans.	An industry leader in small to medium size business financing, with a focus on business cash advances.
Online Address	https://www.paypal.com/workingcapital	https://www.loanbuilder.com	https://www.bambufinance.com
Head Office Location	San Jose, CA	Wilmington, DE	Troy, MI
Loan Amounts Available	$10,000 to $300,000	$5,000 to $500,000	Up to $250,000
Credit Score	N/A	550	500
Mimimum Time in Business	Have a PayPal Business or Premier account for 3 months or more	At least 9 months	In Business for at least 6 months
Minimum Revenues	At least $20,000 in annual PayPal sales	$42,000+ in annual revenue	Monthly gross revenue of at least $15,000.
Repayment Terms	Repayments get automatically deducted from your PayPal account as a percentage of each sale. Loans estimated to be repaid within 12 months.	13 to 52 weeks based on loan amount	Repaid via a daily draw of your overall credit card sales

These are just a few of the many Fintech options available to the martial arts business owner. Depending on your financing requirements, the amount of information you need to provide in order to explore possible lending options is may be small enough that you can quickly and easily research several FinTech's in order to determine the best fit for you.

For the most part, Fintech lending requires that you have been in business for certain time and make a certain level of revenue. As mentioned, the credit score can be contentious, so some FinTech's have their own credit scoring process that takes into consideration your banking and social media details. Repayment is rapid and can be made monthly, weekly or even daily!

My final comment is a caveat. Due to the nature of the Fintech Industry, the initial interest rates offered may be on the high side. As with most financiers, you can always get a better rate depending on how much verifiable credit information you are prepared to provide.

More options now available

Even if you have a good relationship with your bank, it is still nice to know that you, as a martial arts school owner, now have more options available to you ensuring the success of your growing business. Whether you are looking to expand, purchase new equipment or simply trying to cover your working capital needs during those slow months, looking to a new FinTech for assistance is getting easier each year which can only benefit our industry as a whole.



A Community Effort!

Lately, I have been watching as many of the MAIA webinars (and Facebook videos) as I can. I am amazed at the effort Mr. Silverman and his team have put into supporting the huge number of martial arts schools, even as our collective industry worries that we are teetering on the edge of financial collapse.

I normally consider myself a business technocrat: I am always in favor of new opportunities which would allow small business owners a better chance of success, whether this be via traditional banks, credit unions, trust companies or even the new FinTech industry.

I recently wrote a MAIA blog on FinTech's, in which I suggested them as alternate sources of financing for martial arts school owners. Then COVID-19 happened and the world of business suddenly changed. The businesses who counted on walk-by traffic and locals stopping by daily were suddenly gone. Group settings were now banned. All competitive sports were put on hold. The class setting of martial arts schools were too communal to allow them to continue. The life blood of our industry was being taken away from us.

As a semi-retired business consultant, I have watched a number of my friends struggle with their businesses during these trying times. This includes some who are martial arts school owners, and sadly, there is a high likelihood that some of them will never open again. This realization hit me harder than I had anticipated, especially after watching one school struggle with their remote classes while trying to persuade students not to quit outright.

I was prepared to complete some research including interviewing a couple of school owners in order to write some business analogies and advice, but as I was writing I quickly discovered that I was highly affected by this unforeseen "interruption" in our lives. What we are experiencing is unprecedented in our history and any financial sage advice I can give feels a bit crass in these trying times.

I am old enough to have experienced most of the epidemics and financial adversities in the past 50 years and even with all my business, banking and martial arts experience, it is hard for me to sit here and tell others how to conduct themselves during a time where any consideration of a "personal touch" is frowned upon.

As mentioned, I have been watching the MAIA webinars and Facebook Live sessions (again, another major shout out to Mr. Silverman and his team) and the effort MAIA is making to remain positive while giving excellent advice is better than I could ever do. I will repeat their advice of always having enough savings to cover at least three months of expenses (for times like this) and to remain in constant communication with your students, parents, your suppliers and especially your banker.

Regarding your banker, here I will give you some small advice. The MAIA team has been stressing that you need to visit your banker as soon as you can, especially to initiate the process of applying for the various governmental relief programs being offered during this pandemic. They even mentioned the one point I also wish to emphasize: When your banker is not being very helpful (and making up excuses), ***then you need to find a new banker***.

What is wonderful about the U.S. banking system is the diversity of its banks. Please remember, here in Canada, almost 90% of all banking is dominated by six banks, including some of the largest in the world. In America, there are over 5,000 separate banks (and that's even after the disastrous 2008 financial recession). This means that there's a good chance your banker knows not only your business, but is probably your neighbor and could even have kids going to the same school as yours.

No true banker wants to foreclose on a client, especially after years of developing a relationship. Even in dire circumstances, your banker will usually do their best to get you back on track. You should always try to work with your banker when times get tough. When you are dealing with a smaller local bank, your relationship should be at the point where you banker is always proactively working for your business interests. With today's circumstances, I hope that your banker has already contacted you to see how they can assist. Please take them up on their offer.

The aim of any consultant, whether they are your accountant, banker, lawyer, business mentor or professional advisor, is to develop a rapport with their clients. This is the only way for the relationship to be a win-win scenario. This connection is what I like to call the Personal Touch, which is where your consultant, or banker, in this case, truly wants to help. They really wish to see that you succeed, which in turn allows them to succeed.

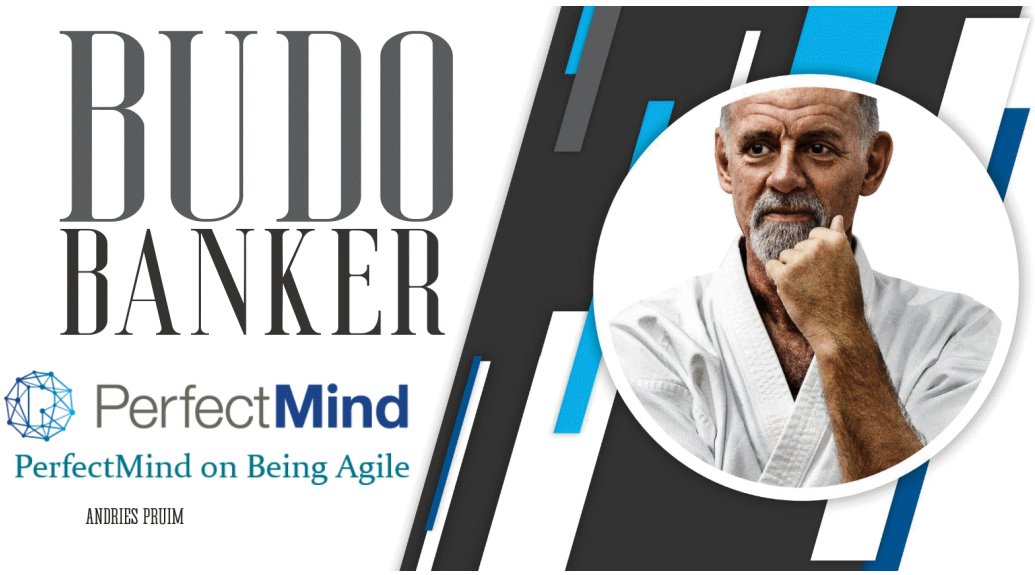
Leadership over and beyond!

Watching the MAIA team continually reaching out to those martial arts school owners by doing all the legwork in gathering government assistance information, not to mention the constant positivity reflected by their team, has been an amazing effort by all! Personally, I feel humbled by the efforts of everyone in our industry so I am reaching out myself to see how an old guy with 45+ years of business and martial arts experience can help those small school owners. I encourage all those able to do the same... even if it's as simple as volunteering to put on a ZOOM class and/or help disinfect the dojo afterwards.

I really wanted to write something profound and intelligent, but today's circumstances have shown me how little control we have in the big scheme of things, but it is with the support of our family, our friends and our community (both in our physical location and within our industry) that we will get through this.

I am also so encouraged by those who have stepped forward and shown leadership in this unique and unprecedented times. We must forgive the occasional stumble as there is no script for what we are going through. What we must do is to acknowledge those that have stepped up and took the leadership responsibilities so lacking these days. Leadership during these tough times not only requires tough decision to be made, but to do so with some empathy and a personal touch, even in our era of social distancing.

There is a saying that the business of business is business, but when you have the wellbeing of so many people depending on you, including your staff and your students, it may be the business of our business is the welfare of our community. This is why we teach the way of the martial arts, why we teach not just techniques but life skills and it's in times like these that these life skills show their value. Be safe and stay the course. We will all become better people at the end of all this thanks to the fortitude we show today.



PerfectMind on Being Agile

Striving to be Agile in Today's Ever-Changing World

A Local Success Story from the 2020 Virtual SuperShow

After spending 20 years in the banking industry, I moved to business consulting, where I have spent the past 15 years as a manager of a software development team. We deployed and supported project management tools and telephony tracking platforms. My role was to provide the business acumen necessary to ensure that the various applications made sense. This led to my interest in various client-management software platforms.

Recently, when watching the 2020 Virtual Summit (hosted by the Martial Arts Industry Association and Century Martial Arts as this year's digital replacement for the Martial Arts SuperShow), I noticed that the first sponsor was not only the creator of one such system, but was in fact a local business! At least, to me: PerfectMind started in my hometown of Vancouver, Canada. Not only did I know the name of the company, I knew the people!

PerfectMind's Genesis as a Martial Arts Idea

My business side was immediately struck by the potential I saw in PerfectMind, compelling me to dig deeper. My research uncovered a connection in my martial arts past. Years ago, PerfectMind founder Farid Dordar was the head instructor at Champions Way Dojo. Dordar, a martial arts world champion, and his school had a reputation for being some on the toughest and most determined competitors out there. I competed against some of them and later judged some of their outstanding students in tournaments over the years.

It was that martial arts dedication that allowed Dordar to not only establish and run one of the most successful martial arts schools in the city, but also to teach himself software development! It was the desire of a gifted martial arts instructor trying to better serve his student base that led to the development of PerfectMind. With this new goal in life, Dordar tackled the software world with the same passion as he did the martial arts industry!

After Dordar moved from his native Iran to Vancouver, he created a martial arts empire that stretched from martial arts schools member-management software to business consulting and support services. Despite the growth, Dordar and PerfectMind never strayed from the martial arts core value of helping others. In fact, listening to users has allowed PerfectMind to create one of the most interactive and user-friendly platforms in the student-management software space.

PerfectMind worked *so* well that its creators realized that although they had designed their system for martial arts, there was no reason it couldn't work in other industries, as well. Fast-forward to 2020, and PerfectMind is serving a myriad of industries. Its core focus remains martial arts; however, it supports all types of membership and facility management industries, from dance academies to parks and rec departments.

The success of PerfectMind resulted in its recent acquisition by TSG, an international conglomerate of health and fitness-related businesses. The transition in ownership allowed Dordar to finally retire and enjoy more time with his family. Fortunately, PerfectMind found the next perfect mind to lead it in Ali Sanei, the company's longtime COO.

Another tie to the past: Sanei and I actually worked for the same corporation before his move to PerfectMind and in fact met on a project. This allowed me some earnest discussions with the new CEO that reflected a passion similar to the founder's vision. Especially in this post-COVID world, Ali Sanei's business experience makes him the ideal person to lead PerfectMind.

It will also be Sanei's responsibility to transition PerfectMind through this acquisition, but in the end, he feels that this new partnership will do nothing but enhance the services PerfectMind can bring to its customer base.

Not only will the relationship with TSG bring sizable financial support to PerfectMind and its customers, but it will allow PerfectMind to become a truly international provider of membership and facility management solutions.

As noted, while PerfectMind was serving the martial arts industry, it became apparent that its constantly updating software platform would be useful in other industries. One of the first non-martial arts business that signed up with PerfectMind was the Richmond Oval (in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada). Made as the speed-skating venue for the 2010 Olympics, it has since been converted to a multi-sport facility containing basketball courts, racquetball rooms, fitness centers and more. In fact, the Canadian Provincial and National Karate (WKF) Championships are held annually in the Richmond Oval, and it is PerfectMind's platform that facilitates its successful outcome.

When asked about its ongoing relationship with the martial arts, Ali Sanei expressed it best: "We are a true health and fitness provider. Even so, martial arts is in our DNA, as our business started with the martial arts and evolved around the martial arts."

PerfectMind's flexible, easy-to-use platform allowed the company to obtain contracts with both New York City Parks and Boston Centers for Youth & Families. In Canada, some of the largest cities on both coasts are now using PerfectMind's products, and they have recently signed the University of British Columbia, one of the largest universities in North America.

COVID-19 Hits the Martial Arts Community

Like every other business in our industry, PerfectMind has been affected by COVID. For them, their development pipeline bore the brunt of the impact. Companies like PerfectMind maintain a "product roadmap" on which the company's development priorities are listed. COVID was a boulder suddenly dropped onto the charted path. The PerfectMind team had to quickly adapt to the reality that most of its client base both in martial arts and in the health and fitness industries in general had closed or were being forced to close by governmental decree. This required the PerfectMind development team to rethink their clients' immediate needs.

They immediately reached out to their client base to determine what was most needed. As the pandemic has dragged on, PerfectMind has continued to stay in touch. Not only have they added new features, they have continued to hone and refine the existing features that are most useful to school owners during this pandemic (see sidebar).

One of the unique features is the recent rollout of PerfectFace. This facial recognition platform facilitates touchless attendance tracking. Development of this feature began prior to COVID, but it just so happens to be great for a world that's trying to go contact-free. Other ongoing developments include features for online registration, class size limiting, and automated wait lists. In a nutshell, PerfectMind's mission has not changed from efficiency, but it has expanded to fully consider the health and safety of school owners, their staff, their students and parents.

PerfectMind also feels that an important factor in the success of any martial arts school is the relationship between the instructor and the students. The automated communications tools featured in PerfectMind allow instructors to remain in contact with all their students via either email or any type of social media – all in real time. Overall, this provides the level of communication (and in turn safety) necessary for martial arts school owners to survive and thrive in today's world.

The Agile Principles of PerfectMind

Being agile in software, business and life can lead you to success in these unique times (and in any other time). Being a software development company, PerfectMind leverages a delivery methodology aptly known as Agile. Just as the name connotates, an Agile team maintains a customer-centric focus so they are ready to make changes quickly in response to new developments in customers' requirements (see sidebar for some Agile definitions).

Over the past 10 years, PerfectMind has used this Agile philosophy to successfully meet its customers' needs. Now more than ever, they are constantly engaging with their client base, especially their martial arts customers.

"You have to realize that our business was built by a martial artist who owned a martial arts business, so we understand the needs of the business and we also understand the needs of the customer," explains Sanei.

PerfectMind discovered that just as there are many different martial arts, so too are there many ways of running a martial arts business. And just as no one style is right, neither is one system of management. PerfectMind's challenge has been to make its features flexible enough that any school (or business) can use them, while retaining their efficiency. This is the philosophy of "agility."

One of the strongest features of PerfectMind is that the entire solution is built on a portable platform. This enables schools to use the "base" of the platform and customize it with as many unique features as they need to meet their requirements. Having the base also allows PerfectMind to turn around a development request in weeks as opposed to months or years. This speed is what allowed PerfectMind to release a host of new, COVID-countering features in a timely manner.

PerfectMind and the Reopening Economy

With the slow reopening of our economy, the martial arts school owner continues to struggle to regain business. Sanei and his team have been working with their clients over the phone daily. PerfectMind has even gone the extra mile for the worst-hit schools, deferring payments and providing a vast number of resources (webinars, whitepapers, etc.) free of charge.

However, as any martial artist knows, not every fight can end in victory. Even with financial support and extraordinary technological help, some schools have been forced to shut down.

"It's very painful to see our customers dealing with this situation," Sanei admits. "[When schools] close…it's sad."

But getting discouraged by loss is a luxury none of us has during these times. Instead, PerfectMind is working harder than ever to come up with features that will ensure the survival of their schools. This is where their new relationship with TSG will come in. Now PerfectMind will be able to leverage other products and services from its parent company. This includes a service called TrueCoach, a trusted online coaching platform used by over 20,000 coaches and gym owners worldwide.

PerfectMind feels that its existing library of features together with the new features being deployed during the pandemic should provide all the support needed to allow most martial arts schools to reopen. Sanei says that his company and team are ready to assist:

"The challenges they may face [during re-opening are many]," he said. "Some staff were furloughed or may have been laid off, [but] we will help them train new staff or retrain the people they currently have."

This shows the heart of PerfectMind: concern for the individuals who make up the schools, as well as the businesses!

Partnership in the Post-COVID World

Going forward into the post-COVID world, PerfectMind fully understands that the reopening of our economy will be a slow process. The worst-case scenario is that schools start to close, not because they are financially failing, but because the owners become disheartened and give up. The PerfectMind team is countering with a plan centered on education and making other knowledge resources available to all PerfectMind clients. For example, new informational webinars are being produced regularly, and when the PerfectMind team sees a customer who could benefit from one, they reach out to let them know rather than hoping the customer will simply stumble across it.

One of the most unexpected business downsides caused by the pandemic was the sizable increase in hacking. With this in mind, and considering my interest in FinTech's (see the previous Budo Banker Blog on FinTech's) and other online businesses, I asked Sanei about PerfectMind's security protocols.

One of the first tasks assigned to Sanei when he joined PerfectMind 10 years ago was to lead the company to the cloud. He and his team decided to move their platform to Amazon Web Services and were one of the first users of this extensive platform in Canada. The reasoning behind this jump was simple: AWS could provide security, scalability, robustness and availability at all times.

He noted, "In today's cybersecure world, it's not a matter of *if* [you get hacked] but *when*, and with AWS you have some of the most secure online platforms on the market."

With the online support of AWS, together with the highly trained, 24/7-availability support team employed by PerfectMind, the resources available to today's martial arts school owner are unprecedented. PerfectMind has committed itself to an ongoing and strong partnership with martial arts business owners. Together, they believe we can all succeed in the post-COVID world.

"Martial arts is going to remain our main vertical," Sanei says emphatically, stressing that PerfectMind can serve the needs of any school regardless of its size. This why the PerfectMind team is looking forward to next year's Martial Arts SuperShow (which hopefully will be held without restrictions in Las Vegas as usual), where they plan to not only meet their clients face-to-face (maybe for the first time in months) but also all other school owners looking for a leading-edge, cloud-based and fully automated student and operational management tools to ease the school's back-office requirements.

When I asked Sanei about PerfectMind's new priorities now that he is CEO and heading into unchartered waters, his impassioned response was reflective of the company's original vision:

"Our number one priority is to make sure all the businesses [we serve] are fully operational post-COVID," he said.

With the full commitment of PerfectMind and its new partnership with TSG, success for schools seems within reach. Being agile in today's business climate is going to be as necessary for today's school owners as face masks are. Yes, it will take some time to get used to it, but to succeed (or stay healthy), you need every tool available, and that is exactly what PerfectMind is prepared to offer.

A Breakdown of Agile Software Principles

Still not sure what Agile is or why it's such a perfect fit for our industry? Rather than continuing to list features, I have provided a list of principles that Agile follows. Although these are not the only principles of Agile software, they are the ones that I believe will resonate the most with martial arts school owners.

1. Ensure customer satisfaction by early and continuous delivery of product or service.
The martial arts school owner knows the importance of this only too well. Being flexible in when and how you teach your art will ensure that more of your members are enjoying their experience.

2. Always welcome changing requirements, even in late development.
Having to quickly adapt to remote classes is a perfect example of a changing requirement embraced by many martial arts school owners.

3. Promote close and daily cooperation between businesspeople and developers.
This is similar to the relationship between instructors and their students. For there to be an effective team or school, the instructor must nurture the relationships with students on a regular basis.

4. Projects are built around trusted, motivated individuals.
Like any dojo, where the quality of instructors and staff is paramount when it's time to delegate responsibilities, Agile relies on having an effective team where each member can work on their own while remaining part of a network.

5. Face-to-face conversation is the best form of communication.
This is a no-brainer! Every school owner and instructor knows that the best way to teach is with your students in front of you. Remote classes are convenient, but they can never replace the personal touch.

6. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design.

This principle is something constantly stressed in almost every martial arts business seminar. In addition, regardless of what exceptional technical upgrades you made to your business (also a good thing), your personal and school's martial arts technical ability must be constantly improved (which includes your curriculum).

7. Simplicity – the art of maximizing the amount of work *not* done – is essential.

This is for your business and your curriculum. Using a leading-edge software tool will simplify your daily business processes. Keeping your curriculum simple and safe in today's litigious society is just smart business.

8. Regular reflection on how to become more effective, and adjusting accordingly.

Constant communication between you and your staff is the best way to ensure quality and motivation. Having regular staff meetings or instructor seminars will keep your team sharp and agile. If, in the future, we need to once again adjust our processes (and classes) to ensure the viability of the school, you must be certain your business is agile enough to continually embrace change.

Helpful Tools to Face COVID-Caused Restrictions

Online Booking

When you start adding up all the small in-person interactions you have in your studio each day, you might realize that there are many conversations, questions and inquiries that you could address through digital means instead. Especially during this time when you want to reduce contact as much as possible, online booking is a fantastic tool. PerfectMind's software allows your members to book themselves in for classes, private lessons, seminars or any other service your school offers.

Contactless Sign-In

Many of us are familiar with contactless tap-to-pay methods on point-of-sales systems, but minimizing contact wherever possible is ideal. This is where contactless check-in methods for students or members can be extremely helpful. PerfectMind's feature PerfectFace captures and stores the faces' unique characteristics while never storing a personal image and simultaneously using advanced encryption.

Class Size Limits

If you are integrating online booking into your operations, you will want to make sure you are limiting class capacity as well. You will want to make sure members or students can have at least 6 feet (2 meters) of space around them and set class limits accordingly. Using PerfectMind, you can easily limit class sizes to ensure that students are able to stay distanced for the duration of the lesson.

Video Conferencing

You've always worked with students and members in person because it's what you know and what you've always been great at. So, adding virtual classes to your schedule won't just save room in your studio, but it will make your services more accessible for more people. PerfectMind will help you determine the best video-conference platform for your needs.

Document Handling

Finally, digital tools can offer a helping hand when it comes to paperwork. If your members or students need to access, print or sign documents, they don't need to come to your facility anymore! Not only will this cut down on the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, but it also will save time and effort for your team. Use PerfectMind to create, save, print, upload and organize your documents securely in the cloud.



Traditional Karate... such a (modern) concept

I normally write almost exclusively about the business side of the martial arts industry and do so in order to stay out of the many controversies that make up the various styles and “ways” of the genre. I did write about my own personal martial arts evolution, which was not the standard ‘path’ that most martial artist travel and which I hope to have published in a couple of months.

What was unusual about my personal journey is that I started to first learn Shotokan Karate from a very non-Japanese, Canadian raised Instructor who could not be considered “traditional” in any real sense of the word. I mention this as we are seeing far too many references to “Traditional Karate” (or martial arts in general) these days with too many feeling we have lost touch with the true representation of whatever Karate style being discussed (or whatever martial art) based on their interpretation of ‘Traditional”.

Oxford Dictionary defines “tradition” as: “A long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another.” Or for our reference, as it pertains to Martial Arts: “An artistic (or literary) method or style established by an artist (writer) or movement, and subsequently followed by others.”

I feel that that the second definition is the pulpit the Traditionalists of today attempt to preach from. While there is a still a separation between those who consider themselves traditionalists and those who have left behind the Japanese heritage from their teaching and training curriculums, none should consider themselves superior to the other as both have their strengths and well as limitations.

Japanese Martial Tradition Leveraged

While our focus for this article will be on Karate, the traditionalist battle can be applied to number of other Japanese Budo, including Naginata or even Kendo. In fact, while the term Bushido is a well-known descriptor of Japanese Samurai martial art spirit and dignity, there is more and more evidence that Bushido never truly existed and was the fabrication of a late 19th century educator in his attempt to establish a truly Japanese moral code during the turbulent Meiji restoration period.

In this same time period, basically at the end of the 1800 ’s, Kendo was established in its current form and Karate started to develop into more than a backyard endeavor. With Kendo, most of the previous training for swordsmanship was conducted in small groups with one-on-one training over a span of several years. With the elimination of the Samurai class during the early part of the Meiji period and the growth of Japan as an international military power, some of the political elite felt that leveraging the romanticized spirit of the Samurai would allow the new generation of soldiers to have a noble past for inspirational purposes.

This included the way the students were taught Kendo as well as what was taught for the purpose of consolidating the various sword styles into a cohesive training curriculum. Together with Government intervention, Budo was “formalized” into the Dai Nippon Butokukai.

As quoted from the www.dnbk.org website:

“… in 1895, The Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (Greater Japan Martial Virtue Society) was established in Kyoto Japan under the supporting authority of the national government and the endorsement of Meiji Emperor to solidify, promote, and standardize all martial disciplines and systems extant in Japan.” ….

At this same time, Karate started to expand in Okinawa and slowly formalized into more organized curriculums similar to what was occurring in Japan including the transition to teaching large groups of students rather than the teaching one or two students as was the custom.

Further evidence is being uncovered demonstrating that karate as it was known on Okinawa around the turn of the last century had little resemblance to what was taught prior to Karate being added to Okinawan School curriculum. In other words, the only “tradition” being taught was basic cultural norms and not the type/style of karate (or even how it was taught).

In this light, we can therefore trace the traditional “Start Point” if you want, at least for Kendo, to the turn of the 20th century, which in the history of Japan is not all that long ago. Yet the Kendo of today can only truly trace its history to this point in time, while formalized karate itself is even younger.

Initiating Modern Martial Arts Tradition

The traditional Karate styles we see prevalent today have only existing for less than 100 years and each are hard pressed to say this is a tradition “not to be touched”. In fact, it was the transition of karate to Japan proper that initiated the development of the various “traditional” karate styles now in existence.

Even Gichin Funakoshi knew that he had to modify the karate he was taught to accommodate the “sign of the times” if he wished to successfully propagate Karate to the Japan populous. Even though Funakoshi sensei never “named” his karate, unlike his Okinawan compatriots, nevertheless Funakoshi’s students decided to name the karate they learned from him as “Shotokan”.

It was around the same time period, namely the 1920 ’s and 1930 ’s when the other karate styles originated, mainly to get themselves properly registered with the Japanese Dai Nippon Butoku Kai. This included accepting the ranking system as well as the wearing of a uniform, which in Karate’s cases initially emulated the Judo Gi.

Even though we acknowledge that Funakoshi and others of his stature were innovators of Karate, there slowly developed a philosophy that certain elements of each Karate style were not to be “innovated” any further. What is surprising is that this philosophy never really took root until Karate started becoming internationalized, especially to the North American market. When Karate started to become popularized in North America, primarily in the late 1960 ’s and early 1970 ’s, the cast of characters involved were unique and diverse to say the least.

While karate did evolve in the early part of the 20th century, into several separate “styles” (or Ryu), nevertheless the basic premise of the karate was similar in many aspects. This included most stances, strikes, kicks and in some cases Kata, but each with some unique aspects to the training which differentiated it from other styles. In a number of cases, unless you were an active participant in one of the styles (i.e.: Shotokan, Wado-Ryu, Gojo-Ryu, etc.) most of the differences would be negligible to the inexperienced spectator.

Karate starts to Professionalize

What truly initiated the separation into “traditional” and “nontraditional” martial arts were “commercialization” of karate, which simply means that when people started to make money on karate, they do what they need to do to keep the money flowing in. The second main separation of karate into traditional and nontraditional was the introduction of “Sport Karate” which led to competitors who trained primarily for tournaments and shunned any “traditional” aspect to their karate training, including practicing kata or the wearing of the white Gi.

This eventually then led to separate competitions where the “Open” tournaments allowed all styles, including non-karate styles (e.g.: Tae Kwon Do and Kung-Fu/Wushu) to compete and the

more “traditional” tournaments where only Japanese and Okinawan Karate styles were permitted.

Here is where the word “Traditional” started to become more focused towards how the style of karate was taught more so than what was being taught.

The “traditionalist” mainly concerned themselves with ensuring standard uniforms (primarily white GI’s) were worn and that certain Kata (forms) were performed with little modifications to these katas permitted. On the other hand, those karate schools which participated in more of the “Open” tournaments began to evolve into a variety of unique operations from small school fighting teams to schools that concentrate on the new version of competition kata known as “tricking”.

While there are benefits to both variations, unfortunately the “traditionalists” try to maintain that they are the true “keepers” of the way and hold the higher moral ground in the Karate world. Unfortunately, when realizing that we are talking of times no longer than 75 years ago, when the karate we see today started to evolve, the word “traditional” has a bit of a hollow meaning.

It must be remembered that it was the “Open” concept that allowed for Karate and Martial Arts in general to evolve into variations including Kick Boxing and ultimately Mix Martial Arts (MMA). Without the inclusiveness and experimentation that the “Open” karate styles allowed for, a number of innovations to the martial arts may never have occurred, including new kata developments, expanding the use of weapons from simple farm implements to all varieties of hand-to-hand combat weaponry, not to mention the true commercialization of karate in general.

This was where a number of traditionalists started to criticize these Martial Artists/Business people for “selling out” their craft. There was a philosophy that true Karateka should never profit from what they were taught and the true way was through dedicated adherence to making yourself a better person in society and helping others to do the same. For some reason, remuneration for this effort was frown upon and it was thought that making Karate a career choice for financial gain was giving up the true way.

This is amusing as most of the early practitioners of Karate, especially in Okinawa, were of the gentry class, which means they came from families with sizable fortunes, allowing them the leisure time to train. Most of the population at that time would not be able to spare any time for such extensive study so to frown upon those trying to make Karate a life’s endeavor is somewhat “complex” to say the least.

Olympizing the Martial Arts

With many full time and very financially successful traditional schools now in existence, the traditionalists are now defining themselves more on what and how they teach rather than any commercialization hesitations. Again, this is a somewhat complex definition as with the new push to get Karate into the Olympics, the traditional styles have once again evolved into a more “generic” style of karate in order to gain acceptance by the Olympic committee.

In fact, organizations like the World Karate Federation and it's National/Provincial counterparts (KarateCanada and KarateBC) have affiliated themselves with the National Coaching and Health Agencies which again has affected what and how the "traditional" styles of karate are taught. There is a document put out by KarateCanada known as the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) initiative which actually makes recommendations to move away from "styles" of karate and for competitive purposes, they should follow the LTAD program which is also used by most sports organizations.

All this puts the word "traditionalist" into a quandary as the "white Gi", limited Kata, specific Kumite and Kihon routine "karate styles" are continuing to evolve into a "Olympizied" version that doesn't look very similar to what was developed by Funakoshi Gichin and his compatriots. Nevertheless, even though there is a myriad of reasons why we can define traditionalists as simply a variation of what is being taught in today's martial arts industry, including all the new/old eclectic styles, we should try to focus on the desire of the instruction, rather than what is being taught.

We should examine the philosophy behind what is being taught as well as the sincerity of how the karate (or martial art in general) is being taught. Even with Traditionalists, there has never been agreement on uniforms, kata nor proper kumite practice, but what they all have in common is a respect for what they were taught and the respect in how they treat those who follow them.

Traditionalists have very little timelines to defend their "nothing should be touched" mentality, yet some of today's Karate Instructors who are considered the true traditionalists are actually innovators of today's karate, or even other Budo. For example, Atarashii Naginata is considered a traditional Budo and the way it's taught, together with the techniques being taught are considered sacrosanct by most of the Naginata leadership, yet the Budo itself was not "organized" until 1955 with all previous versions being offshoots of Kendo practice.

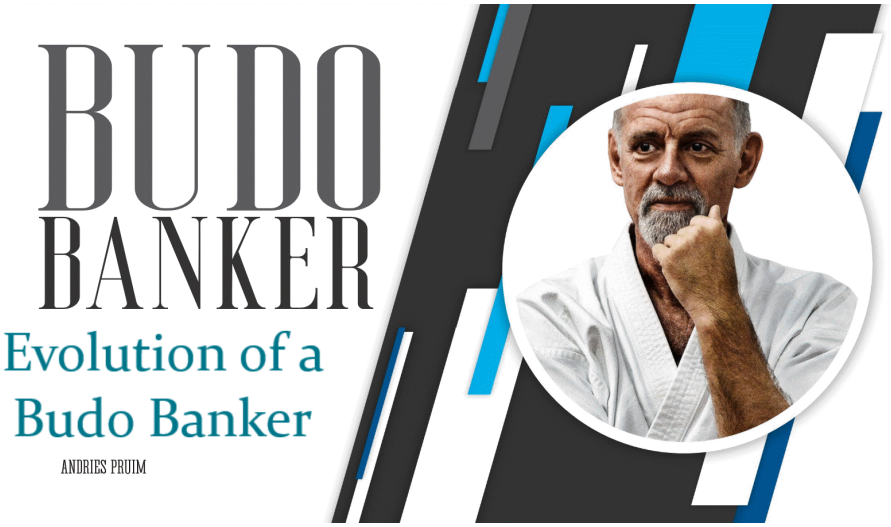
Traditional is a Mind Set

One of the leading proponents of Karate, Kanazawa Hirokazu and one of the most talented instructors of Naginata, Kimura Yasuko, both felt that their Budo would be enhanced by allowing innovation to be included within their Budo's training curriculum. Whether this innovation was listening and learning from Non-Japanese "experts" or simply trying to be more inclusive in the training and propagating of the Budo itself.

It is therefore best to qualify Traditionalists as those who have their Budo's best interest in mind and prefers to leverage some of the best "processes" (to use business vernacular) of what is more aptly described as "Classic Karate" but only in the use of the Uniform/Gi, Kata's and Basics. You will seldom find similar training techniques and in a lot of cases the execution of the techniques is still different within the same style. Yet the atmosphere within the school is respectful, energetic, forward looking and ultimately fun!

If you are training at one of these “traditional” schools working bi-weekly out of a community center or local school gym or training within a full time professionally run business/school, which is totally equipped with all type of training tools, just remember that as long as the learnings you obtain from your experience is fulfilling, educational, effective in getting into better shape as well as enhancing your overall outlook on life, then you can say you’re a training at a traditional school.

Traditional is some endeavor we “do” in such a noble way that we truly wish to pass on this excellence to others. Remember the word we call our teachers in Karate is “Sensei” which simply means “those that have gone before us”. No better nor worse, just experienced. Learn and Enjoy your Budo tradition, whatever you make it out to be.



From Non-Traditional Karate To Traditional Karate To Business Karate

THE EVOLUTION OF A BUDO BANKER

Corporate Career vs Personal Development

I was sitting at my desk at the Main Branch of the Commercial Bank where I was recently promoted to an Assistant to the Commercial Lenders, trying to make sense of the all the pile of papers in front of me.

Being new to the position, I was desperately trying to learn all I could of the position as well as answering the demands of my immediately bosses who were a couple of senior Commercial Lenders. Unfortunately, the business of lending is high stress and extremely complex with both of my bosses not being the accommodating kind so I was raked over the coals on many an occasion, for a variety of reasons.

On one particular day I was called into the Senior Manager's Office and was once again being reprimanded for not being timely enough, when I decided I needed to push back and started to make my arguments. As I was just getting into details, the Manager's assistant came into the office and quite excitedly explained how "Baghdad was being bombed".

We all immediately stopped our conversations and headed to the conference room where we watched CNN become the news source everyone tuned into for this type of news coverage (at least back then!). After watching the newsfeed for an hour, we all went home under very reflective mindsets.

For me, I was very much in flux as I realized that the world looked like it was entering another war which caused me to think of those that were now already fighting or preparing to do so. Here I was in a very safe occupation and doing what I would call safe work, namely Banking!

While past the age to be able to contribute to this effort in any way, what I found when I arrived home would also change my life. As my wife discussed the ramifications of the first Gulf War, we almost missed an unusual envelope that arrived by standard (snail) mail.

What made this unusual was that most of the lettering on the envelope was in Japanese with the exception of my name. I opened it and unfolded a large notice which was once again all in Japanese so initially I assumed this was a mistake or a joke was being played on me. Fortunately, my wife was watching me and informed me that there was English on the reverse side.

While feeling a bit foolish, nevertheless once I saw what the document said, I was still somewhat dumbfounded as it was an invitation to attend an International Budo Seminar being held at the International Budo University in Japan. It was 4-day event and included 8 separate Japanese Martial Arts.

Normally I wouldn't even consider a trip to Japan but with recent events on my mind, I felt it was necessary for me to take the small leap of faith and take them up on the offer. So, without any idea of what I was doing, I made the flight arrangements and sent in my registration form. This was it .... after 20 years of learning karate here in North America, I was finally taking the pilgrimage .... I was going to Japan!

Non-Traditional Route

This decision for some may not be that life changing, but the route I took to my proficiency in Shotokan Karate was more along the non-traditional lines so going to Japan wasn't really on my bucket list during most of my Karate career.

While I appreciate the legitimacy that some students have being associated with well recognized Instructors (mainly of Japanese descent), during my pre-Black Belt (Mudansha) phase of training I was involved with a very independent school which had no relationship with any national or international association.

Ours's was a modern version of Shotokan, which did us well in the open 'Karate' tournaments. These Karate tournaments did not exclude non-Japanese styles which allowed us to compete against (and in turn befriend) a number of Tae Kwon Do and American Style karate participants.

My initial Non-traditional path was to be the first stage in my Budo development and it was a unique experience, especially considering the colorful characters involved in this side of the martial arts. My initial instructor was from the mid-west who learned his karate in the old-style schools and taught us the same way.

While the Shotokan Karate I learnt was top quality (as I found out later in Japan), nevertheless my instructors were independent and enjoyed associating with as many other martial artists as they could. This allowed to me to not only learn a quality style of karate, but I was able to train with, compete against and simply associate with the likes of Steve Armstrong, Dan Anderson, Robert Hill, Gerry Gould, Robert Edwards and other Titans of the Pacific Northwest Martial Arts scene.

This path allowed me to view the martial arts world in a very inclusive manner where I enjoyed watching some of the best perform their particular martial art. It was wonderful and yet I felt I needed to discover more of my own particular art, namely Shotokan Karate.



Initially I did this by starting my own school and researched my style by attending seminars and through books and videos. In addition, when trying to properly teach techniques, it is amazing what you discover as an Instructor when trying to get a concept across to students. The education a Sensei can achieve while teaching is instrumental in developing their understanding of their style.

My school starting prospering but never to the point that I would be able to make a career out of it, especially seeing my Banking career was taking off. For this reason, my Karate career remained a passionate hobby and something to offset the pressure packed nuances of the finance industry.

While continually enrolled in various Bank Courses, I decided that some additional research into my martial art would counterbalance the somewhat mundane banking courses. I proceeded to write 4 separate articles for Black Belt Magazine and was looking to other avenues of research when the ubiquitous Invitation to attend an International Budo Seminar in Japan arrived in the mail.

Investing into the Traditional Side of Karate

Once my mind was made up, I fully committed myself to this adventure especially seeing I had never gone off to another country like Japan on my own, especially one whose language I could not speak or read!

I mailed my reply, purchased my ticket and started my adventure to the land of Budo. It must be remembered that this was in 1991 and the use of English in Japan was not as prevalent as it is today. While I was able to get from the airport to the Chiba Train center, it was here where I almost cried. There I was, staring up at a gigantic map of Japan and its rail lines, but no English to be found anywhere.

After what seemed like an eternity, a friendly local assisted me in getting my ticket and I was finally on my way to the International Budo University. This Budo seminar brought in experts from a variety of Martial Arts including Karate, Kendo as well as Judo, Sumo and others. It was an amazing collection of high-quality Martial Artists and seeing the seminar was for International participants of Japanese Budo, I was able to mingle with people from all over the globe.

I was able to not only witness some of the finest Budo Masters in Japan, I was permitted to try a couple of separate Budo styles as well as attend a number of college level lectures on various aspects of the martial arts. It was also here that I met my present ‘Sensei”, namely Hirokazu Kanazawa and Manabu Murakami, a relationship that endures to this day.



This trip changed my perspective on the Martial Arts or Budo as it’s known in Japan, whereby as I started to dedicate myself to the traditional form of Shotokan (especially considering Kanazawa Soke was a direct student of both Masatoshi Nakayama and Gichin Funakoshi). I thought ‘what a better place to learn the original way of Shotokan Karate’, but what surprised me as I was training at their HQ Dojo was how (business) professional Kanazawa’s organization (SKIF) was.

I have returned to Japan well over a dozen times and have enjoyed the hospitality of my now Japanese friends, but each time I visit the Honbu Dojo (HQ Dojo), I would always watch carefully how the front office was run and it was no different than any other large Japanese business.

It was apparent to me that while the school was as ‘traditional’ as you could get, the way the business was run was as modern as any other business, with a full-time staff that handled the organization’s local, national and international dealings.

With my ongoing education of how businesses are run (via the Bank), I was surprised to find that finding my traditional side of karate would lead to my third phase of Budo development, namely becoming neither a traditional nor a non-traditional karate practitioner, but rather evolving into Business Karate.



Karate properly evolving professionally to Business Karate

The third stage of my Karate Evolution began during a relaxing trip to Las Vegas one summer in the mid 2000 ‘s. I was now at the stage in my life where I was looking at the Martial Arts with a new but different perspective. It was obvious from my trips to Japan that Traditional Karate did not mean non-professional karate, but rather treating Karate as a Service with the style of karate being the decision of the participant, whether it be Traditional or Non-Traditional or even the many Eclectic styles now out there.

This new philosophy of mine was fully re-enforced when I literally stumbled upon the MA SuperShow in the mid 2000 ‘s as I was looking for one of the many buffets within the enormous Casinos of Las Vegas. While at first, I thought it was martial arts tournament, fortunately after talking with some exceptionally helpful MAIA personnel, I was able to walk the trade show floor, which as many have said before me, became an epiphany in itself.

Once on the trade show floor, I immediately started conversations with the various vendors and was so impressed with their passion for not only the product and/or service they were promoting, but with the martial arts in general.

Since then, I have tried to both attend and promote the MA SuperShow as I was so impressed with the willingness of others to assist anyone whose passion was a career in the martial arts. Surprisingly for me, my evolution from a non-traditionalist to a more Traditional style of Karate was the main reason I became a “Budo Banker” as business has always been a part of Karate since it migrated from Okinawa to Japan (and even on Okinawa itself Karate has become somewhat of a tourist attraction).

Ongoing Personal Development

What became obvious to me was that while Business Karate takes into consideration remuneration for the skills sets taught, it also impassions the School owner to be true to both their students as well as their own martial art .... basically, a Win-Win scenario!

It should not have surprised me to find that once I started to look for the roots of Karate in Japan, it would lead me to the realization that Business Karate is Professional Karate and as long as we propagate our Martial Arts with honor and truthfulness, your development as a Martial Artist is along the same path as your development as a true professional Businessman or woman.



What was acceptable as short as 25 years ago is no longer acceptable in today's society, whether this be speeches, comedy or even teaching of martial arts. In fact, I was recently told by a very knowledgeable instructor that if your Sensei learned his/her karate in the 1970 's then never let them teach again ... while this commentary was meant to be 'tongue in cheek', there is some truth as the way we were taught would lead to lawsuits in today business environment.

The on-going evolution of our Society means a similar maturation of our Industry, which means that the Business Karateka I became is what was meant to be for the Martial Arts Profession. We must all be professional in our careers and considering the trust being put in us by our Clients (both the Students and the Parents) it is imperative we reach for even higher standards.

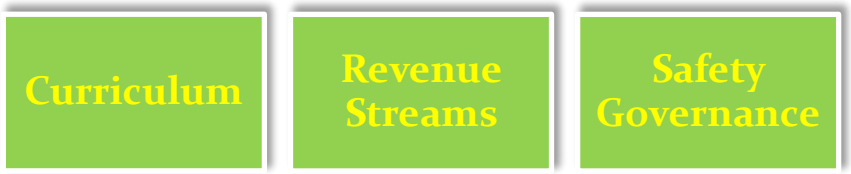
My personal Evolution from a naive Karate groupie to a Professional School Owner took me on circuitous route from the offices of one of the largest Banks in the world to the hallowed halls of Japan's Dojo's, from the free and open spirit of the early Sport Karate crowd to the "C" Level Management of the Telecommunications industry, the Karate person I am today is a professional first and foremost leveraging ALL my life experiences to ensure my Martial Art is passed on to the next generation of enthusiasts with as much integrity and honor as it was pass on to me. This is what Business Karate is all about. In other words, we truly mean business when we chose our passion to be our career!



Martial Arts Safety Governance

TODAY'S PREEMINENT BUSINESS SUCCESS FACTOR

The Trifecta of Success for a Martial Arts Business



While there are a number of different definitions within the Martial Arts Industry on what elements of business are needed in order to become a successful school owner, I position that there are only three (3) main components that need to be addressed. As reflected above, I have simplified the 'high level' success factors for a Martial Arts Business as:

1. ***Curriculum***
    a. This is your “Product”, “Service”, the Widget you are selling!
    b. From White Belt (Beginner) to Master Instructor, all gradings fully defined.
    c. Includes all types of training (Karate, Grappling, Weapons, etc.)

2. ***Revenue Streams/Profit Centers***
    a. How to Monetize your Product …. i.e.: Curriculum
    b. Monthly/Annual Dues/Upgrades
    c. Events/Seminars
    d. Retail Sales
    e. Includes all aspects of Marketing and Sales

3. ***Safety Governance (Risk Management)***
    a. Every activity needed to ensure the Safety (and Health) of All participants.
    b. Always Evolving.
    c. Mitigate Lawsuits.
    d. Enhances likelihood of Success.

Curriculum

The Curriculum is the Product or Service that your business is providing and must be defined completely. You wouldn’t try to sell a product that was only half developed/built, so your curriculum must be well thought out. Your ‘Product’ must be fully detailed and documented ensuring everyone knows how a student progresses through the curriculum.

This detailing (Documentation) must represent all aspects of your curriculum including what martial art is being taught (and its history) as well as any specialty classes (e.g.: weapons). The Curriculum should also fully define how your school recruits its next generation of instructors. In other words, all aspects of your martial arts progression strategy are fully explained and understood by all.

Another aspect your curriculum that must be considered is how well can you update or modify it. The recent Coronavirus ‘disruption’ has revealed that to survive in today’s ever-changing world, you are going to have to modify your teaching habits regularly (even if only temporary). Whether its finding new mediums in which to teach your students or alternatively restructuring your class size and/or scheduling, just remember you are not changing WHAT you teach just HOW you teach it.

Revenue Streams

The second Trifecta component is the various Revenue Streams you need to develop in order to obtain compensation for the teaching of your curriculum. This includes whether to simply charge a single monthly fee, allow for paid up front memberships, putting on seminars, using upgrades, related retails sales and any other possible way to monetize your product, namely your curriculum.

Obviously, this would also include your Marketing, Sales Lead conversions, and any other aspects of your business related to generated revenues. Being aware of every new possible revenue stream will ensure the success of your business, examples of which is the recent spike in remote classes due to the unforeseen pandemic. Being able to develop a new revenue stream shows that even in a crisis (as we have recently experienced), level heads will ensure the survival of your school.

Safety Governance

The final and in my opinion, the most important component of the Trifecta of Success, especially considering our society's changing priorities (not to mention the recent COVID-19 pandemic) is Safety Governance. In today's litigious society, the emphasis on Risk Management must be given serious consideration, otherwise your efforts at Monetizing your Curriculum will be moot (and could cost you a lot of effort, grief and eventually money).

In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has put this business management component front and center and if implemented correctly could save your business, considering what we have witnessed lately.

While this segment of Business is normally referred to as Risk Management or Risk Mitigation, this moniker continues to carry a negative implication which in turn makes it difficult to discuss, implement and maintain. What needs to be understood is that we as school owners are looking after the welfare of not only our students but the business (and our reputations) as well. In other words, don't see this important component as a 'cost of doing business' but rather as a positive outlook in keeping everyone in a safe, inclusive and educational environment.

For this reason, if we are all looking after the safety and health of all martial arts school participants (or "Stakeholders" when using the business vernacular) then it would be more appropriate to entitle this part of your business as "Safety Governance". We are wanting to "Keep it Safe" for the Student, the Parent, the Instructors and even the Business itself.

Safety Code of Practice for Martial Arts Businesses.

Safety Governance is one of the most important components of a successful Martial Arts Business, or any business in fact. Ensuring the atmosphere of your Martial Arts School is safe and inviting takes considerable effort, and something that needs your attention on a daily basis.

While developing your School's Safety Governance Guidelines is the first step in protecting your investments, it is the enforcement of these guidelines that will make or break your business. As you are slowly and methodically building both your business and your reputation, you need to think about protecting both as well.

When establishing a Safety Governance Plan for your business, you must take into consideration both Business and Injury Risk Mitigation, bearing in mind the Industry we are in. In other words, the more you can provide for a safe environment in which your students can thrive, the more successful you will be both as a business and as an instructor.

While not comprehensive, the listings below provide a good overview of what you need to take into consideration each and every day your school is open.

Business Risk Mitigation	***Injury Risk Mitigation***
• Full Insurance Coverage • Staff Training (including Harassment and Abuse awareness) • Modern up-to-date Information systems (Reports) • Emergency Action Plans • Minimize Violence (safe sparring) • Proper Customer Service (Keeping Clients Happy!) • No Change rooms or Single Person Change Rooms only. • Proper Legal and Tax forms, Business Licenses and other regulatory requirements. • Smartphone and Photography Usage limitations in place • Video Supervision of all Classes • Full transparencies of all class, student and rank requirements/objectives.	• Properly maintained Equipment • Clean Facilities with proper Mats • Techniques appropriate for skill level • Proper Supervision of all activities and facilities (including Parking Lots and Sidewalks) • Comprehensive First Aid Training for all Instructors • Proper Signage • Moderate Class size and/or proper Instructor/Student ratio. • KYC (Know your Client/Student/Member)!!!

Special COVID-19 Mitigations

- Control access
- Limit occupancy
- Post signs
- Screen arriving students
- Manage students (and parents) entry points
- Require staff to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19
- Use contactless forms of payment and check-in
- Provide hand sanitizer stations or handwashing stations for patrons and
- encourage their use
- Use appropriate disinfectants
- Provide patrons with either disinfectant wipes or disinfectant in a spray bottle and paper towels for disinfecting equipment and surfaces
- Continually encourage physical distancing and discourage congregating
- Do not offer group classes unless students are able to remain two metres from one another at all times during a class
- Limit locker room use and avoid use if possible
- Do not offer food service
- Close drinking fountains. Water bottle filling stations are acceptable if appropriately sanitized.
- Continue developing online classes until such time that physical distancing restrictions are suspended

The “KYC” element of the Injury Risk Mitigation category can obviously be listed under both columns and is similar to what is required in the Financial Services world. This knowledge leads to a “fiduciary duty” we are obligated to provide our Clients and Students (See Sidebar for Definitions). You can quickly determine by the various Risk definitions above that there is a myriad of situations which could endanger the health of your Martial Arts business.

While most would look at the foregoing list as something negative to either avoid or having to ‘deal with’, you as a business owner should be looking at the positive side of “keeping it safe” for all to enjoy. If you can create an environment of inclusiveness in which everyone has a fun and safe experience, you can assure yourself of a successful martial arts business.

In examining the categories above, we note that both columns could have been could have been listed under a single Risk Management column, but we wanted to differentiate Business Risk Management into those Risks related to Macro Business Environmental areas of concern and those concerns that subject the Student to some possible Injury Risk (physical or psychological).

Business Risk Mitigation

The Business Risk Mitigation portion of your Safety Governance Guidelines should cover the overall business portion of the school such as in the purchasing of proper Business and Liability Insurance. The parameters surrounding proper coverage is now a complex liability mitigation point and something you discuss in depth with your Insurance agent.

While ensuring your school's Safety Best Practices can sometimes be considered "extra work" and inconvenient, nevertheless each of the suggested strategies herein will assuredly result in increased profits for your business. Safety Governance is the managing of both the overall business as well as ensuring the safety of each class and its participants.

The Coronavirus issue we have encountered once again reinforces the requirements of proper communications as well as social distancing strategies (such as eliminating change rooms or anything that can result in non-hygienic possibilities).

Injury Risk Mitigation

Under the Injury Mitigation Category, ensuring that all Training equipment is in good condition, regularly cleansed and properly maintained is a great example of "keeping it safe" for both the students and the instructors.

Simple things like proper signage for your training area, restrooms, exits (especially Fire Escapes) and even parking will alleviate any confusions and possible incidents. The use of video surveillance is another great example of trying to minimize the risk to your business.

What needs to be mentioned here is that the one connection to both categories of your school's Safety Governance plan is "The Instructor", whether it be a one school operation or a multi-location business with a large number of 'hired' Instructors.

The level of education given to an Instructor must focus on not only how to teach the school's Martial Art curriculum but also how to behave in front of the students (not to mention some intermediate level of first aid knowledge).

While a National Coaching certification is a “nice-to-have” for most styles of Martial Arts, it is really not a necessity. What is necessary is a well thought out and documented Instructor Training strategy. The level of detail in your documented Instructor’s Manual must include both physical and psychological elements to ensure the safety of all members of the school (as well as the mitigation of possible lawsuits).

COVID-19 Mitigation

While the majority of this Blog was written prior to COVID-19 pandemic, it is extremely relevant to the subject matter and provides evidence of the seriousness of your Safety Governance Strategy. The additional health implications over and above the normal school cleanliness is a new level of risk that must be managed.

Over and above the list of COVID-19 Mitigation options provided herein, we recommend you visit the MAIAhub site to obtain your own COVID-19 Opening Check List (in Canada, the KarateCanada site has excellent resource page for the reopening of your school). These are excellent sources of Governmental approved processes you can use to ensure the best possibility of success.

While the COVID crisis is at the extreme of the possible Risk scenarios that we could have envisioned, it did occur and hopefully something you were capable of surviving if you had completed and implemented a solid Safety Governance plan. In other words, while there has been an obvious change to your normal procedures, it really shouldn’t be that much of an extra effort if your cleaning and disinfecting protocol has been in place since day one of your school’s opening.

Conclusion

Safety, Feeling Safe, Staying Safe, Keeping it Safe, Safe Zones, these are all the catch phrases of today’s society and something all Martial Arts School owners must put forefront in any business strategy regardless of the martial art you teach.

The trifecta of success is very achievable for any true business person or even someone with a passion for teaching martial arts who is willing to listen to society in how it wants to be taught.

The days of past are just that, the past and while we tend to view history through rose colored glasses, we have to acknowledge reality and if you want to be in business these days, you have a fiduciary duty to your students and staff to maintain a safe and inviting environment.

It is obvious that recent events have brought health and safety concerns to the forefront of all businesses and schools, which simply reinforces the position we are making in this

article. Your curriculum could be perfect, your revenue streams fully thought out and integrated, yet without a strong safety governance plan in place, the likelihood of obtaining the necessary student base to remain in business is questionable.

When you have people wanting to coming into your space, profits are guaranteed, but always remember that profits are not just monetary .... the profit from seeing people blossom and become more than they ever thought possible is where the true value of your efforts shines.

Sidebar

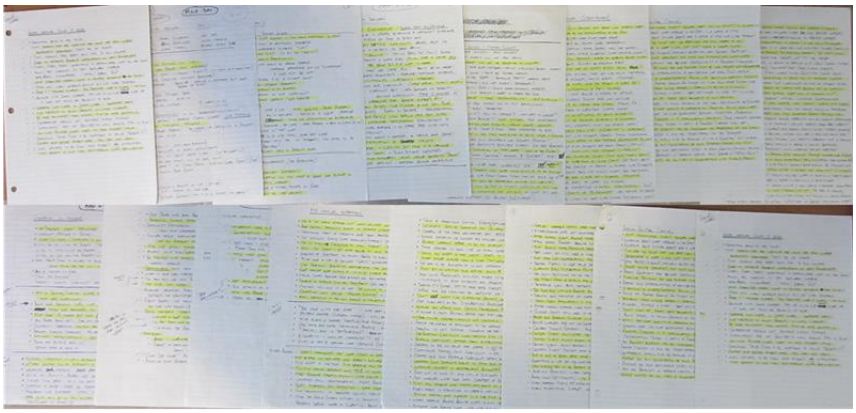
Risk definitions	
Risk can be defined as:	***the chance of something happening that will have an impact on objectives***
For a more technical definition:	***the uncertainty of outcome, within a range of exposure, arising from a combination of the impact and probability of potential events.***
When considering our fiduciary duty as instructors we have the following responsibilities that are now (in most cases) legally binding	
Duty of Care:	***providing a reasonable standard of care for those to whom you provide a service and, in the provision of that service, to protect them from harm.***
Negligence:	***the failure to exercise appropriate standards of care to minimize the potential risk of harm to others. This harm can include physical, emotional and financial injury.*** ***negligence is the failure of an Instructor to perform the duties that a sensible and reasonable Instructor would perform to minimize harm to students and those with whom s/he is associated with.*** ***negligence is the omission of proper attention and the avoidance or disregard of duty from heedlessness, indifference or willfulness.***



Martial Arts Curriculum Strategies

Martial Arts SuperShow Insights

Being an avid follower of Martial Arts Business seminars and courses, I dove in with both feet at the last MA SuperShow which was Virtual for the first (and hopefully only) time last summer. As seen from the photo below, I took a ton of notes, especially from those sessions where either Business or Teaching Methodology was the primary subject.



In reviewing my copious notes, I decided to put together a small synopsis of the best recommendations on how to properly develop your school's curriculum. While I have paraphrased some of the recommendations, for the most part I have simply summarized a number of the session comments together with my personal experience of over 40 years of being a Sensei.

Developing a Martial Arts School Curriculum

A structured and documented curriculum is something that is often missing in a number of today's Martial Arts schools. The most common approach for a lot of Instructors is the "technique of the day" strategy. This is where an instructor would show a few random techniques during class, often without any unifying theme or continuation of previously taught material. If they're more diligent, instructors might prepare a week or two worth of material in advance, hopefully covering the same theme or related positions/techniques.

The problem with these kinds of approaches is that it makes it more difficult to bring new members up to speed in your school's curriculum. This is especially true for grappling or jujitsu schools, due primarily to the sizable number of different positions one might encounter while training. Consequently, when designing a Martial Arts School curriculum, you must ensure that it maintains both retention and program quality so that the students are continually excited about coming to class.

Structuring your curriculum around your style's basic techniques.

The most fundamental part of a good curriculum is teaching of the "basics". Beginners need the most guidance and structure to help them understand the techniques being taught. The basics provide the foundation upon which you can expand with more advanced instruction later.

It should be understood that the criteria for your Ranks (Grades) does not necessarily make for the best foundation for today's curriculum. When you build a basics curriculum, your goal should be to garner new members and to bring beginners up to speed as quickly as possible. This way your students can better appreciate and enjoy the art you are teaching, and not quit because they feel lost.

Consider the following when developing your new curriculum:

- List all the techniques you consider basic or fundamental, especially for beginners.
- For each technique, think about the principles that are important to know at the most basic level.
- For each technique, list 2-3 attacks you consider appropriate for the technique.
- Do the same for escapes / defenses for each technique.
- Estimate the number of classes needed to cover each technique on the list. Sometimes multiple techniques can be covered in a single session if they complement each other, and sometimes a single technique would require multiple sessions to cover in full.
- Using the information, you gathered, build a timeline using the class schedule you currently maintain or if starting a new school, build your class schedule to accommodate your curriculum.

You now have preliminary outline of your basic's curriculum. It should cover the full extent of your school's foundation for a Beginner/New Student to (at the very least) your Advanced Level (e.g.: Black Belt). If your school grows to where you have an extended Instructor base and ranking

system (e.g.: Dan/Degrees), then your Curriculum must also include possible career paths for some of these dedicated students.

The Introductory Session.

Even with a structured curriculum, it takes time for new students to understand the terminology and basic movements and what is expected of them as members of the school. That's where the Introduction Class comes into play.

It would be here where an Assistant Instructor takes all prospects (who have come in for their first session) aside in order to show them the very basics of your style without going into too much detail.

These 'Basics' could entail:

- How to enter the training area (e.g.: proper bowing into the class)
    - Provides insight to school's tradition or simply logistics whereby students enter the facility through a separate entrance from Spectators, Instructors, etc.
- How to properly put on the training uniform/belt or equipment
    - Some schools have a traditional way of putting on uniforms, for others it's simply due to the complexity of the equipment involved.
- Introduce them to basic martial arts etiquette, as it is practiced in your school.
    - Allows the new member to be comfortable when entering the classes and can provide some history of the school and/or style being practiced.
- Explain what the new Student can expect in their first few classes.
    - This includes providing insight to the format of the classes (how to line up, how to address the instructors as well as other students), the pace of the class and possibly content if your classes are tightly structured.
- Basic Physical elements of your martial art, including a Stance, a Block, a Strike and/or a Hold.
    - Allows the student to complete some homework before entering their first formal class and in turn allows them to come up to speed with the rest of the class quicker.

In summary, you are going over those details which should help to reduce confusion (friction) and better prepare new people for attending regular classes.

Adult Instruction



Probably your most complex demographic to work with due to the diversity in tastes for most adult students. This is not to say children are not diverse in their wants and desires, nevertheless new adult students have experienced the world (for the most part) and have already established their opinions on many aspects of life including the way (or what) they are being taught.

For this reason, when developing an adult curriculum, you should focus on the following:

Adult Times for Adult Students:

Adults are Busy! It is as simple as that and for this reason alone you must look at class scheduling as one of the primary factors when establishing an Adult Martial Arts program. Adults will require some flexibility in when they are able to train so your class schedule should allow for several options.

While you can easily ask your Adult students and possible Leads when they would prefer to train (always good to survey your students on a regular basis), nevertheless some research on your location's Adult demographic may assist you in your curriculum design.

For example, if your school is located in an area where a number of young professionals reside, then you may wish to have classes later at night as most young professionals work long or unusual hours. Alternatively, your school may be located in a more industrial area of the city where there is a lot of shift work being worked, requiring your classes to be scheduled at all times of the day.

Fitness and Strength Training

One of the major surprises that I found interesting in Adults wanting to train at the martial arts is the lack of interest in the martial arts styles, history (re: tradition) or philosophy. They may have a small interest (or knowledge) but the main factor in getting Adults to train is primarily Fitness. The fact that there may be some self-defense benefits from the training may definitely be a contributing influencer, but not the main reason for trying out a class.

If you are looking to attract new adult clients, leave the Karate Kid/Miyagi sensei themes for the movies and simply emphasis the physical nature of your martial art. Most Adults do not care if you are teaching Kanazawa Ryu Shotokan Karate or Traditional Japanese Kokodo Jujitsu as they are more interested in how the training can physically benefit them.

Training principles and methodologies that offer the best of the new, with the best of the old.

This relates to more to those who have been training for decades and still wish to maintain some semblance of the martial art they grew up (and old) with. Most of us who trained in the early years of Karate (usually known as the Pre-Karate Kid era) have been repeatedly told that our training methods were archaic at best. Even so, many now acknowledge that not everything we were taught nor how we were taught was all that bad. For this reason, some consideration to mature, long time martial arts practitioners may provide for an excellent additional revenue source as well as provide for some quality time for your adult students.

One last comment on developing a true adult martial arts class. Most adult classes in today's child-centric martial arts schools are basically just classes for those kids who are too old for the children's programs and need somewhere to train. Obviously, these are more teen classes than a true adult class. In other words, take time to design your adult class and not just as an afterthought.

Children's Classes

Teaching Children is sizably different from Adult instruction for in most cases children find it more difficult to concentrate for long periods or understand abstract concepts., especially younger children.

An effective approach is to incorporate regular instruction with games that include the movements or techniques you want to teach. The goal is to have the kids perform the moves naturally while having fun, and then tie it together as an actual technique they can repeat in regular formal basics training.

Gamification is a new paradigm where business and learning (for example) are changing the way they engage their customers and/or students. It tries to move away from the mundane and in some cases simply trying to make their jobs, tasks or routines more enjoyable.

So, while the Children's Curriculum you design can be based on the basics curriculum you already have in place, the timeline might need to be adjusted to account for the difference in instruction. You may have to allocate more time to specific parts which are more important, and then less time (or even none at all) to parts of the instruction you feel might be too advanced or dangerous for children who have just started your program.

Advanced instruction

Advanced instruction would be everything that requires a solid grasp of the basics.

Some considerations to remember to:

1) Student-Centric Instruction: Focusing on the student instead of the instructor;
2) Results-Based Learning (aka Outcome Based Results): Focusing on getting results instead of adhering to outdated style doctrine;
3) Highly Structured Curriculum Delivery: Focusing on a proven development path that is understandable and transparent to all students.

Student Centric Instruction

Traditionally the student/teacher relationship in the martial arts has been focused on the instructor. Certainly, while you as the instructor are worthy of a degree of respect, your focus should be on the student, which in business terms is your client.

If you centralized the attention, you will find that ego can often get in the way of turning out good students, and the traditional image of the instructor as the all-knowing master only serves to perpetuate this. With the advent of the Internet age, this all-knowing persona is a recipe for failure in today's martial arts industry.

A quality and considerate instructor will actually want to turn out students who are better than they are. It is a high sign of success for respected instructors to produce students who exceed them, both technically as well as in character.

By implementing student-focused instruction, it doesn't mean giving up all tradition and courtesy. On the contrary, working in the best interests of your students empowers them and makes each one feel like they can accomplish what you've achieved and more.

Results-Based Learning

We have to understand and accept that we're dealing with an entirely new generation of students who learn quite a bit differently than the previous generation of Martial Arts students.

This new generation has been raised on technology and media, and thus they present unique challenges that must be addressed in order to retain more students and turn out Black Belts (for example) who are worthy of carrying on your school's name.

Results Based or Outcome Based Results is a model of education that rejects the traditional methodology of how the martial arts is taught to students, in favor of making students demonstrate that they "know and are able to do" whatever the required techniques are meant to do. This obviously is a more hands-on approach to teaching and totally appropriate for our Industry. In other words, Results-Based Learning asks you to "look outside the box" and use whatever it takes to ensure your students learn, understand and apply the techniques being taught.

Highly Structured Curriculum Delivery

If your abilities in the martial arts is limited to a single style or martial art, then the likelihood of your school being successful will also be limited. In today's Martial Arts Business world, the student is looking for a diversified syllabus of techniques and routines which means your repertoire must be all encompassing.

If you are not able to personally provide all the martial arts needed to successfully run a martial arts school, you can always look to various professionally designed curriculum delivery options. This is similar to a lot of new FinTech's where an upstart technology firm starts with a core function and then purchases various prebuilt applications to allow for features necessary to make the business a success.

This principle can now be applied to new Martial Arts schools, where an investor or a new Black Belt can start with a core style (e.g.: Karate) and then purchase a myriad of proven programs to ensure the success of the business.

Some examples of these high-quality programs include:

If you are not strong in the teaching of younger children, then you can go out and purchase the "Pre-Skillz" program where a complete selection of activity and drills makes it easy to establish a successful small kids' program. There are not many of us that can easily manage a group of 4,5 or 6-year-old which is a lucrative market in today's martial arts schools.

A lot of martial arts karate schools are hesitant to implement a Sparring program as it discourages a lot of new members from signing up. Again, there is an excellent and proven method for establishing a sparring program that is fun and inviting. The Retention Based Sparring program is another offering from MAIA and can ensure that both safety and inclusiveness is part of your fighting program.

Finally, if you wish to expand your schools class options and have decided that a weapons class is something that your students may enjoy. Unfortunately, if your martial arts style did not include weapons and considering the sensitivity of today's society, then your choice of weapons to teach must be researched extensively. Fortunately, there are a number of quality courses available and one of the best is the MAIA Flow System which is headed up by two World Champions who have carefully designed both a class syllabus as well as having developed a "Teach the Teacher" course allowing you or your Black Belts to become qualified Instructors. In this way, you can quickly incorporate a new weapon of choice into your curriculum allowing for you to have another discipline in your school's course inventory.

You can see how easily it is to properly develop a martial arts school curriculum as long as you keep an open mind about the business side of your school's success.

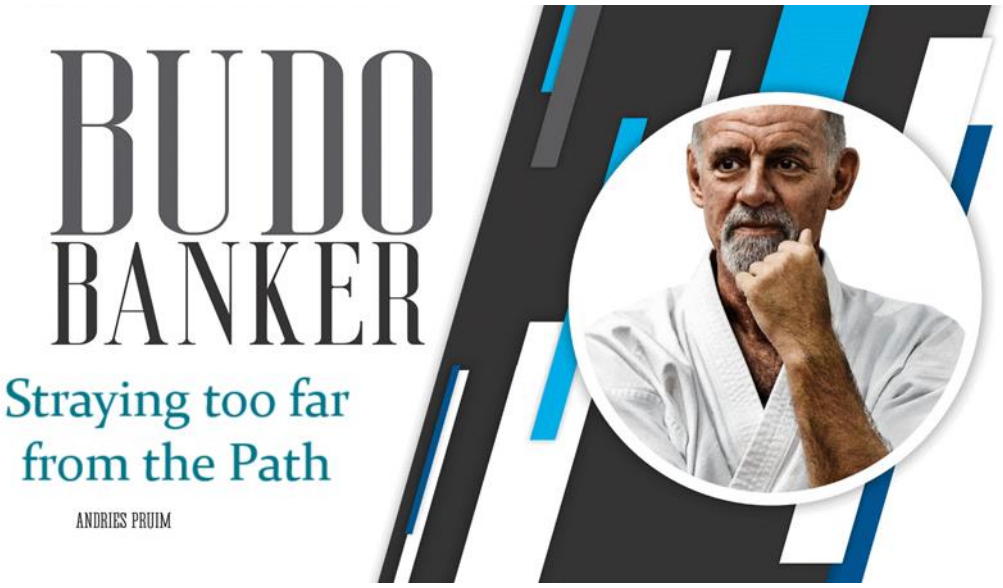
Special Needs Instruction

If you are contemplating accepting “Special Needs” students, then you will need to be prepared to take on the added responsibilities and high maintenance nature of these type of students. In addition, based on the type of “Special Needs” being considered, this will in all likelihood involve some Governmental bureaucracy, thus again adding a layer of complexity and possible litigation issues (Risk Management). A customized curriculum would have to be designed, based on the circumstances of your interests and may have to be approved by a regulatory agency of some kind.

The teaching of ‘Special Needs” students requires a special type of instructor so make sure you have what it takes and are aware of all the responsibilities involved. Of course, the satisfaction of seeing special needs kids flourish is usually worth the extra effort.

Review your Curriculum Regularly.

Don’t expect to create the perfect curriculum in one attempt. No matter how much you plan ahead, you can only tell if something works when you try it out in practice, and then observe the results. Keep an open mind and be willing to change and update your instruction based on how well it’s received.



Straying too far from the Path

What is Budo in today's fragmented and jaded Martial Arts world?

Lately I have been watching the various consultants trying to convince the hundreds of martial arts school owners via remote ZOOM sessions, webinars and other mediums from throwing in the towel and looking for another career. While the attempts by these successful school owners and consultants are admirable, the changing paradigm that is now the martial arts business is not really conducive to those who's training did not involve so much marketing, salesmanship and basically babysitting, more so than a true path to martial arts enlightenment.

Once you've trained a certain number of years on your personal martial art development, you get somewhat jaded when seeing how superficial the business portion of the industry has become. Some rational aspects of training have been set aside for the sole reason of business.

Kindly remember that I have a substantial business background and have written extensively about treating your martial arts school like a business. Nevertheless, as in any dedicated business model you must remain true to your core competency and try to minimize diversity, especially to businesses you have little or no familiarity with.

This is a common dilemma in corporate business where conglomerates start with a core business and in their attempts to compensate for regular cyclical downturns these conglomerates start buying up diverse businesses. At first, the newly purchased business has some relevancy to the core business, but subsequent purchases tend to diversify to far from the "Core" and this is when issues start arising. This is what I see occurring in the martial arts industry.

The dilemma is how far are you willing to stray "from the path" in order for you to keep your martial arts business viable. When you start bringing in business that has nothing to do with martial arts other than for marketing purposes or for the need of the funds the activity brings in, then you are diverging from your business core, which could ultimately cause (legitimacy) issues down the road.

This new forced paradigm has now moved the industry to a new form of martial arts business which I call "Plug and Play Karate" … (for example)

Plug and Play Budo

I will use a new bank (Novo Banks) that wishes to initially provide financial services to select niche of online customers. This new bank will leverage existing cloud technology like "AWS", which can provide a core or base technical platform on which this new bank can start "back office" processing requirements. From here the bank can now decide what "add ons" it needs to be a successful bank.

The Nova Bank will now purchase various functionalities from 3rd party vendors including lending, deposits and or even financial planning. This way the new bank has all the "Plug & Play" components to operate a successful institution. Again, this is how I see the martial arts paradigm developing into.

While most martial artist who wish to make a "career out of their passion", maintain a "core" discipline, (i.e.: Karate), unfortunately most do not have the many martial arts or teaching skill sets needed to succeed in today's martial arts business world.

For this reason, we are now seeing "packaged disciplines" that you can purchase in order to supplement your school's curriculum. For example, if you are not great at dealing with kids under six, and it is a market that you can tap into, then there is the "Pre-Skillz" program that shows you how, what and when to teach this unique clientele.

Alternately if your Karate background didn't include weapons, then you could purchase the "Flow Systems" program which again teaches you a weapon curriculum including "how to teach" the curriculum. In other word, Martial Arts "plug & play".

If you don't have the "feature" you need to sell your service, then you simply buy it. Of course, this could lead to investors who put together a combination of "plug & play" programs and who have no actual background in the martial arts …. other than being an avid fan and smart investor!

While I am a supporter of any successful business model, nevertheless, as a martial artist who learned his craft in the 70 's and has traveled a few too many times to Japan, I sometimes wonder if we have strayed a bit too far from "the path". If we start to promote programs that are basically supervision of non-martial artists for the sole purpose of revenue, then I would compare it to the conglomerate that has lost vision of its core intention and in turn, its core values.

What is your Business?

The question then is, how far from our martial arts "mandate" is it acceptable to go simply to stay in business? While I can understand and accept adding a 4 to 6-year-old tots' class, as long as the primary purpose is to teach a martial art of some form. Even here there is an acknowledgement of the "baby sitting" aspects to a tot class as most know that conceptual comprehension does start until children are approximately eight years old (with some exceptions). Nevertheless, there is some physical benefits that will follow the smaller children as they grow, especially if they stay training in the martial arts.

The problem arises when martial arts school try to supplement their revenue streams with "outside" business, including using your instructors to supervise children in activities that are not related martial arts in any way. The inherent risks involved cannot be understated!

Not only insurance liabilities but an issue that may arise will bring into question, especially in a court of law, your (or your instructors) credentials in supervising activities not related to your expertise. It would be safer to simply sub-let or rent out your premises to those who do have the qualifications!

It has been all these attempts to supplement income that has started me thinking! In fact, my Banker's hat appeared which made me question the viability of these "non-core" enterprises. I would (as a Banker) start researching the competitive structure of this newly implemented line of business to see how it relates to your normal day to day business.

In other words, should you be entering into businesses for the so purpose of revenue with only a slight possibility of student lead generation? If you feel it appropriate then I feel you have moved from being a martial artist to a full fledge business investor. Your school is now purely your place of business. It should not be calling a Dojo but rather a "Child Enhancement Center" (or something similar). Your Martial Arts path is now business main street, which is not a bad thing, but it is not "the path" of traditional Martial Arts instructors… (e.g.: Sensei).

Truth be told, while I was originally trained by a quality Shotokan black belt, he was from the Midwest and my Asian influence was nominal, other than being totally enamored by Bruce Lee and all he represented. On the other hand, my instructor's school was only nominally successful and together with my trips to Japan my business philosophy on martial arts was still a bit conservative in that I felt the martial arts (or karate in my case) was a lifelong path that we had to be honest to.

In most things I do, I will always involve what I call the "cringe factor". If what I see makes me cringe, I tend to steer clear of it. Whether it be the various supreme grand masters who show no real martial arts skills to those who's Karate "uniforms" actually contained epaulettes.

This cringe “meter” is what I use when I examine new “martial arts” programs that espouse the latest and great way to generate revenue for your business. I will carefully examine the pedagogy demonstrated and try to determine its value as a conveyor of the martial principles that are the core (or Mission Statement in business vernacular) of all combat-based disciplines. We should not devalue or deviate from the passion that made us startup our schools in the first place.

I acknowledge the dreadful times we are living through, even so we must still be true to our Martial Arts (Budo) ideals. This means that if we find ourselves diluting the essence of our martial art simply to keep the bills paid, then we should examine our “raison d’etre” carefully.

If your school is a pure investment play, then the martial arts segment would be simply one of a myriad of activities which comprise your business. It would be no different than hiring independent teachers for your private (academic) school.

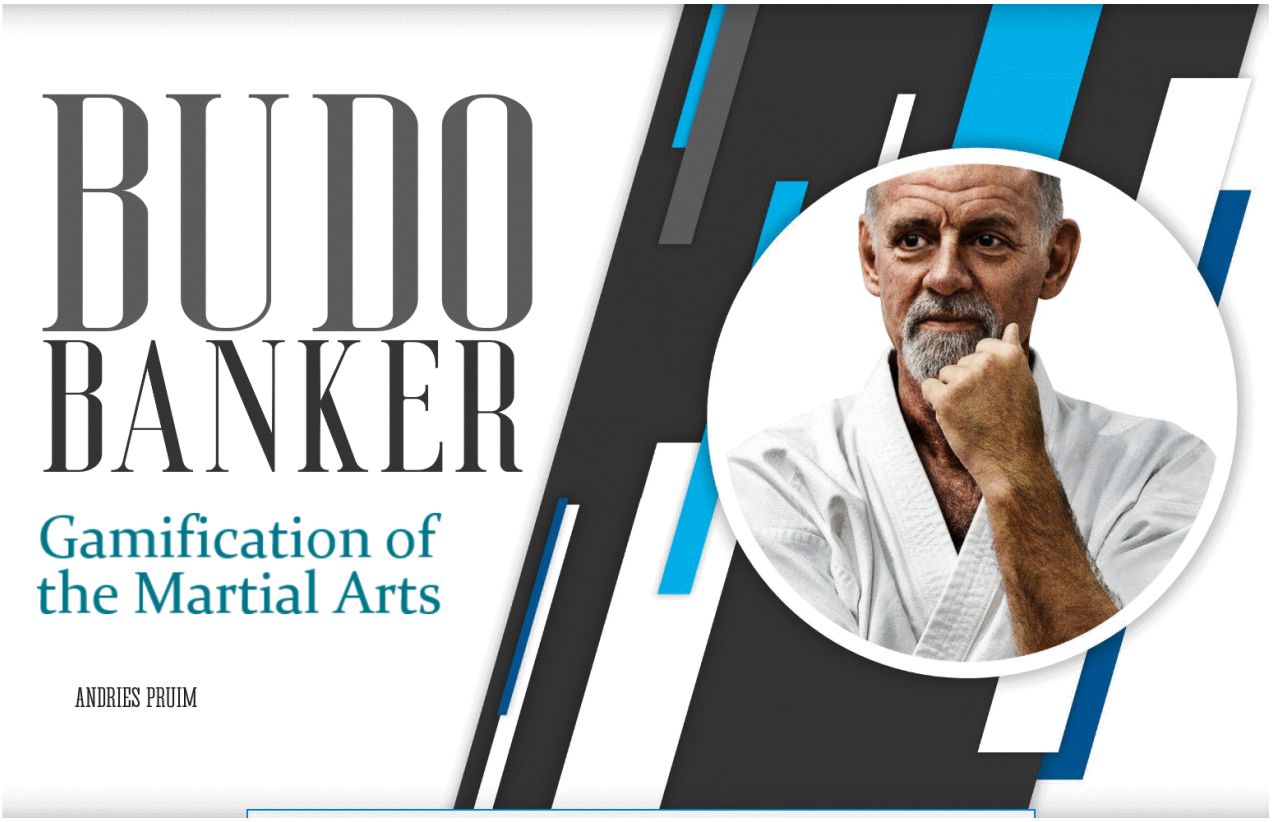
As a Banker, I had a private school as a client, who taught grades K to 12, but was not part of the public-school system. The school owner (CEO) was not an ex-teacher but a smart businessman who saw a niche and worked to fill that niche. This person would hire the teaching expertise needed, whether mathematics, science or any other “specialist” to ensure the success of his school/business.

If this is your business then all the power to you. As long as you hire properly and have established a well-defined training regime, you should be successful. Even during the COVID-19 crisis you can hire the right skill sets in order to supplement revenue lost due to a lack of actual martial arts classes and attendees.

On the other hand, if you started your school as part of your journey down the martial arts road to some type of self-perfection, then some personal reflection is required. If your path, your school, your students, and your personal growth are all because of your passion for martial arts, then your business must also be true to your passion.

As a Commercial Banker, I saw a lot of small businesses closed their doors for a number of reasons. We never saw it as a failure, just another attempt by entrepreneur whose circumstances didn’t lead to success. We would work with this valued client as the passion was there and we know they will be back.

The business entrepreneurial spirit like the martial artist passion cannot lay still long, so review your options and just remember to “not stray too far from the path”! …. It is what got you this far. If you must pick yourself up again, like the many times we did in the dojo during our martial art career, then stay true to yourself, regroup and wait for the next opportunity to share your passion with others.



Gamification of the Martial Arts

LEVERAGING MODERN GAMING STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE YOUR SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM

Gamification of Personal Interactions

In another recent MAIA Elite seminar, Mr. Roland Osborne mentioned how he had updated his school's curriculum to create new Sparring Games or Martial Arts Games in order to provide more entertainment to the students, or as he put it, a better student experience. Mr. Osborn qualified these new curriculum strategies as Gamification of his course material.

Gamification is a new paradigm where business and educational institutions (for examples) are changing the way they engage their customers and/or students. It tries to move away from the mundane and in some cases, Gamification of certain tasks simply tries to make jobs more enjoyable.

My personal interest of Gamification began through my research of major corporations using gamification in their business marketing strategies …. Rewards, Challenges, even the use of a Donut ring to track your savings … primarily to increase customer loyalty. Research also showed that Educational Institutions were looking at Gamification in order to make the student experience more enticing, which to me was where I felt that Martial Arts schools could benefit from this new paradigm.

In short, "Gamification" is the use of game elements in non-gaming systems to improve user experience and user engagement, loyalty and fun. It attempts to harness the motivational power of games in order to promote participation, persistence and achievements. In other words, Gamification is the using of game design on business and educational strategies.
Gamification is also based on our existing Reward system prevalent in todays' society. Examples include Grades in our schools, Rank in Military, promotion/salary in Business. This reward type improvement system is called Operant Conditioning and is a method of learning (pedagogy) through the use of Rewards and Punishments. It is now starting to be leveraged extensively with more and more games being introduced into our modern teaching methods rather than the old way of rote memorization of facts and figures.

It was determined that if you initiate a Rewards System (Gamification) into your curriculum then the Rewards must continue in order that the Learner keeps involved .... *unless* the end result of the training provides some real-world value that supersedes the Reward based system. An example of this is Martial Arts where once the ability to protect one's self provides real world value over and above the satisfaction of obtaining Rank (i.e.: Rewards).

In order to provide some context to the possible inclusion of Gamification techniques in a Martial Arts school, we reached out to 3 separate Martial Artists, each with a different perspective on how best to leverage this new educational strategy.

We talked with Sensei Tina Parker who, together with her son Troy Parker own the mid-size Martial Arts school known as Safeguard Martial Arts. While they maintain a healthy Teen and Adult program, the majority of the school's students can be classified as Children's Programs. Safeguard Martial Arts has been in business for over 20 years and has recently won local Small Business of the Year honors.

We also reached out to Sensei John Lowrie; a 6th degree Goju-Ryu stylist who operates a community-based Karate school known as Sun God Karate. Sun God Karate has been run out a municipal/county recreation center for over 25 years, with each session having a regular waiting list due to its popularity. The school is fully focused on children under the age of 14 and has successfully taught a traditional style to thousands of kids over the years.

Finally, we were honored to have Sensei Jackson Rudolph provide his insights. As a 50+ time World Champion Sport Karate Weapons Master (and Historian), a Leading Martial Arts and Curriculum Consultant as well as having conducted hundreds of seminars all around the world, Sensei Rudolph has witnessed the evolution of Martial Arts instruction and has a modern perspective on training techniques.

We will intersperse these three long time instructors' comments throughout this article as we dive into how Gamification is starting to integrate itself into our Educational and Business strategies.

Instructors' Requirements of Gamification.

When a Martial Arts School Owner makes the decision to incorporate Gamification strategies into their curriculum, they are looking to develop the student's internal motivation rather than simply trying to entertain. It is important to ensure there is an internal motivation within the student as this is the portion of Gamification that allows the student to have fun while being in an engaging learning environment.

Tina Parker: *(As to SMA's Gamification strategy) We use gamification strategies in most TOTS classes relative to challenges that need a mentally visual concept like the Alligator Run (designed to enhance balance and sure footedness), and the blocker chop where students have obstacles to get through with the rhythmic drop of the blockers at various points that they have to strategically avoid to complete the exercise. Such activities create a personal challenge, which leads to the concept of goal setting as they get older.*

John Lowrie: W*hen thinking about gamification strategies I realized that I have used this concept for many years although likely didn't call it that back then. My first wife is a Special Education teacher by training and in the early years of my school she was quite helpful when I was having difficulty keeping kids motivated.*

Jackson Rudolph: *I introduce games in my seminars to help give the students a better experience and create lasting memories. It is natural for the more experienced student to give some helpful pointers to the beginner thus a great method of giving advanced students some entry-level instructing experience. Because my instructor would frequently create challenges to make class more interesting gameplay became a natural part of my teaching strategies.*

So, while the concept of Gamification can be thought of something that came naturally when teaching Martial Arts to children, there are actually many academic studies into the various components that make up Gamification. It is up to the School Owner to determine which elements to leverage for their particular curriculum.

Questions that School Owners must ask when implementing a new Gamification influenced curriculum change. Only after responding to these questions should the implementation of gamification elements be considered. These questions help the instructor determine the possible weak points in the learning activities, and correct them where possible.

Behavior

- Does the class activity provide the student with opportunities for further experimentation, exploration and personal creative expression?
- Is the activity effective in conveying the technique as well as being fun?
- Are students engaged to achieve something great, awesome and bigger than themselves within a specified time?

Progression

- Are your Ranking criteria a good representation of the student's progress?
- Does your Ranking reflect the student's progress on learning, thinking and creating skills?

Feedback

- Is there a recognition of achievement (such as Student of the class or invitation to Black Belt Club)?
- Is there an adequate number of details regarding the curriculum provided to the students at each level of achievement?

Below is a list of the most relevant Gamification components, which should be carefully scrutinized by the School Owner before implementing into their curriculum.

Major concepts of gamification include variations of gaming strategies	
Play	allowing the participant, the freedom to explore within boundaries.
Exposition	creating stories for participants with real-world setting and allowing them to create their own storylines.
Information	providing participants with real time information to learn more about the real-world context.
Engagement	encouraging participants to discover and learn from others interested in the real-world setting.
Autonomy	This is where the User/Player does not need any assistance to complete the gamification objectives
Competency	Being able to complete the objectives of the game with confidence.
Relatedness	having some type of personal connection with the strategies and values espoused by the gamified platform.
Reflection	assisting participants in finding other interests and past experiences that can deepen engagement and learning.

Measuring Gamification Effectiveness

There is still some resistance about implementing Gamification strategies into various business and educational institutions due to the lack of concrete measurable results. There are many traditional methods of measuring learning successes but how much does Gamification truly contribute to any learning or business success is still debatable.

On the other hand, while many academics try to determine the concrete measurable value of implementing Gamification into your educational strategies (i.e.: your curriculum), the basic premise of using gamification is to make the task more fun!! Trying to justify it by attempting to codify certain results takes away the 'fun factor' that is the underlying principle of gamification.

Jackson Rudolph: G*amification provides an escape from the typical rigidity of martial arts classes. It still serves a purpose to create relationships within a school, make classes more enjoyable, and overall increase retention. Most people would be surprised how much adults enjoy some gameplay, children always have fun with it, but it is often the adults who get the most competitive. Even traditional styles like Shotokan, Judo [etc.] can implement games without escaping tradition by choosing games that focus on the execution of techniques.*

Top Three Recommended Gamification Strategies

After completing our research and discussions with some school owners and consultants, we felt the following three Gamification Components are probably the most relevant to the way we presently teach Martial Arts …. especially to children.

Team work

The value of camaraderie cannot be understated and developing a team atmosphere is one of the best tenets of Gamification. While 'Gaming' can produce strong individualism (in wanting to win the game), it has been shown that most of the best results in all Gamification challenges are in a group setting.

I have personally been on a number of Grading Panels where I witness extreme commitment to the team from those who were getting their Black belts together. They all had similar attitudes that if one of them failed then they all failed. These groups of talented young adults would work together for months before the grading and the team commitment is what I felt was the major factor in their successes!

Tina Parker: *Social distancing over the last year has made gamification more challenging as we always have to be conscious of students maintaining appropriate social distancing by not being closer than 6 feet apart. This in a lot of ways stops the camaraderie that closer connection brings. We will undoubtedly be able to include more game-based drills again when we don't have the restrictions currently placed upon us.*

Jackson Rudolph: *Gamification could encourage or discourage teamwork depending upon how the instructor uses it. if all the games are based solely on rewards and leaderboards, that is going to create a lot of unhealthy individual competition. The best way is to design most of your games such that teamwork is essential! For example, use two large teams working together to create combinations that will compete against one another. After 5 or so minutes, each team performs their combination and a winner is determined the losing team suffering a petty punishment like 10 push-ups (nothing that would upset anyone, but still gives the winners a sense of achievement)*

Competition/ Challenging Tasks

We must remember that it was when the numerous Karate Clubs in Japan started to have inter-school tournaments that the popularity of Karate started to take off. So, while competition can sometimes be viewed in a negative light, especially in today's hyper competitive world, in Martial Arts, which is the learning of defending one's self against an opponent, competition is necessary even if only on a small scale (e.g.: Dojo/School Only Tournaments). We need to believe that what we are learning is going to be effective if confronted by an adversary of some kind.
Nevertheless, even when setting up competitive challenges (or tasks) within your curriculum, you can off-set the competitive stress by having teams compete against each other. It provides the students with something to strive for but with the knowledge they have friends and/or teammates who will help. This allows for an exciting game type of competition and the fun each team will have putting their routine together, will ensure there are no losers at the end of the day!

Tina Parker: *In our junior programming, we tend to use more competitive aspects of gamification to encourage and engage - examples: group kata where as soon as a mistake is made (i.e.: teamwork), they sit down (i.e.: feedback) and the next group tries to beat their goal by getting farther through the kata, and timing trials to complete weaponry before the buzzer goes off (i.e.: targets/goals).*

Jackson Rudolph: *This is also seen in the competitive arena where making martial arts a sport whether it be jiu-jitsu competitions, Olympic Tae Kwon Do, or sport karate tournaments, is gamification on a large scale. This "macro-gamification" of martial arts have been proven time and time again to increase retention and student satisfaction.*

Reflection/Feedback

Reflection is the part of Gamification design where the "player" tries to find meaning in their participation within the game. The participants determine if the effort was worth it and for the most part this reflection is usually better in a group setting. In Martial Arts, this is where we are regularly contemplating the "path" we are on and how this makes us a better person than we were before participating.

When developing your curriculum to include Gamification, the perspective should be long term and not just something to disguise repetition or to allow your students a 'break' from traditional training. There are many stages in Martial Arts career and using reflection of one's effort is something we have always strived to achieve in our training.

Gamification of reflection simply tries to have the student focus on their achievements on a regular basis, whether it be after a Challenge/Task of some kind, the awarding of Rank or simply acknowledging the years of effort that has made you the person you are today.

Jackson Rudolph: *Challenging tasks and reflection, are perfect for advanced students. Many curriculums do not challenge Black Belts often enough therefore by intentionally using challenging tasks to enrich the Black Belt curriculum thus allowing opportunities for self-reflection which in turn will allow these advanced students to push them beyond the rank of Black Belt.*

Conclusion

Most martial Arts School Owners have known about or have unknowingly leveraged Gamification principles especially if they have extensive Children's programs. When considering how fast paced our society is these days, it is evident that the attention span of most have decreased to where providing an entertainment factor into your curriculum is a must!

Of course, one last factor must be taken into consideration and that is the perception that the instructor is implementing 'time wasting games' simply to entertain so the kids will come back to the next class. Each Gamification principle used must be solidly focused on the particular Martial Art technique within the curriculum, otherwise the class becomes nothing more than a 'baby-sitting' business. In addition, if you are trying to implement Gamification in Adult classes, there had better be major consideration to the component or principle leveraged (i.e.: team work or competition) otherwise the adult students may not feel the instructors is taking them or their training seriously.

John Lowrie: *In Martial Arts the goals are to develop strength, endurance, muscular development, speed, reaction time, etc. It's possible to do boring repetitive tasks that can improve each of these items but it becomes more fun and the students more eager to participate and spend more time if you can disguise the training as a game provided, of course, that there is a specific goal or skill to be developed.*

Jackson Rudolph: *While the Gamification concept is new to the Martial Arts curriculum, having a term for this approach will help educate more instructors about it and in turn make martial arts classes more enjoyable for students around the world. Instructors can avoid time-wasting games by ensuring that there is always a martial arts technique or principle that remains the focal point of the game. Most games should be speed challenges or consistency games that are clearly focused on the performance of a technique or combination. When games are obviously centered upon the technique at hand, it keeps them from becoming time-wasting games.*

Gamification is both an old and a new concept. We as Martial Arts instructors have always strived to make our classes informative, yet entertaining. We must realize that our Industry is dependent on "disposable income", which means we need to add an element of entertainment in our classes to reduce the mundane and give the student a reason to get off the couch and train!

Gamification is simply a way to add exciting teaching elements to your curriculum and something every instructor needs to be aware of. In fact, in some cases, especially with those that may have difficulty in learning your program, Gamification techniques can assist these students in picking up the techniques faster than anticipated.

Jackson Rudolph: *Introduction of Gamification into typical learning, using gameplay such as speed challenges or intensity battles to make classes and curricular learning more enjoyable. Gamification provides another method by which some students may have the metaphorical light bulb go off and finally understand that concept or technique and this is why games that promote teamwork and collaboration are important, because they will organically create friendships in your school that will keep students coming back.*

And in the end, isn't that why we do this. The family friendly environment that is created by well-established Martial Arts school provides benefits far exceeding any financial gains you as a business owner can garner. Using Gamification techniques simply allows the School Owner an additional "arrow in their quiver" in ensuring the viability of their business and the happiness of their students!

Appendix:

Gamification vs. Serious Games.

There is a separate area of gamification where the designer of the game tries to get the player/participant to accomplish more than just educational or business-related outcomes. This niche area of gamification is dependent on the analysis skills of the player/participant. As these games have less emphasis on "fun" as they deal with complex world issues, they are considered "Serious Games.

Serious Games are platforms that use Gamification techniques to resolve Real Life Problems, whether it be medical or environmental or even demographic issues. Serious Games are more simulation than standard games whereas Gamification maintains a "fun factor" and may not be an actual game.

Serious Games need not be fun but can provide similar satisfaction as a normal (non-serious) game. An Aircraft Simulator teaching Users how to fly is an example of a Serious Game. Others include having the User attempt to solve some of the world's issues like creating a simulated society which in not dependent on Oil/Fossil Fuels. These Serious Games teach a life skill or develop a life style that is usually educational in the end.

Even in the Martial Arts world, we use Serious Games to an extent, although we probably wouldn't think of these activities as games. One is obvious, which is when we teach a specific type of class, such as Self-Defense or even a Bully Prevention Class. While we may use Gamification techniques within the class (e.g.: role-playing, real-life challenges, location scenarios, even feedback), there is no real "fun factor" as with normal classes due to the 'seriousness' of the purpose of the class (e.g.: rape prevention).

Another serious game we practice on the Martial Art business side is when we start teaching our Instructors and Staff on how to handle issues that arise when dealing with disgruntled Parents or Students. Most of these sessions will have participants act out various troubling scenarios (i.e.: Role Playing) in order to teach them how to de-escalate the situation and then discuss the results (i.e.: feedback). Most times these gamification principles do not include making the mundane more enjoyable as it is a serious situation which requires a serious solution.



Expanding your Martial Arts Business

PURCHASE MARKET SHARE OR GROW ORGANICALLY

Andries Pruim | October 2021

Is it time to grow the business?

I wrote a MA Success article about a year ago on the probable consolidation of the Martial Arts industry, which I wrote before the full onset of the recent pandemic. We have seen many Martial Arts schools having to close permanently due to COVID with those remaining schools noting a sizable increase in their enrollments.

This forced consolidation of students into schools which had survived the pandemic brought my conclusions to fruition. It was Martial Arts schools that were well established with proper "systems" in place, including technology, together with quality and well thought out staffing and curriculum strategies, that not only survived the pandemic but actually grew their business during these stressful times.

In recent MAIA Elite webinars, Mr. Metzger and Mr. Tassoul have been driving these points consistently in order to assist the industry in stopping the further closure of the myriad of Martial Arts schools. Lately, the MAIA team has also explored options on how best to grow your business including expanding to multiple locations.

While these MAIA sessions were informative and apropos in how best to expand your school into new markets, what struck me was how these same conversations are presently being had in the Financial Services industry as it relates to various Banks expanding into new markets. You see, even though I have out of the Banking Industry for many years, I continue to keep up on the latest Banking news via Banker magazines (yes, there is such a thing 😊). In a recent edition, a community bank was exploring ways to expand to new counties or even states and was careful to follow well established guidelines.

What surprised me was the similarities between the two Industries as it pertains to how best to proceed in expanding their presence into a new Market area. So primarily to supplement what the MAIA Team has be espousing for many years, I would like to provide a summary of Best Practices when making the decision to expand your school. While I have leveraged the Community Bank example, I have simply provided a similar argument for the Martial Arts Industry.

Which is better – "Build or Buy"

> There are a number of variables when thinking about expanding your school especially into a new Market area. This includes whether to grow your school organically (start from scratch) or take over the operations of an existing well-established school. Sometimes it is easier to take over an existing location if you feel you can provide the necessary support and infrastructure to ensure success.
>
> Both options are feasible, but must be examined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the market you are entering and your business acumen. We will examine some high-level considerations which should help you decide on whether to grow organically, purchase on existing operation or simply pass on the Market and look elsewhere.

First examine your existing location or locations and determine what makes your school competitive and successful.

Before you start even contemplating expanding your business, you must take stock of what you have and what made you successful in your present location(s). It is obvious that you are successful because of some unique qualities you have displayed and implemented. Systemize these qualities and ensure they can be migrated to a new location.

As the MAIA Team stress constantly, you should be documenting your successful processes and looking at the talent you have hired (as staff) for your existing school(s). Once you are confident that your systems are solid and the staff is correctly teaching the school's curriculum, then it's your job to duplicate this successful endeavor to the new location.

Leverage these traits in determining next Market to enter into.

Once you have systemized your successful processes and unique traits (e.g.: Curriculum, Grading Criteria, special events, etc.), you must be able to establish the same criteria in your new location. Seeing that your unique way of delivering a quality product was successful due to the demographics and possible location of your existing school (amongst many other reasons), you should be looking for similar traits in the new Market you are thinking of expanding into.

If the new Market has too many strong competitors, maybe look at alternative options.

While some Markets "look ripe for the taking", the saying "looks too good to be true" may be the more appropriate way to "look" at it. Even if the demographics look enticing, with a sizable family component, not to mention good economic conditions, it is best to first appraise the competition before making any commitments.

If the competition is plentiful and most look prosperous, the barriers to entry may be hard to overcome. It would be in these competitive environments where the purchase of an existing location would be more ideal than trying to grow organically and even then, it may be hard finding someone willing to sell. It may be best to look at a less mature business community.

Even if the new Market appears to be similar to the Market you are presently in, it must be remembered that the new Market will still have unique nuances which may be subtle and hard to detect.

Regardless of how much of a match you feel the new Market is to your existing one, there will always be local "customs" that will have to be taken into consideration before you can fully establish your business. You must become familiar with the community you are entering and without hiring some local talent, this could lead to a difficult time in growing your business.

Hire an Experienced Local Head Instructor and possibly a Program Director which should allow the school to stay focused on the needs of the community you are entering.

If you really wish to ensure success in your new Market, then it would best to hire staff that are familiar with the community including knowing some of the other business leaders. Hiring a local Head Instructor, if possible, would increase word of mouth referrals as your new head Instructor should be well known in the community.

If you are looking to hire a local Program Director, you will need to ensure they have some experience with the local business community and especially the Chamber of Commerce. Developing Business and Referral networks are more easily accomplished by someone who knows "the lay of the land".

Ensure the new Market has substantial growth potential.

One way to determine Market Potential is to closely examine the performance of the competition. Are they successful and growing? In other words, do your homework and research the new Market's demographics as well as employment levels, real estate prices, commercial lease rates and other factors.

Once you have identified your primary customer base (e.g.: children's classes), then you must confirm that the new market has the necessary demographic base to fill your classes. Once again contacting the local Chamber of Commerce or School Board should be one of the first steps in your research.

Try to avoid Markets where there is substantial but small-scale competition. It may be difficult to garner traction is such a fragmented Market.

Of course, if during your research of the new Market area, you find a sizable number of small but successful schools, you may wish to re-think your decision to expand into this area. While national or regional martial arts school are difficult to compete against, the small single operator or husband and wife schools can be fully entrenched within the community and a sizable barrier to overcome.

Always enter a new Market from a position of strength. Highlight your unique qualities and how your new school can benefit the community.

Standard business strategy dictates that for your school to stand out from the crowd is to emphasize your strengths and uniqueness when entering into a new Market. Determine what your "differentiator" is …. what makes your school different from the rest and how has it resulted in your school's success.

When marketing in your new location, stress how well your existing school(s) integrated into their respective communities and how you are also seen as a leader within your business community. So, whether it's your martial art (style), your teaching methodologies, your curriculum, your on-line presence or even just the friendliness and effectiveness of your processes, ensure you properly market your strengths when opening your new locations.

Staffing in your new Market area is also extremely important.

Unless you have a fully trained group of instructors ready to relocate to your new market, you will be looking for local talent, which is not only a must (as previously noted) but a challenging task at the very least. Ensuring you select the best candidates in a new Market can be difficult so if you can't find qualified candidates from within the new Market, then it may be best to avoid this location.

Ensure your existing systems are robust, well defined and migratable to the new operation. Your Membership Management Service Provider should be able to easily and quickly scale up accordingly.

Technology is a must in any of today's successful businesses and the martial arts industry is no exception. Together with your documented staff hiring processes, risk management strategies, on-boarding methodologies, your Membership Management software must be able to handle the increased workload that a new school will generate.

Fortunately, most Martial Arts Membership software platforms, (especially those advertising on the MAIA and Black Belt Magazine platforms) will be able to assist your school in all your expansion needs and we recommend reaching out to them if you are contemplating growing your business.

When expanding your business, you are also expanding your brand.

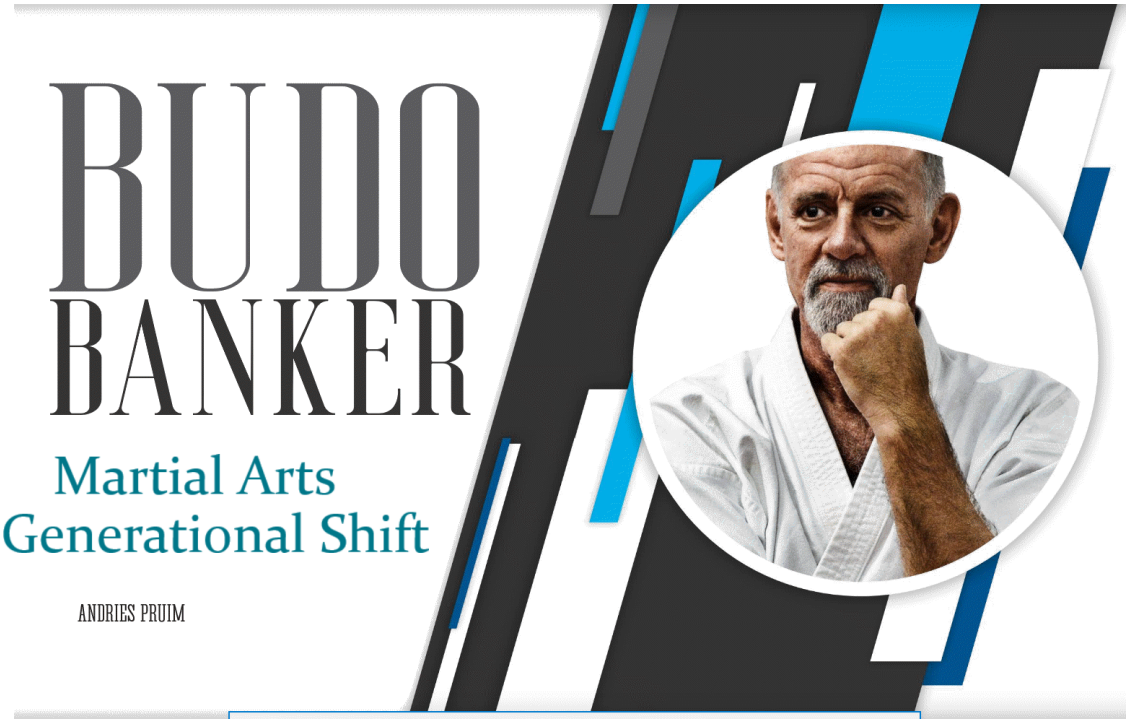
Remember that your school, your staff and yourself are representatives of the successful business you have developed, which is, for all intents and purposes, your Brand …. your symbol of success, your goodwill with the community, your effectiveness in enhancing people's lives …. is so much more than just a fancy Logo and accompanying T-Shirts.

This means committing your new location to the community by joining the local Chamber of Commerce, other similar community organizations and becoming friends with the local school board. Your Brand is what everyone will notice and talk about. Make sure you represent yourself and your new school in the best light possible by making your school's "Best Practices" a hallmark of your success.

Best strategy is to do both.

It's as simple as that. Keep your options open. While growing organically allows you to control all aspects of the new location, sometimes an opportunity exists to take over the operations of an existing location where your enhancements to the business could lead to sizable growth.

In conclusion, just like any business wanting to expand into new markets, there are certain steps which are a must and I found the similarities in a community bank wanting to expand and that of a Martial Arts School owner were amusing and refreshing … it says to me that the maturity of the martial arts industry is starting to show and we are all the better for it.



Martial Arts Generational Shift

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR YOUR MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

New Focus on Business

I recently interviewed Jackson Rudolph where we discussed a myriad of topics relating to Sport Karate and one of the more intriguing comments made by Mr. Rudolph was how his writings were more focused on the new generation of Martial Arts school owners. He felt that many of the 50 or 60-year-old school owners were to set in their ways rather than trying to accommodate any new idea that may enhance their business but dilute their traditional teachings.

When I asked how he felt was the best way to resolve this mindset Mr. Rudolph expressed his opinion that time would alleviate these issues as the older school owners plan for retirement. This generational shift, according to Mr. Rudolph, whereby ownership of martial arts school would transition to a modern group of talented instructors who understand the nuances of today's business climate, is essential if the industry is to survive.

As a semi-retired Business Consultant and Financial Planner, I understand the necessity of getting ready for some form of retirement. When you have spent 3 or 4 decades of devotion to your career or business, there should be some form of reward in the way of easing up somewhat and maybe doing something different. Being a Certified Financial Planner, I always advise business owners that succession planning should be part of their overall financial plan, especially where your business is concerned.

While I will leave the creation of a detailed Martial Arts School Owner Retirement strategy to your Accountant, Financial Advisor or organizations like MAIA Elite, there are still a number of areas of your financial wherewithal that you need to concern yourself with. We will focus on the high-level succession plan strategies and what areas you need to start initiating as soon as possible and, in some cases, depending on your age and retirement plans, the sooner the better!

What is Succession Planning?

I attended the MAIA 2022 Academy Intensive and the mantra of the MAIA team, especially Cris Rodriguez was to plan everything and document your plans. While Ms. Rodriguez was focusing on your marketing and event planning, your succession planning should also be high on your list of business and life tasks that need your immediate attention.

As part of your overall personal financial plan, you must first determine your retirement options before you can decide on what to do with the business you've dedicated so much of your time and energy into. One of the first decisions you must make is how you are going to transition into your envisioned retirement. This includes how you are going to finance your retirement. For example, are you going to sell your business outright? Partially sell and keep some ownership to provide for ongoing income or some other arrangement … and there are many, like trusts or preferred shares, etc.

The owner of any martial arts school who is thinking of retiring, should create three separate but interrelated plans:

1. Retirement Plan
    a. This plan covers your retirement wants and needs, and includes your post retirement activities, whether it be playing golf, traveling or even going back to school.
    b. Deal with any Health-related matters and how best to managed any life decisions.
    c. Develop a budget for not only your post retirement expenses, but any other activities, like traveling, you may wish to embark on.

2. Estate Plan
    a. Includes your Will, which must be comprehensive these days.
    b. Any Power of Attorneys
    c. Any Trusts you may establish.

3. Succession Plan
    a. Make decisions on how you will remove yourself from your business.
    b. Should determine if Business to be transitioned to either a family member or someone else.
    c. Should determine if a Trust is to be established.
    d. How you are going to transition ownership of your business to the next generation.

Whatever arrangements you ultimately decide upon, you still have a sizable amount of preparatory work, which can be both time consuming and mentally challenging. Just remember that Succession planning is a process, not a single event or task.

One area you need to start working on is how best to put a value on your business. What you think your Martial Arts school is worth and what the market thinks it is worth may be sizably different.

There are three main Valuation Methods for your closely held private business:

1. Fair Market Value – Based on Comparative Sales

    Valuation of a private business based on Fair Market is somewhat difficult if there are no comparative businesses to assess. Fortunately for most larger urban areas, the number of martial arts schools is substantial, at least to the point that some comparison analysis can be done.

2. Investment Value – Where an interested Investor sees value

    When establishing an Investment Value, it depends on what the perceived value of the business is to a very interested investor, which is usually a family member when talking about a small business like a Martial Arts School.

While a family member may be the perfect person to sell your business to, nevertheless if you undersell or oversell the value of your business, you can almost assuredly expect scrutiny from the IRS (or CRA in Canada).

3. Liquidation Value – Where the Business is worth more in parts than as a whole

   This type of valuation is more relevant to companies that maintain sizable financial (e.g.: Receivables) or mechanical assets (e.g.: manufacturing equipment). In the martial arts business, most of the tangible assets for a Martial Arts school is negligible in value. Even if your school has a fitness center profile, used exercise equipment loses its value considerably over a year or two.

   The real value in an existing school is its Student (or Client) List and the related data that your school has obtained over the years. Even with the normal 20% loss of clients/students which is what happens in most cases with client list purchases (e.g.: purchasing a Dental Practice), a martial arts school is probably better off being sold as a whole rather than its parts.

New owners of your business will need to see that any business investment they make will align with their personal core values. Most professionals in today's unique business climate will try to get employed with corporations that allow them to fulfill not only their financial needs but their personal emotional needs as well. This has led to a more modern concept of financial planning which is being referred to as Behavioral Finance. This new financial planning strategy takes into consideration the emotional wellbeing of the individual in addition to their financial wherewithal.

For your Martial Arts school, especially if you are a traditional one, you must prepare not only yourself for a transition to a new generation of Martial Artists, but you must ensure that your business will be prepared as well. What this means is that the person or people who will be owning your school must perceive future value of the business so you must demonstrate that your business together with the industry itself has future potential for a long a lucrative career.

Why is Succession Planning important?

The primary purpose of succession planning is to first determine the value of your business, then try to preserve that value as well as its future growth potential and then to pass it forward intact. It also provides continuity to your efforts over the past few decades.

Nevertheless, the complexity of the various business entities (especially in the U.S.) and how they are taxed almost demands that you contact your Accountant and possibly your lawyer before you make any final decision on your succession or even your retirement plans.

One of the most important reasons to implement a succession plan is business stability. It provides a documented path to your future which can be reviewed and updated or modified depending on the progress of your school. While looking for someone to lead your school into the future can be a daunting task, you will find that once you have aligned your personal and business objectives, then even the sizable task of selecting a successor can seem manageable.

Another intangible of succession planning is leaving a legacy of both your martial arts accomplishments as well as your business successes. When thinking of your legacy, try not to focus too much on the traditional aspects of your martial art, other than the quality foundation it gave to the future leaders of your school.

Your true legacy is the viable career future you are providing any successor of your school. If this means updating your school's business paradigm due to changing societal demands, then don't inhibit your successor with traditions that will hinder any future success.

What to consider when choosing a successor

In my banking days, I would review a business loan request based on three main criteria, namely Industry, Management and Financial analysis. When trying to determine a successor of your martial arts business, you have to focus primarily on the management analysis. This simply means you are looking at the human element in your analysis seeing that the industry is still personality based to a large degree.

I recently purchased Cris Rodriguez' excellent digital marketing book "The Best-Known Dojo: A Marketing Book for Martial Arts School Owners" which provides a wealth of details on how you really need to leverage all of the digital platforms in order to succeed in this new business environment. It demonstrates that there is a new breed of martial arts entrepreneur who are forward looking rather than simply doing what their "Sensei did and said". Some of the aging school owners may not appreciate this requirement and feel they may lose the tradition handed down to them from their instructors.

As mentioned, if you are looking to leave a legacy, you must decide if your legacy requirement will inhibit the growth of the school going forward. The legacy you should leave is a well-run school with a new a modern instructor that ensure the success of the school for many more years. This will require you to do a considerable amount of work before you can decide on a new dynamic successor.

When I was working in the corporate world, there were many occasions where I would be working with an associate who was being groomed for senior management purposes. The Corporation would have this (always) bright individual do stints in various departments, with these assignments lasting anywhere from 6 months to a year or until they get a solid understanding of the position. When considering the number of departments in most corporations, this process could last many years before the individual was deemed ready for a senior management position.

This simply means you need to put some serious considerations and thoughts in determining who is capable of taking over from you. There are three main criteria you should be leveraging when looking for in a successor, namely:

- Determine what you are looking for in a Leader
    - Identify Skill Requirements
    - Define Role Responsibilities
    - Determine Future Vision of Business and Leadership

- Evaluate your Talent Pool
    - Expand your potential pool of successors.
    - Ensure Candidates align with business objectives
    - Prioritize what you need in a successor.

- Develop Leadership Curriculum
    - Ensure each Candidate has a personalized development program.
    - Determine if looking outside your business for succession purposes is an option.
    - Leverage the Leadership "E's" to properly align Candidates to Business Objectives.
        - Make sure they have the "**Experience**" you need by slowly increasing their responsibilities in all areas of your business.
        - Provide them with "**Exposure**" to all areas of your business and ensure appropriate mentorship to ensure candidates maintain discipline.
        - Align Performance "**Expectations**" with corresponding compensation and promotions to ensure professional development.
        - Embrace all form of Leadership "**Education**" to ensure your candidates are forward looking and able think differently instead of sticking to (possibly outdated) traditional methods.

The Leadership skills you need today are not the ones you need for future leadership requirements. Your business, as with society itself will change substantially over time. You must try to understand what the future will look like (known as FMO – Future Mode of Operations) when looking for a successor.

Once you have determined what you are looking for in a leader, ensured you have the correct talent pool and have developed your succession strategy, then you can start creating personalized development plans for each of your candidates.

When looking to keep and possibly groom certain people for future leadership potential, try not to determine how much it will cost you in compensation and benefits to retain quality candidates, but rather how much it could cost your business if you lose this potential successor.

Conclusion: Time for a Generational Shift

When looking in the rear-view mirror of life, we tend to romanticize our upbringing and with respect to our martial arts training, how great our instructors were including what and how we were taught. The change in our business environment over the past decade or so forces us to remove our rose-colored glasses and be pragmatic in our outlook for the future of our industry.

If you have put so much effort into creating a successful school, you deserve to transition into some type of comfortable and affordable retirement. This means you need to initiate your succession planning early primarily so you can determine which is the best path to take when moving into retirement. In other words, be realistic as to what your best option is for your personal retirements needs. Whether this is leaving your business to a family member, which is a separate issue in itself, to a senior student/instructor or even if you sell your operation to a national franchise chain, you need to make the best decision for both yourself and your school. In doing my research for this article, there wasn't a single resource material that wasn't at least 30 to 40 pages long, which reflects the complexity and seriousness of any succession planning effort.

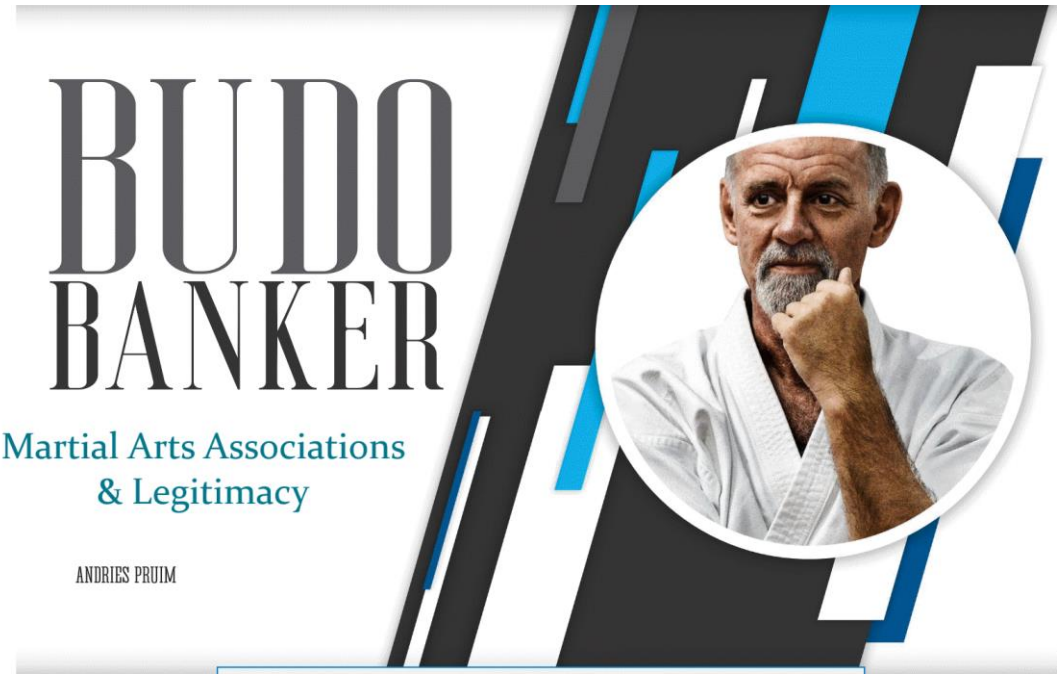
Nevertheless, one of the primary reasons for this article was due to the response of Mr. Jackson Rudolph, who, in an interview I had with him, answered my question on what he thought was the answer to resolving the animosity between traditional karate and sport karate.

"The answer is a generational shift in that over time it will get better"

Having been involved with Karate since the early 1970 's, I can honestly say I've seen the martial arts evolve over the many decades into something that is far different from what I was first taught. Not better, not worst, just different.

When I retired from the corporate world, I knew it was time for me to move on. Not only was it time to make a change in my life, it was also time to give an opportunity to a new generation of managers. Maybe the same could be said of a number of successful martial arts schools. If you have enjoyed a lifetime of being a martial arts entrepreneur, maybe it's time to allow another generation to benefit from a career in the martial arts industry.

I may be dating myself, but quoting from an old 70 's TV series …. "You've done well Grasshopper; it is time for you to go" …. Just make sure all your plans are in order before you transition to the new life you have earned!



Martial Arts Associations & Legitimacy

THE LEGACY OF A LIFETIME MARTIAL ARTIST
HANSHI DON OWENS - 9TH DAN

Formal Introductions

I had been training in Shotokan Karate for well over 20 years when I received an invitation to attend a small Dojo in the suburbs of Vancouver, Canada. It was the early 1990 's and I had just returned from Japan having trained at the world renowned Honbu Dojo of Hirokazu Kanazawa. I had also just moved to Vancouver due to my Banking career and happened to be looking for a similarly high-quality Dojo near my new home.

I was pleasantly surprised to find such a dojo located in a small school gym, with no more than a dozen or so very dedicated students. Through a mutual friend, I was introduced to a well-respected JKA instructor named Don Owens sensei. He was extremely friendly and generous with his time especially considering his high rank, even back then. Seeing my friend was a police officer, I later found out that Owens Sensei was a high-ranking Vancouver Police officer and taught Shotokan Karate on his off hours (and for almost no compensation).

Unfortunately, with my banking career starting to take off, my time for training was sporadic whereby I soon fell out of touch with Owens Shihan, at least until I saw his name in the foreword of a martial arts book. This was about ten years later and what surprised me the most was that he remembered me immediately after I contacted him (via email) and not only that, he actually phoned me directly which was impressive to say the least. I then started to train with Hanshi Owens and would teach some of his advanced classes for him whenever I had the chance. The quality of his karate, his students and his knowledge kept me coming back for years. To this day, I continue to train with Hanshi Owens any chance I get.

In my discussions with Hanshi Owens, now 74 years old and still going strong, I discovered that he was on the Board of several sizable international karate organizations, which I found intriguing seeing my personal opinion of these myriad of organizations was not favorable. I decided to sit down with Hanshi and interview him about the business side of these Martial Arts Associations and their structure, purpose and relevancy. I thought this article would be an excellent follow up to my Consolidation series published by MA Success Blog in late 2020.

Legitimate Beginnings

Hanshi Owens grew up in East Vancouver (Canada), which was and still is the rougher part of town. It was also a very diverse community including Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, East Indian and a number of other ethnic communities. Because of this, some of Hanshi's closest childhood friends were Chinese and Japanese, which when relating to the martial arts in 1965 meant Kung-Fu and Judo. After trying both martial arts for a number of months, another one of Hanshi Owen's Japanese friends introduced him to karate and it was soon apparent this was where he belonged.

After training at a couple of different Dojo's, Hanshi Owens met someone who became his lifelong sensei, namely Yamashiro Hiroo who was a local JKA instructor. It was while training with this local JKA Dojo that Hanshi Owens decided to join the Vancouver Police Department where he eventually founded the VPD Karate Club, one of the first of its kind in Canada.

It was through both his founding of the VPD Police Dojo together with his commitment to Yamashiro sensei that afforded Hanshi Owens the opportunity to train with a myriad of well-known legends of traditional Shotokan karate. It was because Hanshi Owens trained under Shotokan greats like Masatoshi Nakayama, Jun Sugano, Masao Kagawa and Masayuki Shimoda for so many years that he was eventually approached to join one of the major factions of the JKA that resulted after the passing of Nakayama Soke (who was head of the world wide JKA). It was through Hanshi Owen's relationship with Asai Tetsuhiko, the former technical director of the JKA, where he obtained most of his ranks over the many decades of dedication to Shotokan Karate.



Asai 9th Degree Black Belt - World Famous Karate Instructor

Being one of the first Police-based Karate Dojo's in Canada, there was a lot of interest from other Karate Dojo's requesting the VPD Dojo to host senior instructors from Japan, the USA and other international associations. Hanshi Owens has always maintained an open-door policy and welcomed many senior Shotokan personalities into his Police Dojo, which did nothing but enhance the reputations of both the VPD Dojo as well as Hanshi Owens himself.

One of Hanshi Owens' favorite VPD dojo memory was of when he hosted Shimoda Sensei who was the head of the Osaka Police Dojo (one of the largest in Japan) and who presented Hanshi with a new personalized black belt (kuro-obi) as well as recognition of Hanshi's rank and position within the Shotokan community.



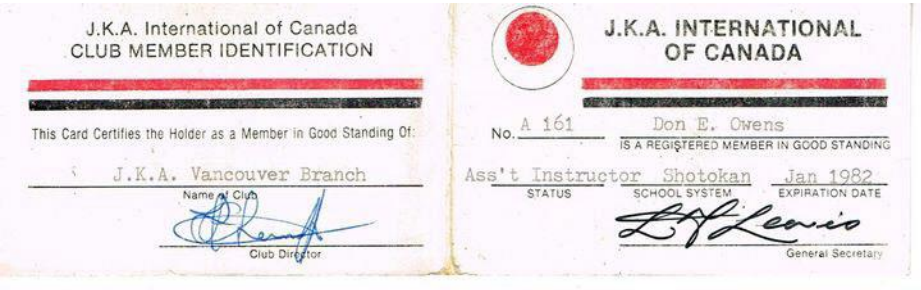
Hanshi Owens with his Osaka Police Kuro-Obi

Organizational Karate

Due to the many karate associations that were created in the 1980 's and 1990 's, a number of former JKA students started to reach out to Hanshi Owens in order to get him onto their Board of Directors due to his legitimate background in traditional Shotokan karate. It was because of these connections that I decided to interview Hanshi Owens as I was interested in how these various martial arts organizations actually worked.

I have written extensively on how I felt that most independent martial arts schools would eventually consolidate, whether through licensing of a brand or via outright franchising of their operation. The recent purchase of the Premier Martial Arts franchise by a massive private equity fund basically corroborated my analysis. For this reason, I also wanted to get a perspective on the third form of consolidation which is to associate your school with a national or international martial arts association. Considering the number of associations that have approached Hanshi Owens over the years, I thought he would be the ideal person to discuss the relevancy of today's martial art associations.

As mentioned, due to the many years Hanshi Owns had dedicated to promoting Shotokan karate, he was approached by several national and international martial arts organizations. Hanshi Owens' primary reason for associating with the JKA was that his instructor Yamashiro sensei had also been part of the JKA and while his involvement in the organizational aspect of the JKA was limited, it did afford him the opportunity to train with some high-quality Shotokan instructors and in turn garner rank over the years.


J.K.A. International of Canada
CLUB MEMBER IDENTIFICATION
This Card Certifies the Holder as a Member in Good Standing Of:
J.K.A. Vancouver Branch
Name of Club
Club Director
J.K.A. INTERNATIONAL OF CANADA
No. A 161
Don E. Owens
IS A REGISTERED MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING
Ass't Instructor
STATUS
Shotokan
SCHOOL SYSTEM
Jan 1982
EXPIRATION DATE
General Secretary

Hanshi Owens then became part of NASKA (North American Shotokan Association – now known as JKA NY) which was a JKA affiliate based in New York under Masataka Mori. It was also at this time Hanshi Owens became part of Karate BC/Karate Canada which gave him his first insights into a professional association. It was through these organizations that Hanshi obtained his 5th degree (Godan) as well as his national coaching certificate which was a requirement of Karate Canada.

Due to the passing of Masatoshi Nakayama, the political infighting amongst the JKA membership resulted in a number of Shotokan associations being formed. After some time of reflection and as it was Hanshi Owens' intention to steer clear of politics, he agreed to join the All-Shotokan Karate Association (ASKA). Hanshi envisioned a more inclusive organization for disenfranchised Shotokan practitioners.

It was at this same time that a European counterpart to ASKA was being formed who in turn invited Hanshi Owens to join their fledgling organization. This European based association of long time Shotokan practitioners became known as the World JKA Association and eventually encompassed over a dozen countries. Coincidentally the VP of the new WJKA was also a student of Jun Sugano and the main reason Hanshi Owens accepted their invitation.



World JKA Association Affiliated Countries

As both organizations started to grow, they slowly brought together some long time Shotokan practitioners which in turn brought some status and legitimacy to these like-minded martial artists. Both organizations grew steadily over the next twenty or so years and while they started to formally organize seminars, tournaments and gradings, there was still a gap of recognition to those long-time practitioners who had already attained a high rank but now had nowhere to go for further advancements. What resulted was the ISKS, the International Shotokan-Ryu Karate-Do Shihankai.

Due to the sizable level of politics involved in traditional karate, there were many high-ranking karate masters over the years who have moved away from some of the larger organizations primarily to start their own associations. Unfortunately, as mentioned without a formal affiliation with the main associations, these instructors had nowhere to go to obtain additional rank. This was the primary reason for the establishment of the International Shotokan-Ryu Karate-Do Shihankai (ISKS), which was the coming together of several senior ranking Shotokan karate instructors for the sole purpose of “confirming” rank.

This prestigious group of individuals would review an applicant’s rank, history and knowledge through a very intense and detailed process. Once the panel of Shihankai (association of masters) reviewed and approved the legitimacy of the applicant, they would then recognize the applicants higher rank and in some cases even bestow “shogo” titles (i.e.: Renshi, Kyoshi, Hanshi) where appropriate. While the ISKS cannot be considered a true business entity nevertheless (and surprisingly) these types of recognition associations continue to have some relevancy as there still appears to be a sizable demand for rank recognition amongst the younger generation of career-minded martial artists.

Business Analysis

I have personally been a member of one karate association or another over the past 45+ years and most have not impressed me to any great degree. While I believe the intentions of the founders of these multitude of associations to be noble and even altruistic, unfortunately the value they provide to their members and their overall relevancy is questionable. When researching about Martial Arts Associations, I ascertained that there are basically three levels of Martial Arts Associations (not including Licensing and Franchising):

The first is the more recently established National Governing Bodies, similar to KarateCanada and USA-NKF, both of which mainly oversee the Olympic type of qualifications for their respective countries. They focus on competitive regulations, coaching requirements and will usually have a relationship with the Government Sports authorities in some way.

The second level is the well-established international associations like the JKA (Japan Karate Association), the ITF/WTF (International/World Taekwondo Associations) or the IJF (International Judo Federation), who are well funded, entrenched and continue to maintain considerable weight in the industry as well as how they manage their memberships.

The final level is the where most martial artists end up. Due to politics and ever-changing loyalties, a number of long-time martial artists are not affiliated with any Martial Arts Associations. In this space, there are a sizable number of national and international organizations whose primary raison d'être is to simply to grant or recognize rank. Some organize seminars and tournaments, but not much else.

While most of the founders or organizers of these Martial Arts Associations had noble intentions, unfortunately due to the unregulated nature of the industry, a number of these associations have both individuals and schools approach them regularly, basically shopping for the best deal (which usually means the highest rank or title they can get). Many of these applicants try to obtain higher rank but without proper credentials.

Don Owens: “I agreed to join some of the associations mainly because I respected both the karate and personality of the person who asked me to join. I soon became the Director of Qualifications for these associations and primarily because of my police experience, I was asked to conduct extensive background checks on all new applicants. I am still surprised that there still is a large number of people trying to obtain high ranking certification without proper credentials.”

While there does seem to be a sizable number of disenfranchised martial artists out there trying to get either higher rank or recognition of existing rank, there are also much interest in just being a part of a large “like-minded” community of, for example, Shotokan enthusiasts.

While a lot these 3rd level type of Association Boards only gets together on an irregular interval, Hanshi Owens has implemented some business discipline whereby any Association he is part of has regular Boards Meetings at least quarterly or even more often if there are extraordinary issues to be dealt with. Hanshi Owens is one of many forward-looking association members that are making an effort to professionalize the structure, operations and transparency of any association they are connected with.

Most Board sessions are run quite professionally in that each Board member would be contacted prior to the scheduled meeting date in order to ensure all necessary business matters were being previewed and voted on. Agenda items for most martial arts associations are similar to regular businesses and would include items such as financial matters, upcoming events, business analysis, leadership issues and would also include matters exclusive to martial arts like the arranging of seminars, gradings as well as discussing new membership applicants.

Most Martial Arts Associations Board Members do try to conduct all Board Meetings in a business-like manner and while a good many Board Members has some business experience, sometimes the martial art's hierarchical philosophy can stymie necessary criticism or proper reflection on certain topics.

Don Owens: "Associations like the WJKA, ASKA and similar organizations are not really good examples of a business model, but when considering the international business, they do, it must be said that for all intends and purpose they are a business, but they are definitely not run like a business."

Association Benefits

Even though the number of these martial arts organizations seems to grow every year, fortunately there appears to be some consistency in how Ranks or Titles are bestowed, especially with respect to the age of the applicant. Most association criteria usually follow those established by the Japan Karate Association (JKA) decades ago, although the criteria for Rank itself can be sizably different from one association to another.

The very respected (and well established) Associations also benefit those higher-ranking instructors who are the head of their organization or school(s) and who do not feel comfortable promoting themselves to higher ranks. These senior practitioners feel it is better to qualify for higher ranks by adhering to an Association's requirements and do so primarily for business purposes as most of these independent instructors have students who are also seeking a career path in the martial arts.

Of course, with children starting the martial arts younger and younger these days, you do occasionally see the 25-year-old Yondan (4th Degree) whereas in the past this rank would not be obtained until someone was well into their 30 's. One of the issues confronting all these established Martial Arts Associations Boards is that the members of these Boards are all quite senior (i.e.: they are old!!). This means there needs to another generational shift in order to keep these associations relevant. The Board members must start bringing in a new generation of instructors in order to learn what will be required of them in the future when it is time for these modern instructors to take over.

Hanshi Owens' primary reason for accepting rank, especially higher rank and title, was to give back to the art form that was a major factor in his life. It was also to garner legitimacy so when he graded his students, it meant something. This way, Hanshi Owens feels he can be assured that there is another generation of Shotokan instructors with the proper philosophy, technical expertise and business knowledge to carry on the traditions of the founders of Shotokan Karate.

Conclusions

I found it difficult to research these types of Martial Arts Associations and trying to get people to discuss the inners workings of their associations was almost non-existent. My passion is to see the Martial Arts Industry professionalize itself to where it the industry is recognized as a well-regarded career option for those who see a future for themselves in "this line of work". No different than deciding to work for a corporation or even the local factory, but with far more personal satisfaction potential.

Nevertheless, I still feel there is a question as to whether Martial Arts Associations should remain basically a political organization or try to restructure more along business lines. The research I was able to do reflected a number of associations with solid mission statements and a true purpose of trying to provide value to their members in some form or another. I struggle with trying to justify the existence of Martial Arts Associations other than to bestow rank on unsuspecting and naïve martial artists trying to obtain legitimate rank. Unfortunately, trying to define what a legitimate rank in the martial arts these days is a moving target at best.

The path taken by Hanshi Owens is one way to establish legitimacy but no more than any other lifetime martial artists who have stayed true to their style, tradition and principles. Legitimacy, in my opinion, is when I teach one of my students Shotokan karate, it is of such a standard that they can train at any Shotokan Dojo in the world and be welcomed due to the quality of their karate. If a school or an association can provide this to their students and/or members, then the legitimacy is there. Just because your sensei and his sensei and his sensei trained with some of the pioneers in (for example) Shotokan karate, doesn't make it the only path to legitimacy.

Initially my impressions of Martial Arts Associations, is that they lacked transparency, value, relevancy, were too mired in tradition and included too much adherence to hierarchy. I also felt that while they did try to provide training and instructor support, there was little or no resources offered to those members who were trying to make their school a full-time business. After a lot of thought, analysis and talking with people like Hanshi Owens, maybe this is for the best. After all there are some excellent, no style organizations like MAIA or Kovar, who have designed very successful systems that they are now disseminating across the industry …. with substantial success. Organizations like MAIA are only concerned in how best for you to bring your business into the 21st century using proven and well-defined business principles and processes. They leave the politics, style definition, grading and traditions to the school itself and whatever Martial Arts Association they may be part of.

This combination could be a truly successful and inclusive relationship and probably the best way forward for the industry. In other words, the Martial Arts Associations would be the "Gatekeepers of Tradition", while organizations like MAIA, Kovar and even my own MAPS Advisors Group will focus on being the "Purveyors of Careers".



Martial Arts Program Directors

BLACK BELTS OF THE FRONT OFFICE

Focus on “Frictionless” Customer Service

What intrigue me the most of professional organizations like MAIA, Satori System, Premier Martial Arts, PerfectMind amongst others, was their focus on front office personnel and processes. Their emphasis on ensuring a seamless process in the solicitation and on-boarding of all new students is what is making or breaking the on-going success of martial arts schools across North America, especially during these COVID uncertain times.

I have attended a couple of Program Director/Front Office webinars put on by some of the aforementioned organizations and it was obvious with the level of dedication these groups have shown for this part of the business. In addition, the most successful schools were those where the Instructors and Front Office staff had a very integrated relationship, which benefited the students tremendously.

To provide for a broader perspective on this increasingly important staffing requirement, we reached out to the Century Martial Arts School Owners network in order to gather some thoughts and comments from those in the know.



We have interspersed their comments throughout this article primarily to reinforce the fact that the martial arts business is maturing and the Program Director position is being recognized as an integral part of these innovative and forward-looking Martial Arts schools.

An Evolving Front Office

Good Instructors are important and step one in the development of your school, but for the development of your business, step two is the hiring of your Program or Admissions Director. Most will be experienced sales people as well as knowledgeable administrators. It is this sales component that is all important in ensuring the success of a martial arts school, no matter how talented your martial arts instructor is. In other words, without students, a great instructor is a wasted talent.

A Program Director must be comfortable in making Cold Calls, Warm Calls, Follow-Up calls as well as simple Courtesy Calls. Program Director/Admission Director is both an administrator and a salesperson all rolled up into one!

> ***School Owners:***
>
> ***“During the day our PD answers calls, books appointments and answers questions.”***
>
> ***“The PD is the point of contact from the time the prospect comes to their first class until they sign up.”***
>
> ***“Our PD keeps the studio tidy between weekly professional cleanings and says Hi to anyone new who walks in.”***
>
> ***“The PD also makes sure that uniforms are in order and that all the equipment is in its place after class.”***

When researching the various Program Director job descriptions, I was amazed at the level of responsibilities assigned to the position. It was obvious that the position was not only essential to the success of the business but the student's overall development as well (See Table 1). In a one-person operation, most of the front office tasks must be handled before or after teaching classes. When your active student count is small these chores are manageable but once you get to where you are teaching more than 75 students, then you'll find that there aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish all of your daily tasks by yourself!

SOHO is an acronym for a small office or home office operation and a single person martial arts school is a perfect example of a SOHO. Quality Program Directors are able to professionalize all processes whereby they can transition a business from a SOHO to a SME (Small or Medium Enterprises). Unfortunately, it is well known that the demise of most SOHO businesses is the lack of professionalism which includes knowing when to delegate …. or better said, you must know when to start hiring talent!

In my non martial arts career, even at the Management level, I was responsible for an immense amount of administration, which makes me a little bias towards these unsung Front Office Black Belts. While in most industries, the administration side of the business is well thought of and even seen as a cornerstone of their success, unfortunately, in the martial arts world, this part of the school's business was initially thought of as a necessary 'evil' that simply needed to be done after teaching classes. It wasn't thought of as important as it does today, and this is due to the complexity that is modern business.

Having operated several schools over the past few decades (70 's, 80 's & 2000 's), I have seen how dramatically the Front Office or School Administrative requirements have evolved over this time. With my first school, which was run out of a church hall, we used a large briefcase with all the school and students' details maintained within it. We would simply ensure that everyone's student card was stamped with both attendance and Dues Payment date, usually on the same card … and little else.

I have watched how the Front Office has evolved from a table in the corner of the Dojo (which usually was a rented hall or gym) to a full time and separate office/room that is now considered as important as the Dojo/Training Hall itself. The position has evolved from where all the office or administration tasks were an afterthought completed late at night, after class, to a full-time semiprofessional management position.

A Management Professional

Initially when a school grew to a size that basically demanded a front office person, this usually fell to the instructor's wife, mother or significant other to manage, but not anymore. Office Management, Sales and Marketing experience matter now more than ever. In today's Sales and Marketing oriented business models, the careful and selective use of social media is slowly becoming a fulltime position in itself. Together with maintaining accurate and comprehensive details on each student, today's Program Director must also be a "tech expert" in order to properly manage a modern Martial Arts business.

> ***School Owners:***
>
> ***"Most important was ability to learn to use the software which is used to keep track of the students. "***
>
> ***"Our PD had previously started and operated an IT consulting business."***

While the Martial Arts Instructor is responsible for all motivational speeches, it is the Program Director that conducts in-depth conversations with the student (and Parents) that, over the years, also positively influences their development as a person. The saying "It takes a village to raise a child" appears to be more relevant in today's hectic paced society. This has resulted in more families wanting to incorporate the Martial Arts school as part of their child's "village". This sizable responsibility can only be fully achieved through the combined effort of the school's instructors, the Program Director, the Parents and especially the student.

> ***School Owners:***
>
> ***"They are the real anchor of a studio and game changing so instructor can instruct."***
>
> ***"For us, this is our PD's main job!"***
>
> ***"Our Program Director checks in with parents each day and keeps an eye on how each student is doing in school."***
>
> ***"The PD lets the instructors know when a student is being bullied at school and gives Mom's a few confidence builders to work on."***
>
> ***"Our PD cheers on students who are struggling and goes up to them after class to tell them how much better they did today as well as pumping out information about tournaments and events and gets everyone excited to attend."***

Of course, the sales aspect of the Front Office position cannot be emphasized enough. We all agree that the ultimate salesperson for your school is the Instructor or Instructors as this is the Product you are selling. Nevertheless, as with any business just having a great product (or service) is only half the battle to success. You must market your product and the best way to do so is to get the word out there as to how great your product is. This is the strength of a qualified Program Director.

Important Partner of your success

Unless you are going to out-source your entire front office, any successful martial arts business almost necessitates the hiring of a Program Director type position. In fact, even if you do automate most of your administrative processes, you still need a strong front office person if you wish to create a true community minded business.

In other words, when a new prospect enters your premises, does the atmosphere you have created provide for a welcoming environment? A place where people can feel included and comfortable. With most full time Instructors having to focus on the class being taught, there is little time to spend with parents and/or prospective students. This again is where the Program Director shines.

Program Directors should also be knowledgeable about the Martial Art being taught as they may have to provide coverage (back-up) of any class where the normal instructor is suddenly unavailable. The level of knowledge need not be at a Black Belt level (although preferable) but should be at least at a level where they could determine which senior student could teach the class in question to ensure consistency in the student training program.

> ***School Owners:***
>
> ***"A black belt who had been training several years prior to becoming PD."***
>
> ***"Our Program Director has no training until they worked here allowing them to learn our styles and knowledge unbiasedly."***
>
> ***"Our PD started as a white belt when hired. We asked our PD to train and are paying for that instruction because we felt that a little bit of knowledge of our training was important."***
>
> ***"Our PD was previously an instructor on the floor (3rd Dan)."***
>
> ***"Our Program Director is 2nd degree black belt in an integrated style of martial arts, training for going on 11 years."***

In addition, modern curriculums must be reviewed and updated regularly. The multi-talented Program Director can provide a substantial amount of useful input based on regular conversations with the students and parents. Program Directors know what is popular within the industry and where the trends are heading.

There are occasions where a student or parent can take up a considerable amount of "non-class communications" which could completely disrupt an instructor's class. These inter-actions are the responsibility of the Program Director, relieving the instructors of these administrative type issues (e.g.: monthly payment clarifications) and the stress related thereto.

> ***School Owners:***
>
> ***"Our PD makes sure that all students are taken care of and new trials are given the best experience possible."***
>
> ***"Upgrades are made with the PD meeting with parents. The Program Director is the parent liaison for most activities."***

"Our Program Directors are the real anchor of our studios and game changing so instructor can instruct."

"Our Program Director checks on students regularly, and engages with parents."

"The PD is very involved with parent and student communications."

"The PD is primarily responsible for the school, staff and parent relations."

One of the most important roles a Program Director has responsibility for (and one of the least appreciated) is that of an Arbitrator. When a student or more likely a parent has an issue with something that happened in class, emotions on both sides of the issue, namely the student/parent on one side and instructor(s) on the other, can sometimes get out of hand.

Having a calm, experienced professional arbitrating the situation is a skill set of the Program Director which will ensures that all parties get proper representation and hopefully a satisfactory resolution. The Program Director will make certain that all issues are aired and resolved in an unbiased process. The Program Director can show the proper empathy required, ensuring that both the safety of the student and the health of the business are taken into consideration when resolving the complaint.

So how best to start your process of hiring a qualified Program Director? Whether you decide to hire internally from your existing membership or externally after a proper evaluation process, one of the best places to determine what you need in your front office is to attend the MAIA Martial Arts SuperShow in Las Vegas. Even if you have already hired a Program Director, bring them to the Martial Arts SuperShow as well seeing that there are so many opportunities for a Front Office staff member to learn new Sales and Marketing strategies from experienced and knowledgeable school owners and business professionals.

The administrative side of any successful business can be glamourless at times, nevertheless it is what makes or breaks a business these days, especially when considering how dramatic the business climate has been these past couple of years. With the advent of online classes and remote learning, the Program Director can be invaluable in trying to maintain a cohesive community atmosphere while satisfying both governmental and societal restrictions. Do not take for granted these modern Front Office Black Belts. Spend some time in your evaluation of the people you put into this responsible position, you'll be glad you did, both for your personal development as well as for the success of the business.

Table 1 *List of Program Director Responsibilities*	
To always keep the Student Leads funnel full.	This includes ensuring all advertisements and school promotions are up to date and properly communicated. This also includes proper tracking and follow up of all potential trials, website information requests as well as any promotional results. Documentation of each lead in the funnel is essential. In most cases, the Program Director has Sales goals which must be met on a monthly basis.
To sign up new Students via professional sales techniques	There should be a documented process in which to properly sign-up prospects and it is expected that the Program Director will be the specialist in ensuring all new leads are fully signed up to one of the school's programs.
Regular personal contact with Students and Parents.	Ensure the Customer Experience for both Parents and Students exceed their expectations and remains consistent. This includes those casual conversations with Parents in the observation room.
Sales & Marketing including maintaining all social media sites (i.e.: updating daily)	In addition to the constant attention required for the myriad of social media sites, which should be updated daily (or weekly at the very least), the Program Director should be the face of the school/business when conversing or meeting with local businesses or chamber of commerce type associations.
Book appointments including trials, events and private lessons.	One of the more obvious responsibilities of the Program Director is the booking of all appointments, events, upgrade meetings, private lessons and in turn contacts all participants to ensure attendance.
Organize all events including birthday parties, summer camps, seminars and gradings.	Most martial arts schools now have several types of non-martial art related events. This includes Parent Night Out, Birthday Parties and Summer Camps to name a few. It is the responsibility of the Program Director to ensure each of these events are organized and fully staffed.
Contacting all Students, Parents, Leads, Trials, Appointments via Phone, Email or Text to discuss all areas of the student relationship process.	From making the new trial members feel comfortable to converting them to full time students as well as assisting them throughout their journey into Martial Arts, the Program Director is fully engaged in the student's well-being. Together with the School's Senior Instructor(s), the Program Director will also be fully involved in all Upgrade Program as well as most Students Martial Arts Career Paths.
Maintaining and updating all Management Software applications including Student Management applications as well as other administration applications such as MS Office.	Most new Student Management Software applications provide more than simply name and address details. This includes capturing Student Leads and basically the entire lifecycle of all your school's students. All new office applications can now easily integrate into your solicitation efforts, including all social media sites so the Program Director should be very conversant in its use.

	In addition, the Program Director should be able to produce proper reporting of relevant statistics on the business as well as all pertinent details on the students.
Continual Personal Martial Arts Training to ensure full knowledge of Curriculum.	In some cases, the Program Director is responsible for the first trial class for new prospects so advance knowledge of the Martial Art being taught is compulsory for most Program Directors. Program Directors should also be articulate when talking to Students and especially when on the Mat teaching a class. They should be able to properly conduct end of class "Mat Chats" in addition to individual motivational discussions.
Assist with Student Martial Arts "Career Plan" within your School's Programs.	This includes arranging various Instructor's sessions where each Student is evaluated for upgrades or rank. The Program Director will also arrange all meetings with Students and is present when the instructor discusses the students "next steps", whether it be an upgrade or attending the next grading.
Facilities and Equipment Management	Ensuring all Daily Facility Tasks are completed including all maintenance requirements on the school's facilities, from internal building repairs to ensuring the cleanliness and safety of the parking lot. A regular review of all of the school's equipment is another responsibility as is most safety concerns of the business. Considering the recent COVID issues, both cleanliness and sanitary requirements are essential to the success of today's schools which again falls under the auspices of the Program Director.



Sport Karate in the Olympics

THE BUSINESS OF MARTIAL ARTS IN THE OLYMPICS



blackbeltmag.com

Criticism of Martial Arts in the Olympics:

I recently read a couple of Black Belt Magazine articles on the quality of the Martial Arts in the Olympics. We are talking primarily about the Judo, Tae Kwon Do and the recently admitted (but now uninvited) Traditional Karate events. I was actually surprised to read such negative criticism from both Traditional martial artists as well as Sport Karate enthusiasts.

I was able to watch some of the three martial arts represented, and while I can't say I was a fan of what I saw, I didn't think it was as bad as some of the criticism I read. Unfortunately, a lot of the criticism felt that the recent 2021 Tokyo Olympics shone quite a negative light on the traditional martial arts that were represented.

In trying to determine exactly what the issue was I felt it basically came down to "watchability". Most of the criticism both from the general audience as well as those practicing the various martial arts was that it wasn't "entertaining" enough, at least for something as important as the Olympics. As I normally write about the business side of the martial arts industry, I understood that the Olympics is just that - a business (at least they are these days). For this reason, any sport participating in today's Olympics is expected to bring in viewership which in turn brings in advertisers.

Incidentally, I also happened to read an article by Jackson Rudolph on how beneficial it would be (to your business) by adding Sport Karate to your curriculum. The article was well written, especially when articulating how Sport Karate, or parts thereof, can keep your students interested in training, thus helping your retention numbers. Mr. Rudolph, provided several examples of how the popularity of Sport Karate is growing almost exponentially with a number of Sport Karate Champions going on to have lucrative careers in the movies and TV series.

I have followed Mr. Rudolph's career over the past few years and I have to admire someone who while extremely successful at Sport Karate still respects the traditional styles and is a strong advocate of martial artists starting with a traditional foundation. Even in his article on adding Sport Karate to your traditional curriculum, he continues to stress the necessity of traditional styles. He just feels that with the increasing popularity of Sport Karate, it would be an ideal consideration for retention and recruitment purposes.

Is it time to give Sport Karate in the Olympics a chance?

This made me think, with the last years Sport Karate's Diamond National bringing in over six million viewers, it is time to give Sport Karate in the Olympics a chance? To assist me in my analysis of such a concept, I reached out to Jackson Rudolph who was generous enough to provide his input into such a controversial question. Mr. Rudolph is a World Champion Sport Karate competitor, a graduate from Stanford University and is presently enrolled in Uniform Services University (Military University) where he studying for his medical degree. In addition, Mr. Rudolph has a very popular Podcast series which usually focuses on Sport Karate so I feel Mr. Rudolph can be considered an outstanding historian of the genre.



Century Martial Arts

Olympics now a Business first and foremost

We can say what we want about the tradition and legacy of the Olympics, but since (at the very least) the 2000 Olympics, the primary purpose of this noble event is to make money. In other words, the Olympics of today is first and foremost a business, which means they are looking to make a profit, which in turn means getting as many "eye-balls" on each event as possible. If the Olympics cannot make a profit, it can create a sizable financial burden on the Host city as well as the country itself. In fact, the IOC required a guarantee in writing from the Host city and its Taxpayers that they are fully responsible for all cost overruns!

This viewership requirement is so important these days that the Corporate and Broadcasting sponsors of the Olympics now have a tremendous say on which events should be scheduled for prime time and which events don't get any coverage. Unfortunately, the one factor connecting all three martial arts, namely Judo, Tae Kwon Do, or Karate is that unless you are a participant of these martial arts, then you really didn't know what you are watching and more importantly the events were not audience friendly. This lack of understanding of what the viewer is watching, together with the fact that the martial arts events were far too technical whereby the 'excitement' factor was minimal.

JR: I also think that the public's disappointment with what they saw was due to a lack of education. This is one of the important things which is the way it is presented to an audience. It has to be presented appropriately.

If your typical viewer watches the event and doesn't know what they are looking at, they therefore can't be impressed by it or inspired by it, then you don't get any traction by it. Clearly these sports are not getting enough traction with the Olympics to get put on TV, to get the broadcasting so the average American viewer, for example, actually sees it.

The more people that watch, the more people are going to say, "Hey, I want my kid to try that because my kid could be an Olympian one day". Sport Karate is a proven spectator sport, so if you get it into the Olympics, then the Olympics benefits because it gets a ready-made spectator sport that people are going to tune in for.

Why Should Sport Karate be given a chance?

With the recent Sport Karate events having garnered a sizable number of viewers over the various social media and broadcasting platforms, we have to take a serious look at how to best promote the Martial Arts, especially in viewer rich environments like the Olympics.

JR: If you put martial arts on display at the Olympics, regardless of what exposure you get for any specific martial arts in the Olympics, that is going to have a trickle-down effect that will benefit all martial arts schools.

The problem is the rule sets and the administrative issues, and all of that which creates a sport that really doesn't look like the Martial Arts of old. It's essential to keep Traditional Karate in the Olympics, especially if you are going to bring in Sport Karate, and seeing that Sport Karate has Traditional divisions within it so you can very easily make that connection.

You need that traditional foundation in order for the audience to continue to understand what's going on for those dynamic events or whatever the case may be.

To bring things back to this whole idea of sports karate in the Olympics, will it work? If at the end of the day you make it happen, it will benefit everybody! Sport Karate is a spectator sport. It is made to be a spectacle.

Personally, I have competed in a number of “Open” tournaments as they were called then, where I saw a myriad of styles competing in both Forms (Kata) and Point Fighting. I won a number of the Traditional Kata divisions and was very proud in doing so, especially considering the caliber of competitors. The kicker was that for Grand Championship trophy, the winners of the Traditional Karate Kata division would have to go up against the Tae Kwon Do form winner as well as the Kung Fu style winner. A real test of your martial arts prowess in an extremely inclusive environment.

In my time, the night shows not only highlighted the Top Finals competition from the Tournament itself, but included were a number of demonstrations from various martial arts notables (e.g.: Cynthia Rothrock, George Chung, etc.). The combination of competition and showmanship made for an exciting night of martial arts, which the entire family could enjoy. This is what eventually evolved into the various Sport Karate competitions and leagues.

JR: One element of the U.S. Open's Night of Champions that most people don't know is that all of the prize money and points towards NASKA world championship titles for the weekend have already been decided at that point. The tournament runs the overall grand championships that determine the money and points during the day, so that the night show is exclusively an invitational event for the ISKA world championships.

With the money already decided, all the adult competitors you see on stage are going up there for bragging rights. The promoters structure it this way to guarantee that the top athletes are pitted against each other for television broadcasts and social media streams, which means that all the top competitors know before the event that there is going to be an epic division come Saturday night. We all train for it and compete in it for the love of the game and the glory of being crowned the ISKA champion.

The efforts of the promoters to put on not only a fair tournament, but an entertaining one, especially the night show, was primarily to ensure that everyone would come back the next year. It seemed that while the Sport Karate promoters were trying to make their tournaments entertaining, some Traditional tournaments were more concerned about following exacting rules and ensuring everyone was doing their forms or fighting “technically” correct.

This may be extremely interesting to those very proficient in the art form, unfortunately it made the event quite unwatchable. In my opinion, Traditional Karate competitors perform for the judges, Sport Karate competitors perform for the audience and the reason the vibrancy at Sport Karate tournaments is always so high.

Sport Karate Unity Issues

Before we broach the subject of whether Sport Karate deserves a chance to be in the Olympics, there are a number of hurdles they must overcome, with the leading one being unity. With most sports there is one universal governing body overseeing their entry into the Olympics, unfortunately even with Traditional Karate, it took decades of negotiations and compromise before the Olympics would give Traditional Karate an opportunity to partake.

There are similar issues within the Sport Karate community. Most Sport Karate organizations are primarily style based and while all Sport Karate tournaments are very open in who they allow to compete, these tournament promoters are not organized in any formal way, mainly for reasons of self-preservation. In other words, the Sport Karate promoters are wanting to ensure their event is profitable which means getting as many competitors as possible and not to lose those competitors to other tournaments.

JR: I think the number one problem with Sport Karate getting into the Olympics is unity. There are several major leagues that all think they have it the right way. In fact, in the U.S. there are dozens of these regional leagues. These regional leagues are a great thing for Sport Karate as it gives opportunity to those students that would never otherwise have a chance to compete at a tournament. What it doesn't do is provide a clear picture to the Olympic committee.

The promoters of these regional circuits are always going to want competitors to come to their events, so if they start saying "hey, the whole point of competing here is to get good and then go compete somewhere else", that's limiting the half-life of the competitors that are paying you right now. Any tournament promoter is going to want competitors coming back to their event for as long as possible.

You would have to develop a partnership between the Regional Leagues and the National Leagues where those promoters work together. I think that partnerships are important so that you can get these competitors who rise to the top of their particular Regional League and then you have them compete in your big world and national events like the Diamond Nationals, AKA Warrior Cup, U.S. Open or the Battle of Atlanta. If those events become a qualifier event for Olympics, then all of a sudden, those regional circuits can become events that maybe you also have to qualify for.

If these regional leagues can establish partnerships with other leagues around the country, they could be leveraged for Olympic qualifying purposes. In turn they could then partner with the huge National Tournaments, like the Diamond National, the U.S. Open or the AKA Warrior Cup which would allow them to qualify for the Olympics. It would be a herculean effort but one that would benefit all Karate.

Sport Karate Structural Issues

Sport Karate has some additional issues in consistency from tournament to tournament, whether it be for Forms or Point Fighting. There are still a lot of discrepancy on how to score Traditional or Extreme forms and whether to have them compete against each other. In Point Fighting, there has to be more clarity on what a point is and how to properly judge a match.

In fact, my biggest criticism of Sport Karate Point Fighting is the officiating, which I feel is somewhat lackadaisical in its format. You'll see the corner judges constantly moving and throwing out points without any real confirmation as the officials want to keep the action flowing. Unfortunately for the viewer, even someone who knows what to look for, it is very difficult to know what technique scored and how.

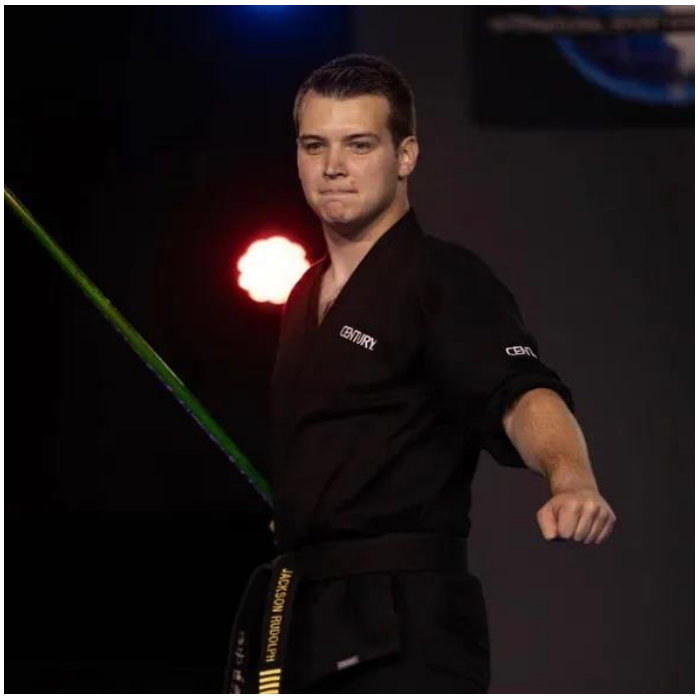
For these very correctable issues, there is a lot of work for the Sport Karate community to come together and develop the proper rules sets, detailed definitions of form requirements and most importantly fully certified Judges and Officials. Seeing that Sport Karate has both Traditional Divisions and Non-Traditional Divisions it should be easy to integrate itself into the Olympics. In addition, Point Fighting divisions can be considered more inclusive as the Sport Karate Point Fighters come from a myriad of styles and disciplines, including Karate, Tae Kwon Do and even Kung Fu.

JR: What does it take Sport Karate Point Fighting a successful Olympic sport or a TV sport in general, I think it takes three things:

#1 I think you have to have more clear rules. I want to see a kick be effective, not just hit the scoring area, but to be an effective technique in order for that kick to score points. So, which one is it? Some leagues are clearer about that, other leagues are less clear. I think you need a very clear rules set on what is a scoring technique and what is not.

#2 and in the same vein, you need to have certified officials. A lot of leagues including some of the best leagues in the world right now do not have truly certified officials. I think there should be a training system in which a judge watches a fight at full speed, in real time and are assessed on their performance.

The third, and maybe the most important from a broadcasting standpoint, both for the audience and for the rules set, which is that you have to have video replay. From a rule's perspective, it would allow judges to make better calls, because if you have video replay, it increases the quality of the judging and will significantly reduce missed calls. It's a way that makes it more spectator friendly.



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Next Steps for the Business of Martial Arts in the Olympics

I was on the Black Belt Magazine website where the most recent Diamond Nationals were being replayed. I watched a very professional attempt of coverage by a team of broadcasters and people in the know, like Jackson Rudolph. As mentioned above this Sport Karate event had almost 6 and a half million viewers over all forms of social and media platforms.

In watching both the Olympic coverage of the Martial Arts as well as the Sport Karate U.S. Open and Diamond Nationals what I did note was the lack of enthusiasm, especially in trying to describe what the viewer was watching. If you are an active participant in the martial art in question, you would have enjoyed watching, but again only to an extent. If more consideration was given to those non martial artists, then in all likelihood viewership would increase exponentially.

JR: I think it starts with skilled commentating. I feel that those who are commentating, those particular to or internet broadcasters of these events need to properly explain what's going on. In order for someone to enjoy a sport they have to know what's going on.

Often when I watch Karate, and I'm not saying this is as a criticism of Sport Karate commentators or Traditional WKF commentators, this is just a general conclusion I have come to …. like Traditional Kata for example, they need to describe what a cat stance is and what it is used for. I truly think that education is really important.

We must remember that the broadcast is the product! The winner or loser is not the product. That participation in the event, the judging…none of that is the product; the product is the actual broadcast that those people at home are going to watch.

That is what is going to provide the revenue to the Olympics, in the way of the more eyeballs you get, the more money you make from TV ratings. In the broadcast order, if you open the show with the Traditional divisions, that gives the commentators and the broadcasters an opportunity to tell that story…this is a front stance, this is the punching and kicking, these are the basic techniques.

In Point Fighting, if you don't provide Kata first, then a viewer is not going to know the difference between a roundhouse kick and side kick. Then when it comes to the actual broadcast, making sure the commentating is top notch so they properly explain what's going on, which will allow new viewers to understand the sport.

Platforms like Black Belt Magazine, which is all inclusive in their support for Martial Arts in the Olympics, has expanded their coverage of Sport Karate events as well as highlighting Traditional Events in order to get the word out there.

With the advent of on-line streaming services, more and more media platforms are dedicating themselves to Sport Karate and Karate in general. There needs to be an organized effort amongst these new Martial Arts focused platforms to ensure growth within the industry to where Olympic participation is a sure thing.

With Traditional Karate no longer being a part of the Olympics, some re-thinking is necessary on which components of competitive Karate should be represented in the Olympics going forward. For example, the Traditional Kata event at the Olympics was panned primarily due to the audience not knowing what they were watching, so why not replace it with Team Kata and Bunkai. Here the viewer would not only see some dynamic symmetry, but a visual explanation of the routine they just saw. A more audience friendly experience.

JR: If you having viewership issues in the Olympics with the Traditional Karate events, then I think introducing something like Team Kata and Bunkai would be an excellent way to increase viewership. It would be great to have it in the Olympics, but I don't think you can ever truly escape the solo Traditional Kata, because that's the foundation on everything else build on top of it.

No one is advocating the replacing of Traditional Karate with Sport Karate, but into today's forward-looking society, we must be open to new ideas including more broad range and inclusive Olympic Karate Events.

Unity is a major issue and not only amongst styles of Martial Arts, but all the supporting organizations that have benefited from their participation in the martial arts over the past half century. Only through the combined efforts of all "Stakeholders" will Karate be invited back to the Olympics and unless the "watchability" of the events improve then that invitation may not be forthcoming anytime soon.

JR: At the end of the day, if there is any way to make it happen, then you've got to make it happen because it's going to benefit everybody involved. The only way you are going to make it happen is through the unity of the organizations working together to create that pyramid structure in which the top is the Olympics, and everybody is working together to build those competitors up to that point where they qualify, and you have to improve your coverage of it.

Final Conclusions

While I advocate a renewed perspective on giving Sport Karate a chance in the Olympics, I say this as a Traditionalist, but a Traditionalist only with regards to the martial arts I practice (i.e.: Shotokan Karate and Atarashii Naginata). My first exposure to the Karate tournament scene was through Open or what is now known as Sport Karate competitions and in turn my reason for believing it's time to give Sport Karate a chance at the Olympics or similar international games (e.g.: Pan-Am Games) Jackson Rudolph mentions in my interview with him that he feels biases will be resolved once the generational change occurs in the ownership of Martial Arts schools and Associations, but considering the lack of unity over the past 100 years of organized Karate, can we wait that long?

JR: The answer is a generational shift in that over time it will get better. I think that right now, there are a lot of instructors who are just set in their ways. Say there is a fifty- or sixty-year-old martial arts school owner out there that has decided that they don't like Sport Karate and they're never going to teach it, well you not ever going to change their minds.

When I post articles on Sport Karate, I'm really not posting it for the fifty and sixty-year-old school owners that are set in their way and want to do it a specific way…. articles like this are targeted at your younger school owners who are just starting out, and any school owner just starting out wants to make money - that's the priority.
They may have started their school because they love martial arts and wants to share it with the world, but when you're starting a business, you don't have a choice. You have to find a way to bring in revenue so you can keep the business alive.



Century Martial Arts



Martial Arts Associations and social media

DO MARTIAL ARTS ASSOCIATIONS NEED TO LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY RELEVANT AND EXPAND?

Are Martial Arts Associations relevant anymore?

I wrote an article for Black Belt Magazine where I tried to determine the relevancy of today's Martial Arts Associations. By relevancy, I mean what value do these associations provide to their membership. The days of simply providing or acknowledging rank are far behind us with most association members (re: customers) demanding more for their involvement … and their disposal income.

While there are several levels of Martial Arts Associations, in this article we are referring primarily to those associations which for the most part have no governmental relationships, are founded, and run by high ranking, long time Martial Artists. These associations usually come about due to some dissatisfaction with the politics of a previous association and look to likeminded schools and individuals for membership purposes.

While ranking and setting grading standards will always be the focus for most martial arts associations, they are finding that in order to provide additional value to their members, more content and support is now required. Determining what type of content and support will be a daunting task and could require a major paradigm shift in how martial arts associations operate going forward.

When trying to determine how best to utilize social media for the purpose of keeping a Martial Arts Association viable, we first looked at how martial arts schools are presently leveraging online resources. Since the pandemic, martial arts schools have turned to a variety of tools like social media and customized websites to grow their business.

In my research, I watched MAIA Consultant Cris Rodriguez's webinars on how best to leverage social media for martial arts schools. I was both impressed and intrigued by her excellent (and very detailed) strategy on using Facebook and other similar social media platforms in order to garner more business for the martial arts school owner, regardless of the style being taught.

What really interested me the most was whether this martial arts school strategy could be used by Martial Arts Associations in order to broaden their appeal. Coincidently, while I was researching for this article, I was asked by the head of the WJKA Martial Arts Association to write a business blog on martial arts for their WJKA Member Newsletter. This then made me wonder if a Social Media strategy could be developed for Martial Arts Associations. Extensively leveraging social media is now a necessity for any business especially considering its overall influence on marketing trends.

For this reason, I reached out to both Cris Rodriguez and the Directors of the WJKA in order to get their perspectives. Cris was generous with her time and was able to provide an excellent overview on how Martial Arts Associations should leverage social media and their general online presence. My session with the WJKA Directors was just as enlightening, especially considering their struggles in modernizing their association's focus and marketing strategies.

Will leveraging social media provide value?

When examining social media strategies for associations as opposed to school owners, we see the main difference being the solicitation efforts of the associations which is more business focused. With associations, their main solicitation efforts are towards schools more so than individual memberships, as opposed to schools who are looking to sign up new students.

In our interview, Cris mentioned that while the main social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are used extensively, this is not true of You-Tube, especially where businesses are concerned. Whereas Facebook videos average anywhere from 30 seconds to 3 minutes, the average You-Tube video is just under 15 minutes, making it ideal for lectures or training videos, which is where associations can provide great value.

CR: Not only is it possible for Martial Arts Associations to use social media, I feel it is a necessity for them to focus on social media. There are so many different and positive aspects to it. And the main one is that it is free. Having Facebook accounts, TikTok accounts, Instagram accounts or a You Tube account does not cost you anything and in fact You-Tube is one of the platforms Associations do not properly leverage. You Tube is great for teachers, for coaches or even consultants.



Seeing that Martial Arts Associations deal primarily with schools more so than individual members, they must ensure that all marketing and solicitation is directed towards the proper audience. For potential new member schools to consider joining your association you need to use existing member testimonials where the prospect school sees the benefits of joining your association. Today, using social media is by far the best place to focus your marketing so associations must leverage the vast experience of their existing membership in order to place your association at the “top of mind” of your potential new member.

Content is where Associations can provide the best value to its membership. There should be a well-defined and documented effort to ensure proper content is posted. Of course, some posts simply do not attract much ‘engagement’ so it’s best to reach out to the membership to determine what today’s member wants to see or read.

WJKA: We try to use social media where we can and while we review social media sites daily, we don't post much as we don't know what our membership wants from us. So, while we struggle with content, we feel this is because of a lack of communication as we don't know what the membership wants us to post about. We also feel that some of our membership may be a bit intimidated by the breadth of senior karate-ka within the WJKA, so they are hesitant to submit materials to our association newsletter.



CR: There are just so many positives to using social media and the fact that it literally only costs your time, it makes it an absolute necessity…and this is true for any business… in order to stay relevant. One of my favorite quotes is from Albert Einstein, who said "don't try to become a person of success but try to become a person of value," and one of the biggest aspects of social media is content creation.

For associations to properly leverage social media, they need provide such engaging material that the membership reaches out for more. As 'value engagement' is the primary goal for associations, a cohesive online presence is essential.

WJKA: We feel using social media and a more interactive website may allow us inroads into the member school's student population. While the WJKA initially focused on having organizations as a member, in today's tech savvy society, we now feel we need to focus on the individual members as well, and we can do so by leveraging social media. There may be individuals who are interested in the WJKA even though their school may not.

CR: Being able to provide educational and entertaining content is very important. We use the term "edutainment" when we are teaching young children. There are a lot of different types of posts you can do. Whether it is motivational quotes, sharing stories or simple answering frequently asked questions, you can use social media to share experiences. You can do Facebook live, you can do webinars, podcasts or even interview school owners.

The reputations of martial arts associations have taken a hit over years due to the normal state of ego politics that is the martial arts industry. This requires the well-established associations to make themselves known to potential members. The best way for these respected organizations to promote themselves, to build their "Brand," is to provide quality knowledge and experience via the various online platforms.

Brand awareness is paramount to today's sophisticated Consumer. People must recognize your name, your logo, your business paradigm or whatever your association is using to identify itself by. Most associations need to carefully segment their prospective "customer" and then make themselves a consideration based on how the prospective member perceives your associations 's value message.

WJKA: This is the main problem we have here in Europe in that the WJKA affiliate schools/organizations do not wish to enroll their students nor provide us with their email address for newsletter and notification purposes. We at the WJKA must figure out how to overcome the school owner's biases and allow all their students to sign up to the WJKA so they also enjoy all the benefits the WJKA can offer.

CR: In regards to an Association trying to get new members, you can't get members if they are not aware of you. So, you've got to get "Awareness" and that's where we have our different marketing strategies. From the awareness, you're not the only association out there, so what are you going to do to make me consider your association versus other associations…and one of the best things to do is to have case studies, and testimonials of success stories of your current members. We've got to get you to become a member and we do that by showcasing the value.

How to overcome communications issues and increase influence?

Providing value through ranking, in-person seminars and tournaments are the obvious avenues, but as we have stressed throughout this article, an online presence will be the future for associations. As to what additional value could an association provide their membership, we have already listed a myriad of options, nevertheless an association should still regularly survey their membership, due to ever changing considerations of what constitutes value.

WJKA: We (as the WJKA) can provide our members with our knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, when we do share our knowledge and experience, we get almost no feedback from our members. So, we feel that the problem is that there are no real communications. We have almost no contact with the membership. It is hard to get the schools to change their way.

CR: Using social media will help associations increase their "Brand" awareness. It allows them to establish themselves as experts within their community. Posting on social media allows you to stay "Top in Mind" because people are constantly seeing you.

There is a Customer Journey that Cris Rodriguez emphasizes where “awareness” is the first step in that journey. This part of the customer journey is where martial arts associations need to emphasis their new prospect solicitations. Awareness to a martial arts association is the degree to which a potential member sees benefits in belonging to a community of likeminded enthusiasts.



This lack of awareness can even occur within an association’s existing membership. In order to retain commitment from an association’s member schools, a coordinated marketing effort would allow both the member schools as well as the association itself to solicit for new students and members respectively. This coordinated level of commitment on the part of the association to provide a foundational infrastructure (e.g.: Syllabus and Ranking criteria) as well as support for the member school’s business requirements will ensure the viability of an association for years to come.

WJKA: What we at the senior level of the WJKA realize is that we are not good managers. We may be quality instructors, (sensei), and extremely knowledgeable about the karate we teach, unfortunately as business managers, we are not so good. We feel associations like ours need to hire a professional Manager.”

With all this experience within the WJKA community, we need someone to catalogue this experience and use it to organize seminars, lectures, gradings and tournaments. Too many of us dedicated long time martial artists have great experiences, but most of us cannot write about it. We must be honest with ourselves so; we need someone to help us write up our experiences for the newsletter or even for lectures we could put on.

In fact, even trying to put out a regular newsletter can be both difficult and time consuming. Once you start falling behind, you can never get caught up, so we feel an experienced business Manager would be able to ensure everyone submits their article on time, etc. The position would follow up with each member school for information about their school and its events over the upcoming year. Just keeping on top of the various asks of the member schools is a full-time task. The position would have huge responsibilities managing all the business requirements of the association’s local and international affairs.

Summary and Next Steps.

In reviewing the relevancy of well-established martial arts associations, the consensus is that if value can be conveyed continually to its paying membership, then associations have a place in the ongoing dissemination of time-honored martial art traditions.

Ranking and syllabus development should remain the primary focus of martial art associations. Since social media has become such an integral part of our lives, it is imperative that martial arts associations leverage this new paradigm in order to expand this focus, to expand its relevance, to become more transparent to its members, and leverage this new philosophy in its ongoing marketing strategies.

As mentioned, associations will need to develop their brand by leveraging the knowledge, experience and reputation of their founders and leaders. While using social media will allow for associations to market this, unfortunately many well-established associations do not maintain a proper business infrastructure which has resulted in a lack of awareness of an association's potential. The hiring of a manager with extensive business experience (communications or social media) should be a priority consideration if these long-established associations wish to remain part of the tomorrow's martial arts industry.

Making the decision to implement a comprehensive social media strategy starts with an equality all-encompassing marketing plan. Here are five standard business steps that should be included as part of your association's new member solicitation marketing plan.

Step One: Determine your Business Goals

Before you put money and effort into your marketing plan, you must determine what you wish to accomplish. Some examples are

- Increase number of affiliates schools.
- Increase number of individual members.
- Establish association brand awareness.
- Expand to new markets.
- Generate new source of revenue.

Step Two: Develop KPI's (Key Performance Indicators)

Once you have decided your goals, you must now determine what constitutes success. This success can be both numerical (e.g., add 10 new schools) or simply to promote brand awareness. Whatever you define as success, be realistic in your goals. As a banker, I saw a lot of projections and forecasts which were unrealistic and had little chance of success.

For example: considering the economic climate, a realistic goal of signing up five new member schools for the year should be attainable. If one of your goals is revenue based, then determine the number you wish to achieve and then work backwards from the number of new schools and individual members you feel you can sign up. Track these goals carefully and adjust where necessary throughout the year. Ensure you document both your successes and those KPI's that need further review.

Step Three: Build your perfect Avatar

Most martial arts associations are style based, (e.g.: Shotokan, Taekwondo, BJJ) which means they are focused on a subset of the martial arts and their marketing strategy should reflect his segmentation. To ensure each marketing dollar is spent effectively, associations need to fully define who they are looking to attract as members. Developing this perfect potential member is called building a "Buyer Persona" or an 'Avatar.'

CR: I think it is important for associations to identify who is their ideal client. We have a full sentence that explains that this is our ideal client for our company. Does that mean that is the only client you are going to attract? No! but it does allow us to put together marketing campaigns that can attract that type of client.

Obviously for a martial arts association, they need to define not only the style of the school or individual but what value or solution these potential new members are looking for from your organization. This is where social media and other electronic platforms like email and SMS texting can generate a sizable amount of engagement from an associations' solicitations efforts.

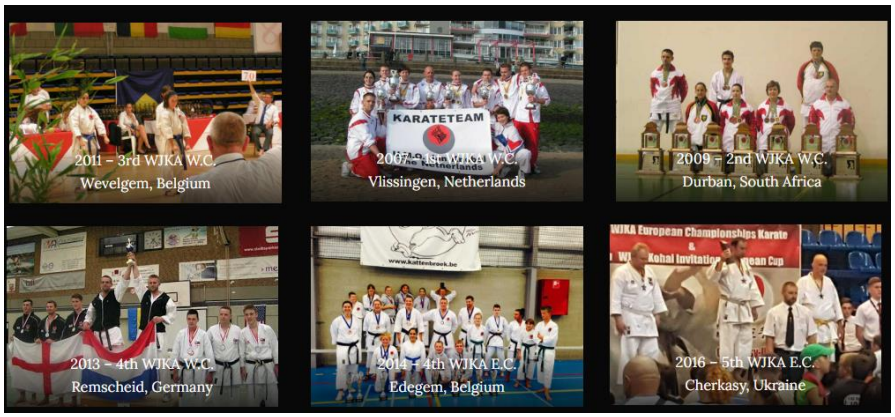
Step Four: Create a Budget

While most social media can be leveraged for free, to create the biggest impact or the highest potential return on your marketing effort you will need to spend a bit of money. Whether these funds are used for buying software or actual advertising costs, ensure you have budgeted some funds to allow your marketing efforts to have the best chance of success.

Step Five: Market your Uniqueness

The final step is to fully define what makes your association more desirable than another association. You must document your competitive advantage which articulates why a school or an individual would want to join your organization. This is what is formally called your 'unique value proposition' or what I define as your "differentiator." Develop your association's "mission statement" and articulate it in an easily understood sentence that describes your organization's services and benefits.

WJKA: Our solicitation issues revolve around how best to properly word our communications. This again is where a professional manager could be of great value. We are planning to distribute our latest newsletter as an introduction to WJKA to any potential individual member or organization. We are also planning to use social media to post portions of the various books that the WJKA has available, which hopefully will result in interest to buy the books or possibly joining the WJKA, if not already a member.



Our society is still redesigning itself post pandemic and regardless of how it turns out, we can guarantee that social media and having an on-line presence will be a major part of it. If you are a martial arts association looking to expand into new markets or simple trying to stay relevant to your existing membership, invest into social media. Put the time and effort needed to provide your expertise and knowledge to a whole new generation of martial artists. There is value in what you do, let everyone know about it using the best medium you can, which today is social media!



Sport Karate Business Benefits

Sport Karate Business Benefits

I met with Jackson Rudoph to discuss Sport Karate in the Olympics as I had read his Black Belt Magazine article on the benefits of bringing Sport Karate into your martial arts business. We were able to collaborate on an excellent article on the merits of having Sport Karate in the Olympics, which, in turn resulted in a secondary discussion on the tangible business benefits of leveraging Sport Karate.

As I try to focus my research on the business side of the Martial Arts industry, it was obvious that the benefits of having Sport Karate in the Olympics would be industry wide. In fact, any additional exposure to Karate in general, whether Traditional or Sport Karate would be advantageous for ***all*** Martial Artists.

I wanted to further explore Jackson's position that adding a Sport Karate element to your curriculum can also provide sizable financial benefits to your business. As our discussions on Sport Karate in the Olympics spilled over to how this additional exposure could benefit the martial arts industry, I have decided to include a number of Jackson's personal thoughts and comments as I feel he is fast becoming one of the leading spokesmen for Sport Karate.



Highlighted here are the top 4 benefits your martial arts business can obtain if you do decide to include some facet of Sport Karate into your curriculum.

Retention of Existing Student Base

Here is where Sport Karate can improve the lifetime value of your students. Today's students can get easily bored, so it's is imperative that you as a business owner ensure your students are content to the point that they wish to return to class over and over again.

The Sport Karate retention opportunities are sizable as it provides you with more martial arts related activities, which in turn provides for a very diverse student base. With more 'arrows in your quiver' you are able to attract students who may not be into Forms but really enjoy working with Martial Art weapons, while other prefer the more traditional training.

JR: When I preach the gospel of Sport Karate in terms of business, it is in the retention benefits. Let's take student satisfaction for example. That six-year-old, seven-year-old, or eight-year-old, in their mind they are going to that Karate class because they think they can learn the spinning kick that they saw Captain America do in a Marvel movie.

If you're already teaching them the front stance, the low block or a punch, then what's the harm in showing them a superman punch. It's not going to impact their traditional training. You've

taught them what they need to know in class. You taught them a proper stance, you taught them how to block, you taught them how strike, so give them that little bit of fun in the last five minutes of the class.

One of the weakest components of most school's curriculum is the Black Belt program, especially seeing that most schools focus primarily on how to get to that first Black Belt level. A lot of traditional styles suffer from this problem and lose a number of students once they attain their Black Belts. Using something like Sport Karate could keep your Black Belts interested in training at some new martial art discipline, which in turn provides you with long-term students (and potential staff).

JR: Particularly at the Black Belt level, because I can't tell you how many schools I've been in where it's seems that Black Belt classes are really just whatever the Sensei wants to teach that day. That's how people commonly handle Black Belt classes, where it becomes a chilled, loose class format. Sure, that might be fun for the first few classes, but at some point, those students are no longer going to be stimulated, they're not going to be challenged. This is because a lot of the traditional curriculums that have been passed down for years, don't have complex Black Belt programs.

My point is that the curriculums are way underdeveloped for the Black Belts. That is why we see a lot of people get their Black Belts and then quit the martial arts. This is because they may have tried a few classes after getting their Black Belts and then they realized that there is not much left to learn. In reality, there is a whole world of possibilities out there to enhance your classes. If you want to do a completely traditional curriculum and you're getting students to Black Belt and retaining them effectively, then maybe after Black Belt is where you supplement it with some Sport Karate.



Recruitment of New Students

If Sport Karate was added to the Olympics as well as your curriculum, it would provide the industry with a wealth of new student prospects. If you took a survey of all the stunt doubles in both movies and television who had a martial arts background, you would quickly note that almost all of them came from the Sport Karate community.

Whether it be the DC or Marvel Movies or the huge number of action Video games, there will be a number of kids who want to emulate those various action heroes. When you look at the Extreme Divisions of Sport Karate you will see similar "flashy" techniques that you see in the Movies or Video Games. Using these Sport Karate elements can be an excellent marketing tool.

JR: I think there a lot of kids that come into the martial arts right now because they see these Marvel or DC movies and all the fight scenes. And guess who is performing these scenes?? Sport Karate world champions, Caitlin Dechelle, Matt Emig, Sammy Smith, Mackensi Emory, the list goes on and on. It is all those Sport Karate champions that are behind the scenes doing all these stunts and putting Sport Karate moves into the stunt choreography. So, when a kid comes into the martial school because they were at a Marvel movie and saw Captain America do a spinning kick on things, then they want to do that.



Retail Benefits

One of the most underappreciated aspects of having Sport Karate in the Olympics and possibly part of your curriculum (in some form) would be the retail side of your business. The Traditional side of the retail business is somewhat limited as you are looking at a single standardize Gi and the same with fighting equipment, with the weapons side of the Traditional Karate not even represented in any Traditional tournament.

If you add Sport Karate to your curriculum and then considering the extra exposure of the Olympics, this combination could lead to a wonderful opportunity to increase your retail business thanks to the variety of Sport Karate uniforms and related equipment.

JR: When you go from a traditional curriculum that doesn't have Sport Karate to one that does, well then all of a sudden you need a black uniform, if you were using a white uniform, you need a black uniform for the creative divisions, you need a separate Point Fighting uniform, otherwise you're going to look like you don't know what you are doing, you also need head gear, hand pads, double pads, foot pads. You also need whatever the weapon of choice is. For a lot of competitors that could be two or three weapons. You can see those dollar signs add up from a product or retail perspective very quickly.



Seminars

One final benefit both financial and professionally would be scheduling seminars for your school. Whether Sport Karate or some other martial art where you don't have the skill sets to properly introduce the style into your school, then you can still invite top practitioners of the style to your school to put on seminars.

JR: If a martial arts school owner that's new and is trying to figure out some of the best things they can do for their school, then sees an article about Sport Karate, and they think "This will bring more kids into my school?" Okay, let's give this a try! Or maybe its supplementing your program with a Jujitsu program. You may say "Hey we teach karate here, but every Friday we have a guest instructor comes in and we do a Jujitsu class". So having something extra that isn't what your school always does, is something that can definitely help you increase your retention regardless of the style.

This way you not only introduce something new to your students, you can make some extra money for your school as well as grow your network of Martial Arts professionals. The more quality Martial Artists you can associate with the more you are going to grow as a Professional, a Businessperson and as an individual. This can do nothing but lead to success.





Downsizing your Dojo

POST PANDEMIC LIFE CHOICES

Focus on Life or Business .... what is the balance??

Having led a sizable development team while a Business Consultant as well as managing a lending portfolio consisting of some of the largest corporations in the city, I felt honored to be able to provide business expertise and leadership to all my customers, allowing me a semi successful career in the corporate world.

I also remember when I first started out in my banking career, my lending portfolio was a lot smaller and consisted primarily of professionals, like Doctors, Lawyers, Accountants and Engineers. While the number of borrowings were a lot less than the corporate leaders, I truly enjoyed the time I spend with these incredible professionals. In turn when I was a Senior Business Consultant with a large telecommunications firm, some of my best times were when I was leading a small 4/5-man group of technical specialists developing software platforms.

In both cases the slower pace of the smaller team and portfolio allowed me to interact more frequently with all my clients and team, where I was able to develop a great rapport. It also allowed me more time to reflect on my responsibilities and how best to do my job. In fact, I discovered that I started to truly enjoy my job, even though the financial rewards weren't as great as when I was held a considerably more senior position.

It was this difference in life style that made me rethink my career aspirations and how much I really needed to make me content with my lot in life. This reevaluating one's life choices seemed to be a trend with several business and career-oriented people, including those in the Martial Arts Business. The recent pandemic had caused many to learn to live with less due to the uncertainty caused by COVID and to their surprise countless people found that they enjoyed the less stressful lifestyle.

The recent pandemic demonstrated the difficulty for martial arts school owners in trying to stay in touch (and remain relevant) with their student base, with the level of difficulty rising almost exponentially for those schools with large student counts. What was disheartening was that this new hurdle was the 'last straw' for many long-time martial artists. Most had accepted that the bulk of their students would be children but to have to suddenly pivot to become an online star as well was a bit too much of a paradigm shift. This caused many to use the pandemic as an excuse to permanently shut down their schools and move onto something else.

Others whose passion for teaching martial arts was still high, did their best to accommodate the considerably smaller classes once the pandemic was over and again found to their surprise that they enjoyed the intimate nature of these more personal sessions. It would seem that more and more people are troubled by what society has become after the recent pandemic and are now looking to keep life simple.



How much do you really need?

One of the main considerations when downsizing your dojo is determining what you really need from the business. If you are considering downsizing, there is a presumption that you presently have a healthy business with a sizable active student count and have done reasonably well financially over the past few years. Basically, once you feel you have some financial stability, then you can reflect on what is important to you both as it relates to your future and your martial art.

For those who have done well by their martial arts business, but who's physical attributes are obviously aging, it may be time to review lifestyle choices. We live in a society where no matter what you have or how much you earn, its still "never enough". This, to me, will be the toughest question you will have to ask yourself … "what is enough?"

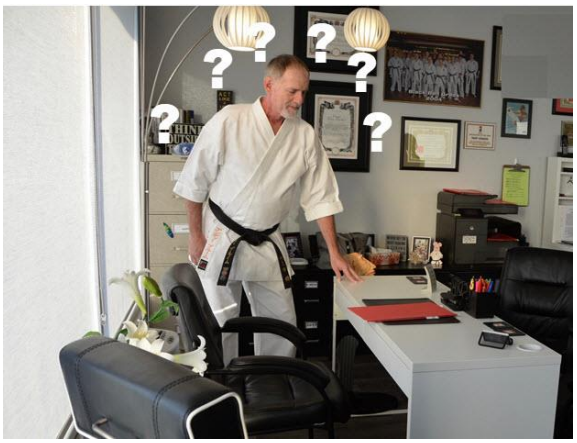
As a financial planner and former banker, I would first tell you to look at the numbers. While we will review some financials below, the first number you need to determine is how much do you really need for day-to-day living. As a true martial artist, your 'wants and needs' should be modest and hopefully you have fulfilled most of your bucket wish list. This is now the time to review your financial situation and develop a succession plan for your business.

More than Financial Security.

As mentioned, while financial independence is the goal, you must also consider your physical and mental wellbeing. Today's society is far too material based, not to mention wanting instant gratification for any effort put forth. As a seasoned martial arts instructor, hopefully you have disciplined your personal "wants and desires" to where it's time to talk about leaving a legacy.

While many martial arts instructors enjoy being the center of attention and find it hard to let other have the limelight, most seasoned instructors soon learn that age is the "all equalizer," especially on a physical level. Those who recognized this fact, will review their priorities, especially when starting the sunset years of their lives.

For some longtime instructors, they may now wish to explore other martial arts and downsizing your dojo may be the ideal way to accomplish this. While many instructors took lessons in a second or third martial art, most times this was for the benefit of the ever-changing martial arts school business model. When considering "slowing down", this doesn't mean you need to stop learning. To learn something for the pure pleasure is something we don't do too often in our "monetize everything" society.



Conclusion

As I was looking to write this follow up to my succession planning articles, I reached out to some close long time martial arts instructors and asked about their perfect "downsizing" scenarios. I was very surprised with the notably different responses.

When I analyzed their responses in more detail, each correlated to how the instructor saw themselves within the martial arts community. Some saw their future selves as absentee managers of their schools, other saw themselves more involved in (martial arts) association work while a few focused specifically on their internal "Budo" training. Whatever the reason, all saw themselves downsizing their responsibilities to where they could appreciate life a bit more.

Even in my semi-retirement, I find I still have considerable interest in a number of activities that I felt I never had time to experience in depth when I was working full time in the corporate world. There are many full-time martial arts school owners that feel the same way so downsizing your dojo may be an excellent way to transition to this new phase of your life.

Crunching the numbers

While we have tried to express the qualitative components of Downing your Dojo, being an ex-Banker, I like seeing the quantitative arguments so let's crunch some numbers.

Let's start with some assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed that your teaching is still a desired commodity and you will be able to charge as much for your smaller more personal classes as you are presently charging in your full-time school(s).

Another assumption is that you will not need any assistance or staff, but still plan to run your downsized dojo as a proper business. This simply means that you will still be generating income and having to pay expenses but at a greatly reduced level.

My example is using 50 students and still having to pay rent for a place to train. If no rent is required then you can either teach less students or have more profits. To summarize revenue for your downsized dojo:

Example: 50 Students

Revenue: 50 Students @ $150/month = $90,000/year
$500 per month from Special Events = $6,000/year
$500 per month in equipment sales = $6,000/year

As for expenses, I used a standard list which in fact was from one of the schools I operated. So, while you can add a number of additional expenses or even reduce a few line items, nevertheless you can quickly see that an annual income of over $50,000 is a reasonable expectation.

For any successful business owner, it will be difficult to slow down. We are driven individuals which was the primary reason we decided to open our own schools/businesses. It is also this incredible desire to succeed that cause many emotional and eventual health issues as we age. For this reason alone, please look at your circumstances, crunch some numbers and see if downsizing your dojo should be the next step in your career. It may be your last career so try to make the best of it!

Downsized Martial Arts School Budget

	Annual	%
Income		
Member Dues	$90,000	88.24%
Equipment Sales	$6,000	5.88%
Seminars/Events	$6,000	5.88%
Total Income	***$102,000***	100.00%

Expenses		Annual	
Marketing	$	2,700.00	2.65%
Rent	$	24,000.00	23.53%
Hydro&/Gas	$	4,800.00	4.71%
Bank Fees	$	480.00	0.47%
Credit Card Fees	$	900.00	0.88%
Equipment Purchases	$	3,600.00	3.53%
Phone Company	$	1,800.00	1.76%
Cleaning supplies	$	420.00	0.41%
Office supplies	$	600.00	0.59%
Insurance	$	2,400.00	2.35%
Accountant	$	1,200.00	1.18%
Staff Wages	$	-	0.00%
Staff Benefits	$	-	0.00%
City Licenses & Fees	$	480.00	0.47%
Repairs and upgrade	$	1,200.00	1.18%
Annual Floor maintenance	$	900.00	0.88%
Totals		***$45,480***	44.59%

Monthly Shortfall/Surplus	$56,520.00	55.41%
Accummulated Surplus/Shortfall		



Martial Arts Income Opportunities

IS IT POSSIBLE TO EARN A RESPECTABLE INCOME FROM THE MARTIAL ARTS WITHOUT HAVING TO OWN A SCHOOL.

The Martial Arts' many paths to success.

On my last visit to the Martial Arts SuperShow, I attended the Financial Lecture put on by the Director of MAIA, Frank Silverman and was pleased to see all the new faces in the audience. For the most part almost all of the participants in Mr. Silverman's seminar were school owners, as were the majority of all those who attend the annual MA SuperShow in Las Vegas.

The MA SuperShow provided a myriad of seminars, business and teaching examples, recommendations and other valuable resources for the new, the well-established or even those who are contemplating becoming school owners. The MAIA Team, the Century Team and all the writers for the Black Belt Magazine are going full out trying to support the Martial Arts School Owners in ensuring both their viability and future success in these difficult economic times.

Personally, I found it 'gut-wrenching' to watch so many schools shutter their doors permanently due to the pandemic and the subsequent economic instability. While you have to applaud those school owners that did succeed over the past few years, you knew that to some extent some of this success was due to the failure of a competitor's school.

These school closures resulted in a sizable number of highly talented martial artists scrambling to find other sources of income. While most of these former school owners went to work in an unrelated industry, there were a few that tried to continue to earn some type of income from their martial arts passion.

In addition, while a good number of the MA SuperShow participants were school owners, there was still a large number of very talented Martial Artists present, who while looking to financially capitalize on their abilities, had little interest or resources in owning a school.

Martial Arts Industry Career Options.

For these reasons, we thought of some possible avenues of Income from the Martial arts without having to invest into a school:

- Consulting (e.g.: MAIA) + Software Providers
- Seminars + Private Instruction (In Person or Remotely) + Certification Programs
- Tournament Winnings / Professional Leagues
- Stunt Work / Entertainment Industry
- Retail Sales (e.g.: Century Martial Arts)

While so much could be (and has been) written on each option listed, we thought we would provide a quick summary of what you could expect if you wish to explore these possible income opportunities.

In order to provide some context, we reached out to two very knowledgeable Martial Artists who both know a lot about trying to make an income from their martial art talents. For the consulting perspective, I have been a business consultant for both a national bank and a telecommunications conglomerate for almost 25 years. Along with my corporate experience, I have been practicing Shotokan Karate for over 50 years.



For the Sport Karate perspective, I have asked Jackson Rudolph for his thoughts and comments. Jackson is a renowned Sport Karate Champion, Coach, Broadcaster, Writer, and historian. Jackson's knowledge and support of the Sport Karate community is second to none.

In addition, I have asked a long time Martial Arts associate, Chris Chin who is a full time Vancouver Police Officer, a part time stunt man and a former National Sport Karate Champion in his own right. Chris's Sport Karate accomplishments included a Battle of Atlanta win as well as being the Canadian National Weapons Champion on a couple of occasions. His stunt work includes Shanghai Noon (Jackie Chan), The Last Samurai (Tom Cruise), Skyscraper (The Rock) and the soon to be released TV Series Shogun.





Courtesy of Century Martial Arts

Consulting

Trying to become a consultant is constant uphill battle in an attempt to obtain legitimacy as well as clients. The value of a consultant is always debateable with the real test of any "words of advice" is the actual success of your business. Consultancy is the unique ability of an experienced professional trying to convince others to do it their way!

Unfortunately bringing in outside consultants has never been a popular way of resolving issues within your business. The "outsider" mentality will lead to people blaming any lack of success on the consultant exclusively. My last position within the corporate world was as a Senior Business Consultant with a national telecommunications firm and while I actually worked for the corporation (and was not a contract worker), there was still a hesitation to give any advice from a consultant a chance.

This is also true in the martial arts but in a more unique way. In the martial arts we have been taught that we are always learning and we must be open to new concepts and ideas that would enhance but not actually change our individual martial art style (Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Jujitsu, etc.). So, while martial arts school owners are more than willing to listen to consultants, unfortunately actually implementing any advice from these same consultants is where most school owners hesitate.

I regularly attend webinars hosted by the various Martial Arts consultants and what I hear most often is how a number of school owners listen but do not action. This simply means that for anyone interested in having a career as a martial arts consultant, the primary skill set to have in order to succeed in the industry is a ton of patience and understanding.

The second and more important skill you need to develop is the ability to get yourself noticed, which is more difficult these days due to all the 'noise' that is social media. This is why it is best to seek out advice from digital experts like Cris Rodriguez of Grow Pro Agency/MAIA, or start learning on-line or attend some of the myriad of free seminars now available.

I have included software vendor under the consultant category as most of the platforms that cater to the martial arts have a sizable consulting component associated with them. I wrote about one such provider (PerfectMind) where a martial arts instructor learned software coding and build an incredible company that not only catered to martial arts schools but a number of other industries as well.

While there are now some sizable barriers to entry in this space, you can still provide services to the industry if you have quality programming (coding) skill sets. Whether being an employee (or contract worker) of a software firm that caters to the martial arts industry or simply a part time contributor, the remuneration can be lucrative.

Seminars and Private Lessons

Conducting seminars can encompass both in-person events as well as remote classes. In both cases being prepared and professional is the foremost quality necessary to ensure the success of any seminar regardless of what is being taught. The most obvious prerequisite of conducting any type of seminar is that *you are a leading proponent of the subject matter you are espousing*.

Jackson: Private lessons are great. You don't have to own a school to offer private training to others, the tricky part is how you attract clientele through social media and other means.

As with consulting you must first make yourself well known and a desirable commodity. Here you once again will need to leverage all the digital platforms available to you even if you are only conducting in-person seminars.

Ways to Promote yourself:

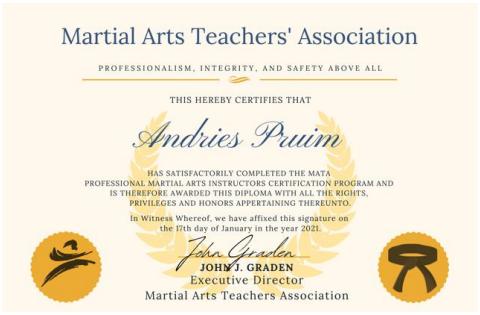
- Videos or Podcasts
- Writing articles or Blogs
- Entering (and winning) or Performing at Tournaments.

Online platforms may be the way of the future for (non school owning) Martial Arts wishing to earn money within the industry.

Jackson: There are still some ways to make a solid supplemental or secondary income without owning a martial arts school. I still use several opportunities within the martial arts to supplement my income, opportunities that are the results of my career as a renowned competitor.

The Martial Arts Industry is still very "Personality" based which is very instrumental in signing up participants. While a good personality is a 'must have', in order to become a successful seminar instructor, an over inflated ego can quickly curtail any long-term success. This simply means that your enthusiasm and ego must be carefully balanced and constantly monitored.

Another income avenue is to develop a valued Certification program. Any type of Certification Program (e.g.: Flow System) that provides real value to the participants is something that if well-presented can provide a solid income stream.



If you are marketing your certification program, ensure you follow best practices, including:

- Provide a clear understanding of the certification programs goals and score
- Ensure frictionless onboarding (easy to start program)
- Market to your target audience (qualified applicants)
- Complete certification program with well thought out exams.
- Maintain program through continuous education and support.
- Most importantly – make it enjoyable (entertainment).

If you do decide to try and earn income from a Martial Arts certification program, then you need to determine what qualifications would be a minimum in order to be remotely successful in teaching related certification seminars (or being an effective consultant). In addition, what level of specialization is required? With the amount of available certification programs support available online, it is best to complete some in-depth research before developing your own program.

Finally, if you are finding it tough to get traction with your private lessons or seminars, you could try to obtain contract work from public or corporate institutions. Depending on your martial art, you could even try to get a contract with a police or security firm teaching proper opponent controlling techniques. In fact, some corporations look for self-defense and/or awareness courses for their employees, which can generate a quality return.

Professional Leagues/Tournaments (Promotion and Winnings)

In turning a successful tournament career into a lucrative second income requires a sizable commitment whether this encompasses forms or fighting divisions. Having to travel from tournament to tournament is costly with winnings from any tournament barely covering this expense.

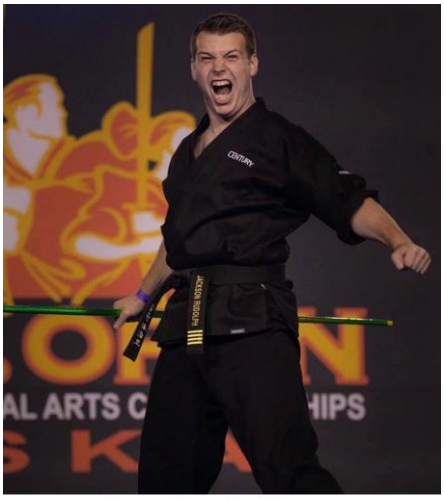
Unfortunately, due to the recent pandemic even this nominal remuneration was reduced due to a lack of funding and spectator participation. In fact, even the top competitors are still expected to pay entry fees, so unless you are part of a sponsored Sport Karate "Team" (e.g.: Paul Mitchell, Top Ten, Team AKA, etc.), most competitions will cost you more than any prize money you may win. Most Sport Karate competitors participate primarily for personal satisfaction, nation rankings and especially the possibility of some media exposure.

Jackson: Leagues like NASKA need to shift from having their best competitors pay fees to compete and win prize money, to paying athletes to compete at their events. The only thing that makes sport karate competitors "professional", is when the sponsor pays for their travel and entry fees (such as Paul Mitchell Team).

Chris: Even at the Grand Championship winning level, you could only take home a few hundred dollars; hardly enough to even cover travel and entrance fee expenses. I was mainly competing to maintain my ranking level both nationally and internationally. For me I enjoyed the overall experience of competing, traveling, and meeting new people.

In other words, while competing in Sport Karate may not provide for an abundance of income opportunities, the one area where these national competitions shine is in the sizable media exposure these events can provide. It can give an up-and-coming competitor some online recognition which can lead to more lucrative careers like the UFC, WWE, or even other career options in the entertainment industry.

Jackson: The way that athletes make their money on sport karate alone is by teaching seminars and private lessons in addition to the prize money. Using this media exposure, they can start making money on viewership.

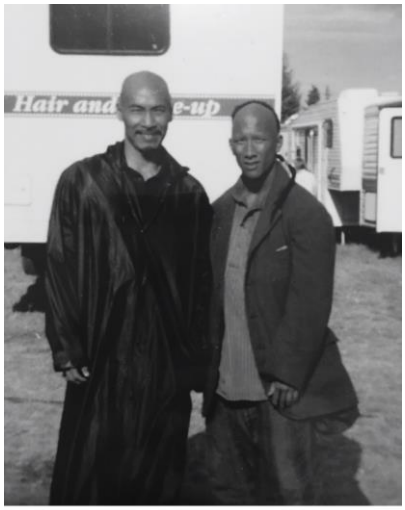


Courtesy of Century Martial Arts

Stunt Work (Entertainment Industry)

I have included Stunt Person work as a possible income source as I was surprised during my research to find out how many film industry stunt people were former Martial Arts competitors and instructors. Stunt work is a unique way to capitalize on your martial art talent. It is also an excellent avenue into the entertainment industry.

Chris: Being a practitioner of the martial arts definitely inspired me to be in martial arts films much like my idols Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. My martial arts skills definitely paved the way into the stunt performing world. My first stunt job was in the movie Shanghai Noon with Jackie Chan and they were looking for Asian stunt performers who could do martial arts.



Roger Yuan and Chris Chin
Shanghai Noon

As in martial arts itself, attempting to become a stunt person required a huge amount of time and dedication. Of course, there is also the numerous stunt training sessions that you will have to attend, which would be over and above your normal martial arts training.

Chris: To this day, a lot of stunt jobs involve fight scenes, so in this regard, martial arts training has been a valuable skill set that has served me well.

Fortunately, considering all the new action movies and TV series now being filmed, the opportunities are excellent for anyone willing to make the commitment, which could possibly lead to a lucrative career within the industry.

Chris: Once you are established, and dedicate your time fully to the industry, it is certainly possible to make a living at it and do it full time. Keep up your training and skill set and be patient. Hard work and dedication will make the journey worth it!

Retail Sales

While we have included retail sales as a possible income stream, the "barriers to entry" for this option are considerably high, which simply means it would be difficult to make a sizable presence in this space without ample resources.

In addition, the complexities of running a sizable retail outlet would be beyond the capabilities of your average martial artist. Nevertheless, running a small local martial arts equipment retail store is still an option if you are able to make the appropriate local connections.

Of course, working for a sizable Martial Arts equipment manufacturer like Century Martial Arts is a worthwhile career option for the avid martial artist. In fact, the majority if not all of the employees of the Century Team consider themselves martial artists of some kind. One of the benefits of owning a school and being fully immersed within the martial arts community is the satisfying feeling of working with (and training with) likeminded people. When working with a large Martial Arts related corporation like Century you actually get a similar satisfying feeling about your co-workers. Not a bad idea for a career!!

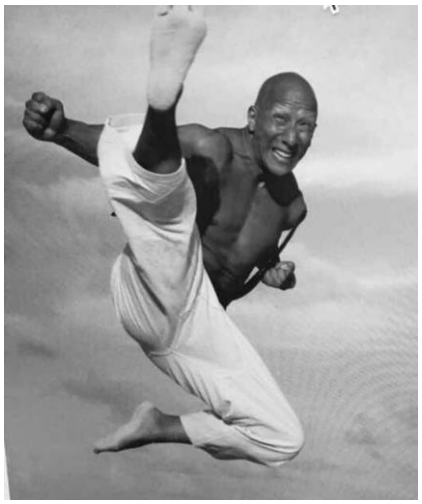
Conclusion

One of the more difficult aspects to earning an income from your martial arts talent is how much to charge. While you may feel that your talent is extremely valuable, the likelihood that others feel the same way is minimal.

Do your research, do the extra legwork, and properly canvas similar instructors or courses to ensure you price yourself accordingly. So, unless you are already a known quality (e.g.: national forms champion) then make sure you do not price yourself out of the market.

Even if you do all the proper research and marketing, the likelihood of having a full-time martial arts career, without owning a school, is remote and only a few eventually succeed. This does not mean you can't make a healthy income from your martial arts passion; you may simply have to curtail your expectations.

In conclusion, if you are working full time at a quality paying job, then using your martial art to enhance your income will not only solidify your financial future, but keep you in great shape for years to come .... and who knows, you could still become the next Oscar winning martial arts superhero.





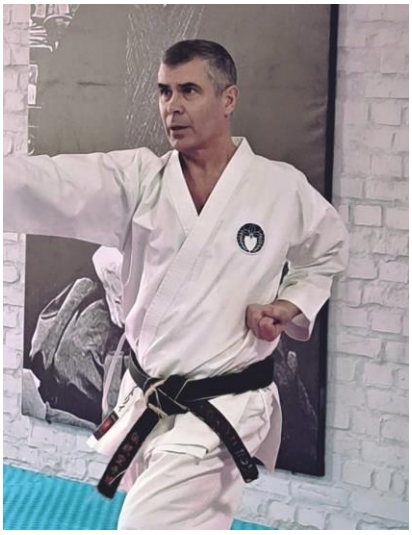
Interview with a Ukraine Dojo

A FRANK DISCUSSION WITH A KARATE DOJO STILL OPERATING IN THE UKRAINE

Dojo training still a priority

In one of my recent articles published by Black Belt Magazine, I interviewed the directors of a European based Shotokan Karate association for an article on social media. During our discussions concerning the sizable number of national affiliates, we briefly talked about the WJKA's Ukraine affiliate and how the organization's administration was reaching out to assist where they could.

While I was able to complete my article on social media and Martial Arts Associations, I did ask about a possible interview with the head of the WJKA Ukraine main Dojo. After overcoming some communications issues, we had the honor of contacting Sensei Anatoliy Naumenko of the Ukraine in early 2023.





Sensei Anatoliy Naumenko (7th Dan) has been training in Shotokan Karate since the early 1990 's. After training under both Hidetaka Nishiyama and Hiroshi Shirai of the JKA and ITKF, Sensei Anatoliy started to train extensively with Shihan Kenneth Funakoshi, where he obtained most of his rank.

Sensei Anatoliy, as he is better known, joined the WJKA in 2013 and has been a great supporter of the association to where he was scheduled to host the prestigious WJKA World Championships, before the invasion of his country cancelled all events going forward.

I was surprised to find out that the Ukraine affiliate Dojo was still open even under such strenuous conditions. They are located in the city of Cherkasy, which is in central Ukraine and only about 125 miles south of Kyiv. During the first weeks of the invasion, most business, schools, and government offices closed but eventually the determination of the Ukrainian people drove them to try and return to some semblance of normalcy.

Sensei Anatoliy: Currently, the situation in Ukraine continues to remain difficult, and it differs in different regions, as some regions are occupied, some are very close to hostilities and there the war is felt every minute, in other regions, which are further from the epicenter of constant artillery shelling and bombing, the situation better, but the air-raid sirens that sound daily to warn of missile strikes keep everyone on edge. We understand that danger can come at any moment, but everyone continues to live and do their work.

While Sensei Anatoliy's main Dojo is in Cherkasy and is still operating, several affiliate dojos around central Ukraine have had to permanently close due to the war. Nevertheless, even training at the Sensei's honbu dojo isn't without risk. Training in the Ukraine these days is often interrupted by sirens, resulting in the class having to relocate to the nearest air raid shelter. These serious interruptions have done nothing but build the resolve of Sensei Anatoliy and his students.





Sensei Anatoliy: My central dojo is in Cherkasy, it is the center of Ukraine, a relatively calm region, but when our anti-aircraft defense works and powerful explosions are heard, we feel it!

While our main Dojo of Ukraine is located in Cherkasy, we also have Dojos are in 14 other regions.



Even with the courage and determination of the Ukraine spirit, many of Sensei Anatoliy's students had to stop training. For some it was just too dangerous to travel to and from the dojo, for others they felt compelled to fight for their country, risking everything to do so.

Sensei Anatoliy: However, during the period of war that has lasted more than 1 year, I, my family and students are already used to it, but some could not endure such conditions and were forced to go abroad.

While those who went to the front of the war should be highly commended for their bravery, some praise must be extended to any student who decided to train, especially considering the determination of their enemy to disrupt every aspect of Ukrainian lives. Missiles continue to rain down on innocent people with those training at Karate displaying true Budo spirit in their fight to stop others from totally disrupting their lives.

Sensei Anatoliy: Training in our dojo continues until the end of June. Depending on the level of the groups, there are 2 to 4 training sessions per week. When prolonged air alarms, training is usually cancelled. If this happened during training, we go down to the shelter.

Some Dojo were closed during the war, because their managers and trainers went to the armed forces of Ukraine, national guard, and territorial defense to protect our country.

Of course, normal traditional training is not always possible but thanks to the efforts of Sensei Anatoliy and his senior instructors, he has been able to keep the spirit and devotion to karate alive within all his dojos.

Sensei Anatoliy: I continue to train personally and have two groups I train with, junior and senior. For me, karate is my way of life, so I try to simply maintain my form and improve myself, usually this happens during the training of my senior group three times a week. In Ukraine as a whole, before the war there were about 1,500 Ukraine members [training in our schools], and now there are not even a thousand.

Of course, there could be panic, then people would leave Ukraine and life would stop altogether, but as you can see, this did not happen, all Ukrainians keep their front in their places, even though it is very difficult. And so, we continue our training, little by little we resume the holding of competitions, all this naturally inspires, forms a strong spirit, and supports the psychological state.





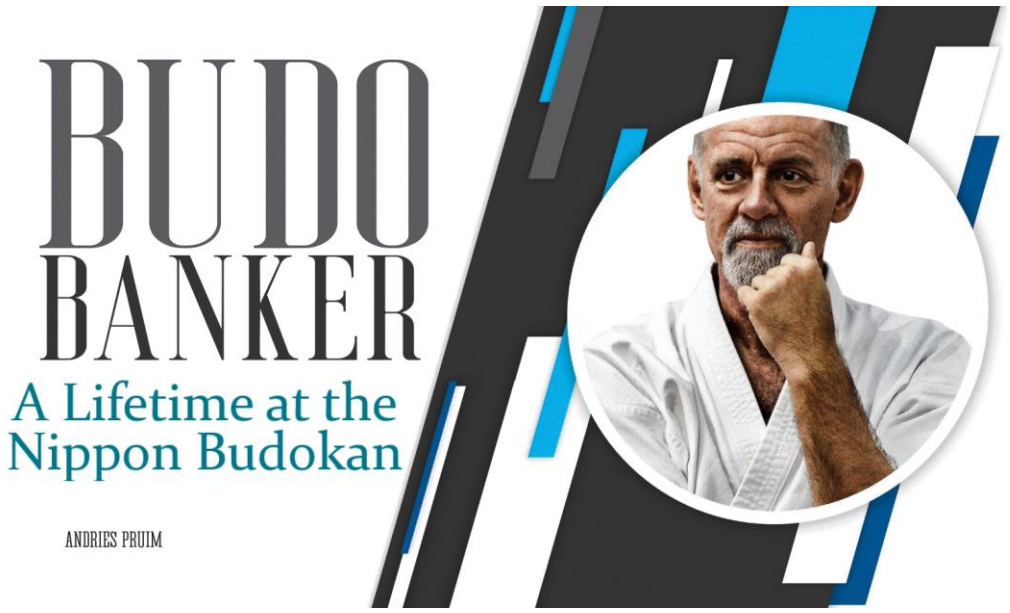
Moving Forward

When I first decided to reach out to the WJKA's Ukraine affiliate, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew that the budo spirit was strong amongst traditional karate practitioners but the decision to keep dojos open during such precarious times demonstrates how the blending of budo spirit and Ukrainian resolve is purely inspirational!

Sensei Anatoliy: This winter was a very difficult period, enemy troops destroyed a lot of energy facilities in Ukraine, as a result of which there was no electricity and heating in the cities. The lights kept going out, people in their homes were using batteries and generators, and we also installed a battery and LED strip in the Dojo and continued to train with our clothes on, as the temperature was 5 degrees. It was a very difficult period that is thankfully over.

In life, it is very important to learn to overcome yourself, your weaknesses. Our everyday life and modern civilizations encourage this, there are many temptations that distract from understanding the real life, so it is very important to understand your purpose, set a goal and step by step go towards it, and karate is the best thing that can be around and help in difficult moments. We hope that when the war ends, we will be able to continue our Budo path as before, gaining new victories in life …. and on the sports path!

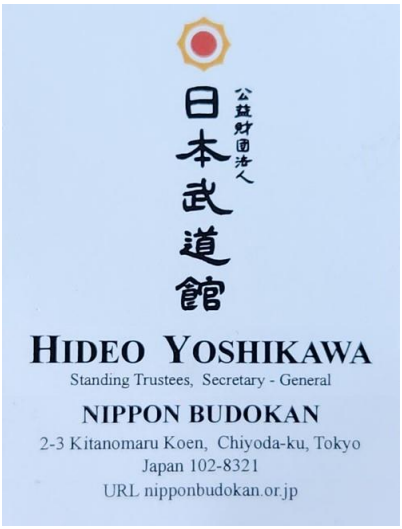




A Lifetime at the Nippon Budokan

THE CAREER OF NIPPON BUDOKAN SECRETARY GENERAL
HIDEO YOSHIKAWA

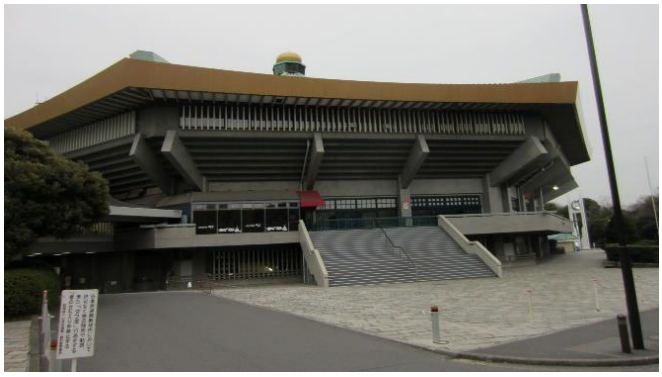




Nippon Budokan's support of the martial arts

The first time I decided to travel to Japan, it was 1991 and I was scared to say the least. I was travelling to the birthplace of Budo to a seminar sponsored by the Japanese Government through their representatives at the Nippon Budokan.

I was intrigued by the invitation I received from this prestigious organization as I knew the Nippon Budokan to be the cultural mecca of Japanese Budo. While many people know of the Nippon Budokan, most primarily know of the structure itself, which is considered a marvel of traditional Japanese architecture. The Nippon Budokan is also a government affiliated organization that manages both the facilities and administration of the promotion of traditional Japanese Budo.



The building itself, from its samurai helmet shaped roof to its newly build central (or companion) dojo, has held both sport and cultural events since its inception during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. It has been the honor of Hideo Yoshikawa to lead this eminent organization for the past few years, but it was in a totally different capacity as the organizer of the annual International Budo Seminar where I first met Yoshikawa-San.

The seminar was open primarily to foreign residents of Japan who maintained at least a first-degree black belt (Shodan) in one of a number of specific Budo disciplines including my specialty, Karate-Do. My invitation was extended to me due to my various connections to Japanese based martial arts organizations most of which I joined mainly for research purposes (for previous Black Belt Magazine articles)



The location of the seminar was in Katsuura, Japan at a Martial Arts Facility call the “Kenshu Centre” which was adjacent to the International Budo University. This trip was to be the start of a long and arduous journey whereby I would revisit this impressive country another 15 times over the last 30+ years. One of the first people I met at the start of my journey, was an equally impressive martial artist, Hideo Yoshikawa, who also happened to be in charge of this newly established International Budo Seminar.

International Budo Seminar

The International Budo Seminar was the brainchild of the Nippon Budokan and was the Japanese government’s strategy in promoting traditional Japanese Budo to an international audience. When I arrived at my first seminar, it was already going on 3 years and included some of the finest Budo instructors in Japan.


Third International Seminar of Budo Culture

修了証

CERTIFICATE

あなたは第３回国際武道文化セミナーに参加し、全課程を修了しましたのでここにこれを証します

This is to certify that

ANDRIES K. PRUIN

participated in the Third International Seminar of Budo Culture and completed the entire course.

March 11,1991

財団法人 日本武道館

会長 松前重義

Dr. Shigeyoshi Matsumae
President
Nippon Budokan

Mr. Yoshikawa was already the lead supervisor of the seminar's organizing team and as he was responsible for all aspects of the seminar, including organizing the instructors, the participants, their food and accommodations needs, as well as all related staff, he did so in a very professional manner, yet was still approachable and gracious for our involvement. With myself being one of the very few permitted to attend without actually living in Japan, Mr. Yoshikawa ensured I wasn't totally lost during my first visit to Japan.

The International Budo Seminar was a unique event where some of the highest ranked Budo Masters would assemble at the Nippon Budokan Kenshu Center and allow a small group of martial arts enthusiasts like myself to witness and learn some of the finest techniques and philosophy produced by Japanese Budo culture.

This included the 9 main Budo disciplines promoted by the Nippon Budokan, which were Kendo, Judo, Kyudo, Sumo, Karatedo, Aikido, Shorinji Kempo, Naginata and Jukendo. We not only trained at our own discipline (and where I first met Kanazawa Hirokazu Soke) but where we were also permitted to try and train at one of the other disciplines (which is where I first started Naginata).

Thanks to Mr. Yoshikawa's generous nature, I returned to the same seminar for the next 5 years and have returned to enjoy the Budo camaraderie of the seminar and in turn Mr. Yoshikawa's friendship many times over the past 30+ years.

While Mr. Yoshikawa continued to rise through the corporate ranks at the now prestigious Nippon Budokan (as the building itself is located on Imperial grounds in the center of Tokyo), he continued to lead up the team at the Budo Seminar until it changed its format about 10 years ago.

It was Mr. Yoshikawa's love of the older and more traditional Budos, known as Kobudo (古武道) or "Old Budos", many with unique outlooks and weaponry, which became his driving passion. It was this passion that resulted in the development of the annual Nippon Kobudo Demonstrations which are held at the Nippon Budokan each February.



Although I have not been able to attend one of these International Budo seminars for several years, every time I do travel to Japan, I make an effort to meet my old friend, which usually ends up with dinner and some sake. It was during my most recent visit to Japan in September 2023 where I was able to procure some of my friend's valuable time for a short interview. The pandemic made it difficult for me to travel to Japan for a few years so our getting together was pleasant and it was enjoyable to see an old friend again after many difficult years.



Career Aspirations

As Mr. Yoshikawa and myself caught up on family and work, we agreed that time had passed us by, far too quickly. He was nearing 70 years old after working his entire career at the Nippon Budokan in its various departments until where now he was leading this prestigious organization.

I asked Mr. Yoshikawa about his time at the Nippon Budokan and why he first decided to join the organization and in turn why he stayed so long.

HY: I did Judo in High School. In University, I focused on Aikido and I knew that I wanted to stay with Budo for life.

Mr. Yoshikawa explained to me that when he started to practice martial arts in school, he wanted his career to revolve around martial arts or Budo and the reason he accepted a position with the Nippon Budokan when he graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1977.

While learning the nuances within each department he was assigned to, he would also volunteer for side projects, especially those that promoted the traditional spirit of Japanese Budo, like the International Budo Seminar. Not only did Mr. Yoshikawa learn the proper corporate management skills needed to succeed, he, in fact eventually led each department he was assigned to. Nevertheless, even with all this management success, he still had no inkling that he was on the short list to lead the organization out right.

HY: I have enjoyed my career at Nippon Budokan, but I never thought I would still be working after I turned 65.

Mr. Yoshikawa, after a stellar career and a dedication to the promotion of traditional Japanese Budo culture, was selected by the Board of Governors to become the Nippon Budokan's next Secretary General. We are told that while the Board of Governors decide on the ultimate direction and strategies of the Nippon Budokan and its future, it is Mr. Yoshikawa's responsibilities to carry out these mandates.

One of his more serious mandates and the reason he feels he needs to stay on for a couple more years (at least) is to ensure he properly selects and educates the next Secretary General. While the Chairman of the Board of Governors has final say in the selection process, it is obvious that Mr. Yoshikawa's opinion carries a huge amount of weight.

HY: I may have to stay as Secretary General until I am at least 70 years old, as I will need to properly train my successor.



New Challenges

Some of the first challenges encountered when Mr. Yoshikawa took over stewardship of the organization, was the slow demise of the popularity of Japanese Budo, due mainly to other popular sports, like baseball as well as the growing (and very encompassing) universe of video games.

Mr. Yoshikawa in addition to promoting Budo to the Japanese, continued to be an active participant as well, achieving a 7th Dan in Aikido as well as a Shodan in Wado-Kai. What he did notice when training in either discipline was that the future of both art forms was in its children's classes.

While Mr. Yoshikawa's efforts to date had been focused on the promotion of traditional Budo Values including the preservation of Old Budo (Kobudo), he quickly realized that this strategy included having children become part of these efforts. This resulted in summer programs for all children and the updating and publication of the "The Budo Charter for Young People" both of which promote that *through the practice of Budo, the student learns correct manners, refines his or her technical skills, and develops the mind and body.*

These are similar beliefs that most North American schools promote in their marketing material and similar to their North American counterparts, the Nippon Budokan began working closely with local elementary and high schools organizing classes, seminars and tournaments.



The Pandemic and the Olympics

The greatest challenge for Mr. Yoshikawa, as it was for many martial arts schools and organizations, was the Pandemic. In Mr. Yoshikawa's case, it was two-fold as the Pandemic also disrupted the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which the Nippon Budokan was an integral part of.

As in the 1964 Olympics, the Nippon Budokan facility was to house the Judo competitions, but this Olympics, they were also to host the inaugural Karate events. This required substantial upgrades as required by the Olympic committee, including the building of a second attached facility which housed the new training or warmup dojo.



HY: For the preparation of the Olympics, Nippon Budokan was closed for approximately two years.

Similar to elsewhere in the world, most businesses in Japan closed down during the Pandemic, although the business of the Olympics operated somewhat differently. While Japan was struggling with COVID-19 issues, the Olympic committee was still pushing for the games to be held.

Fortunately for Mr. Yoshikawa, the local construction conglomerates had dedicated themselves to ensuring the success of these very important (at least to Japan) 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

HY: The construction companies responsible for renovating the venue did not experience any prolonged interruptions due to COVID-19 and were able to complete the renovations almost as scheduled

This was very convenient for the Nippon Budokan as the construction included a secondary training facility known as the Naka Dojo. This new building covers more than 3,000 sq m. (over 32,000 sq. ft.) and includes new lecture and cafeteria facilities, with the Dojo itself being over 7,000 sq. ft. Together with the modernization of the main building, this multi-Billion Yen upgrade was completed on time, even though the Olympics themselves were delay for almost a year.







HY: Despite the one-year delay caused by the pandemic, we are very proud that judo and karate were able to be held at Nippon Budokan.

The lengths that the Nippon Budokan staff went to, in order to ensure that success of the Olympics, were substantial which included relocating offices until after the Olympics. Unfortunately, with the Olympics bureaucracy being almost as big as the event itself, there was no nearby office complex to accommodate them. Mr. Yoshikawa's unique solution was to simply move the entire office staff to an adjacent parking lot where a temporary tent covered solution was built.

The comradery created within his Budo influenced staff, whereas they survived this small hardship for the good of the nation (or at least the Tokyo Olympics) also solidified Mr. Yoshikawa's leadership legacy.

Personal Career Legacy.

When trying to assess Mr. Yoshikawa's personal efforts while leading the Nippon Budokan, we feel it was his determination to preserve old Japanese martial arts by focusing on children's events and classes that should have a lasting effect. Having three sons of his own, Mr. Yoshikawa feels that Family and the focus on traditional cultural values is the best path for the future of the Japanese society.

While Mr. Yoshikawa has many candidates to choose from when deciding on a successor, he continues to lead the organization by providing the administration and facilities for various non-profit martial arts organizations throughout Japan. These services include not only the organizing and running of several children training tournaments, where learning takes a priority over competition, there also are seminars, lectures and an extensive library of books and eBooks published exclusively by the Nippon Budokan.

The Nippon Budokan is a longtime and prestigious institution which remains a cultural center for both traditional and modern martial arts .... Budo (see list of modern Budos officially supported by the Nippon Budokan above). While we have not touched upon the many non-martial arts related events made historic by the "Budokan" (think Beatles and Cheap Trick on the music side alone), it is the wholesome and inclusive nature of this time-honored institution that will allow it to flourish into the future.

It also provides the Japanese people an opportunity to remember their time-honored martial arts history, traditions and culture. These are the same values that continue to drive Secretary General Yoshikawa Hideo, which ensures they also become part of his personal ‘lifetime at the Nippon Budokan’ legacy.

