The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about management

策 (radical 竹 zhu = bamboo)
Pronunciation: ce (Putonghua, 4th tone), chaak (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: policy, strategy, tactics

策 originally meant bamboo horse-whip: 策馬 (ce ma = whip/ride-horse). 驅策 (qu ce = drive-whip) means order/control/drive people. 計策 (ji ce = calculation-plan) = smart idea/trick/plan. CEOs 策劃 (ce hua = plan-sketch = draw-up) company’s 策略 (ce lue = policies/strategies). Cadres 策動群眾 (ce dong qun zhong = drive-move-crowd-many = mobilize the masses).


Rulers draw up 國策 (guo ce = national policies), but 老子 (Lao-zi, father of Taoism) suggested 無為而治 (wu wei er zhi = no~doing/action~and~rule = “No policy is good policy”).

by Diana Yue