

The Divide And Conquer Strategy

Description

What Is The Divide And Conquer Strategy?

Dictators, politicians, sociopaths, and individuals have been known to use the divide and conquer strategy. It is also known as the divide and rule strategy since those who imply it have the goal of ruling or controlling a situation or resource. You can also add in another term that frequently accompanies the division and conquering, isolate (Divide, Isolate, And Conquer).

People increase their power is by using the divide and conquer strategy. The strategy allows people to take a large and formidable enemy and separate them into smaller parts. These smaller parts can then be attacked easier.

Examples

- Politicians on both sides make bold statements that cause people to disagree and fight amongst each other. This is especially true when it comes to preventing a lower class revolution. To avoid a united lower class, politicians for hundreds of years have fostered infighting.
- Hitler divided his troops between an eastern and western front in world war 2. This led to weaker armies who were consumed by a force that was only focused on the Germans.
- Calvary used to charge at the center of weaker armies to split them into two sections. Artillery can also have the same effect.
- Romans attacked Macedonia and then split the country into smaller republics. They isolated the republics and then began killing off people who disagreed with their rule.
- Nixon won in 68 because the Democrat party was divided about the Vietnam war. Half of the party thought the war was pointless and the other half thought it was important to the USA's world strategy. The period was also one of general civil unrest as racial tensions were high because of MLK Jr's assassination.
- Managers often divide their subordinates into smaller groups when their power is challenged. See this [study](#).



Large Groups of People are Easily Divided

Why Do Leaders Divide People?

Humans derive much of their power because of their ability to communicate and coordinate with others. Ancient people might not be able to kill bears on their own, but a whole tribe of people could.

All battles are costly in terms of time and resources. Divide and conquer separates a once unified group into smaller infighting parts, causing the larger group to use its own resources to attack itself. This leads people who are divided and isolated to lose some of their social, economic, or physical strength.

Thus, [the main](#) reason divide and rule is a commonly effective strategy is because **people are easier to control and conquer when they are divided and isolated**. Division and isolation take away one of humanity's most powerful weapons, goal oriented cooperation.

How Do You Divide And Rule?

One [study](#) looked at how managers responded to power challenges. They typically used divide and conquer strategies, all of which are listed below. Divide and conquer strategies were used to target the employees who had more power in order to weaken them. As Robert Greene said, don't get intimidated by the whole of the group. Instead learn to spot the parts that make up the whole. See the ways the parts connect to other parts. Where are their strengths and what are their weaknesses? Who competes, dislikes, or has contrary interests in the group. Learn to play them against each other. They will look to you for support and you can leverage this want to grow your power further.

Techniques

- Link up people who already dislike each other to accomplish an important task.
- [Delegate](#) responsibilities to two individuals and force them to cooperate. Then blame or play them against each other.
- Restrict communication between groups.
- Physically separate people.
- Stop people from bonding.

- **Favor some people and scapegoat others to create competition.**
- Help enemies cooperate with one group so they become more powerful and attack another group.
- **Bring up topics that people disagree about and cause arguments. Do it under the guise of interesting discussion.**
- Spread gossip.
- Restrict information flow in the group so it only goes to you. Spread some information and keep some back.
- Take one side in a debate that you want to weaken. Pretend to agree with them and then at the end point out something that will weaken their argument significantly.
- Encourage people to have different views and to debate with each other. Do it under the guise of “democracy.” This will inevitably cause infighting.

At Work

The easiest way to divide and conquer at work is to create a competitive environment. Competition will always yield some winners and other losers. Pay attention to what you set up as a competition thought and make sure it serves the needs of your power or the company. Think of all the outcomes that could happen and how to make the best outcomes more likely and the worst less likely. Make one person the star and the other the scapegoat.

The Art Of War And The Divide And Conquer Strategy

See an online Art of War book [here](#). The Art of War was an ancient Chinese strategy book written by a general. In it he talks about division in an army.

“By discovering the enemy’s dispositions and remaining invisible ourselves, we can keep our forces concentrated, while the enemy’s must be divided.” “If double his strength, divide him...”

This first quote teaches us that understanding the enemy and concealing your strategies make it harder to divide you, and it makes it easier to divide the enemy. In other words, if you have a better idea of what is happening than the enemy, you can spot weaknesses and use those weaknesses to divide the enemy into smaller groups so they are easier to attack.

“Knowing the place and time of the coming battle, we may concentrate from the greatest distances in order to fight.”

This second quote means that if you know important information about the battle you can unify your army so it is stronger. First this teaches us that something about being divided makes an army weaker. Second it teaches that knowing where crucial battles will take place is key to winning.

Overall, the Art of War teaches us that concealing information protects us from being divided. On the other hand learning more about the enemy opens them up to division. **Practically speaking this means you should hide your weaknesses and look for the best time and place to attack your enemy. By maximizing their weakness and minimizing yours, you can increase the chance of separating their followers into groups you can conquer one by one.**

Machiavelli And The Divide And Conquer Strategy

[Machiavelli](#) talks about how a **leader should endeavor to divide the forces of his enemies in every act he takes**. He gives two strategies for doing this. First you can cause the person to separate his forces. Second you can cause him to doubt or become suspicious of people who he trusts.

To accomplish these strategies you can stir up suspicion through gossip or by framing people's actions in a negative way. Favor some individuals and scapegoat others. Set up a competitive environment. You can also help other enemies cooperate with part of the group to make that group more likely to attack another group. Finally you can prevent alliances by isolating people physically or socially.

Avoid Becoming the Group Scapegoat

33 Strategies Of War Divide And Conquer Strategy

Robert Green also writes about divide and rule in the 33 Strategies Of War book, chapter 17. He suggests not being intimidated by an enemy's whole. Instead look at their individual parts and look for ways to separate each part. Look for things that connect and unify and those that divide. When a member of the larger group feels they are losing support they will be more likely to cooperate or surrender. Make people feel isolated by making people feel they are separated from the group and alone. This feeling will make them do something desperate and risky.

Trick them into saying things or bringing up topics that will offend others in the group. Try to get them to gossip to you about other individuals and then tactfully share that gossip. Separate the leaders from the followers in the group by making them look out of touch or overly controlling or authoritarian. Spread them thin by attacking all over the place so they don't know where or what to prepare to defend. Restrict information from different parts of each group, and make the new information only come through you. Control anything vital. Consider giving groups multiple goals so they split their resources up in attaining each goal.

In debates take pretend to take one side first when you start speaking but then create doubt on a small but crucial part of their argument. This will make them weaker by making them question their position and make them more open to suggestion.

The competition tactic was used by the Romans. They created a system where some cities had benefits that others didn't. By giving benefits depending on performance to some groups and not others, they created competition. The groups became more focused on competing for Rome's attention and benefits that they didn't join up with the other states and rebel. "All roads lead to Rome." Everything must flow through you.

Consider rotating your stars to create more competition by making people believe there is a possible position at the top for them. Encourage people to have different views and to debate those views. Greene says to justify this as something necessary for a good Democracy.

This is similar to the us vs them tactic. This is used in politics to create an enemy that unifies a group of people. By creating enemies within a group you divide the group

How To Overcome Divide And Conquer

The best way to overcome divide and conquer as a strategy is to make it clear what the person is doing. Use techniques from our article about inoculation. [Inoculation](#) is a strategy where you predict the person's behavior as a way of proving a person is up to something. Remember the most important part of inoculation is pointing out how this individual's actions is a direct threat to something the group values. If it isn't a threat, why would they care?

You can also unify people by demonstrating what they have to lose. If people have a common interest, like an out group to attack, they will become unified by the common dislike for that group.

See the next paragraph for more information.

How To Deal With A Divide And Rule Boss

Often the best way to deal with a divide and rule boss is to simply find a different job. People with this type of strategy can be miserable to work for and you likely can't change their opinion.

You could try to get on their side top. Since bosses often do the divide and conquer strategy as a response to their power being threatened, you can build their power for them. If done correctly, this will separate you from the crowd and you will become their ally. Ask yourself what their weakest point is and fix it for them. In a way this gives your boss what they want, competition between his followers. You need to decide if competition will lead to an outcome that is favorable to you before choosing this or other methods.

Finally you can take the risky route and fight back. The best way to fight the divide and rule strategy is to unify and counter attack. Do this in three steps.

First get people to realize the strategy that is being used against them. One way to do this is to predict the boss's behavior. See our article on defending against character assassination to learn more about a technique called [inoculation](#). Second you can persuade people to fight back by using the [WIIFM](#) principle. This is the most powerful persuasion principle.

Once you have made it clear what people have to lose by not fighting, you can start the actual attack. Give them a chance to stop using the tactics but don't expect change. You will likely have to get them fired. See this [article](#) for techniques for ruining reputation.

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