

“Imagination Governs the World”

On the battlefield or in the boardroom, Napoleon's advice can help win “campaigns.”

Napoleon's legendary campaigns (1796-1815) most often evoke discussion of his strategic genius and tactical innovation, but his true “secret weapon” was *leadership*.

BE TENACIOUS

Napoleon was a leader, teacher and master strategist who was unwavering in his commitment to his goals. In business or in the profession of arms, it is critical that personal and organizational *tenacity* be ingrained into the leadership climate. As Napoleon once said, “Victory belongs to the most persevering.”

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Napoleon noted, “Imagination governs the world.” He realized that an organization is best served by people who are allowed – and preferably *encouraged* – to formulate solutions that might seem unconventional yet still produce positive results. In fact, his battlefield triumphs were in large part due to his empowerment of subordinate commanders with the ability to make the tactical decisions necessary to win battles. In contrast, other armies fell apart because talented commanders lacked tactical flexibility. For an organization to thrive, leaders must permit subordinates to “think outside the box.”

A mounted Napoleon directs his troops in *Napoleon a Cheval* by Joseph Chabard. Napoleon is one of history's true military geniuses, but his leadership style often proved to be the “secret weapon” that inspired his soldiers to achieve unequalled battlefield accomplishments.

AVOID COMPLACENCY

Complacency is deadly to any organization. Working beyond the required minimum standard enables members of a business or army to achieve excellence. An organization that merely “avoids failure” can never motivate its people to perform at a higher level. As Napoleon once said, “Death is nothing, but to live defeated and inglorious is to die daily.” Don't let your organization die one day at a time!

DON'T SUBSTITUTE TECHNOLOGY FOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Napoleon enthusiastically capitalized on technological advances in military weaponry, and he did so with enormous success.

However, he placed the greatest value on the ability of individual leaders to outwit their opponents and overcome major obstacles. He said, “There are two powers in the world, the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the mind.” Thus, he warned against overdependence on purely technological solutions. Remember that human knowledge and experience – *coupled* with technology – always win the day.

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO SPEAK UP

It is vital that members of an organization know when to speak up, and that the leadership climate is such that they are not afraid to do so. If a person has an important idea or a concern but remains silent for fear of retribution, the organization ultimately suffers. As Napoleon said, “Ten people who speak make more noise than 10,000 who are silent.”

SET HIGH PERSONAL STANDARDS

In war and in business, integrity can mean the difference between success and failure. Napoleon famously declared, “The moral is to the physical as three to one.” This oft-quoted statement implies the need to set high standards for personal and organizational conduct. Neither Soldiers nor employees can be inspired to accomplish great things if their leaders lack integrity. ★

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