

# Napoleon bonaparte astounding leader history essay

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## **Introduction**

Napoléon Bonaparte was and still is one of France's most astounding leaders. Though born in Corsica, he came to France for school at the age of nine and then joined French artillery at the age of sixteen. He rose to the rank of general, being elected First Consul of France and Her Dependencies for life. At the age of 34 he proclaimed himself France's emperor due to the fearless determination on the battle field and the great ability to lead people. Although his leadership style could have been seen as unorthodox, it is today that we can understand all of the characteristics that made him a brilliant leader. We can now state that Napoleon was a man of destiny, as he remarked once by: " Destiny called upon me to change the face of the world".

## **Leadership skills**

Leadership needs to take into account not only the leader, but also the relationship that exists between the leaders and is followers, respectively " the ones that comprise the general's staff immediate circle of assistants who act to translate the commander's operational will into battlefield reality." [1] We will first have a look at Napoléon Bonaparte leadership skills in order to further discuss the consequences of his leadership. Napoléon knew how to motivate his people and keep them enthusiastic about their mission. He won the trust of the people he was leading but also of the ones he wasn't leading, therefore he first took care of his relationship with his generals and then he conquered the loyalty of his soldiers with the promise of glorious victories. Being a very charismatic speaker, he knew exactly how to motivate

and influence people, this being a major key to his success. Napoleon's army fought for France and for their commanding emperor with the same intensity, truly believing in his ability to succeed. Napoléon was always thinking about new military strategies, new ways to make things work and that is why on the battle fields his enemies were amazed by his maneuvers and did not know what to do combat them. He would fight consecutive days, no matter if it were snowing, raining, sunny, night, it was important always to have an advantage.[2]<http://potential2success.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Napoleon-rivoli.jpg>

Napoleon knew that showing gratitude will be a great way to acquire the favor of the people. In this case soldiers feeling appreciated would perform not only for their country but also for their leader. In order to reward his men Bonaparte created the Legion of Honor. He would encourage soldiers in other ways: to the bravest man of the battalion, Napoleon would award a medal from his own coat and pin it to the selected soldier. Napoleon wasn't offended to do during a battle the things that were the responsibilities of his subordinates. He would be wherever he was needed, even if that would mean loading cannons. The fact that after the battles Napoleon would look "sweaty, dirty and covered in gun powder won the respect of the men around him." He offered them the feeling that he was one of them and cared about the goal of the battle. Napoleon was a good-natured man. He cared about his troops, their welfare and took good care of them. He felt the pain of the victims of war families. He was not afraid to put himself in the line of fire, and that is why his soldiers were capable to follow him without hesitation.

## **Napoleon in Italy**

In the spring of 1796, Napoleon came to Italy as Commander of the Army of Italy. The soldiers he found there were incredulous, undisciplined, unmotivated, but by spring the following year Napoleon changed this situation by offering them a goal to fight for. His victories came soon after his arrival, allowing him to ward off the Austrian army out from Italy. At first the soldiers did not warmly welcome because they did not trust him and saw him as a "Street General" in reference to his actions in Paris. Although the army was well-armed it was badly supplied and the soldiers had low morale due to months of back pay owed. The uniforms were poorly kept and the discipline was not present with only 45, 000 of the expected 60, 000 men present. As the poorly equipped armies were falling apart, Napoleon acted by ordering all looters to face death if caught and started constant drill and parades among the troops. He started motivating the soldiers restoring their pride and force of will as soldiers of France. Napoleon kept his men busy because he didn't want his soldiers to lose discipline and become a rabble. Wanting to achieve the full effect of his measures, Napoleon knew that he has to give the troops a victory, in order to keep the effects of his measures and for his soldiers not to slip back into bad habits. Therefore Napoleon decided to strike against Piedmont, and did what was to become his trademark tactic; he struck at one foe in force and defeated them in time to concentrate on another.

## **Consequences of his leadership**

Napoleon's lack of experience at the regimental level cost him the battle of Waterloo. Although he only trusted his own instincts and conscience, his

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success on the battle field came to an end: „ I do not believe in the proverb that in order to be able to command one must know how to obey" said Napoleon.[3]Napoleon was not a cautious man, he was always looking for further conquests. Looking back, maybe it would have been better to consolidate his power rather than trust in his personality so absolutely. That is why the state became, in his era, the instrument of dictatorship. He claimed that he alone embodied the indivisible rights of the people.

[4]Nevertheless Napoleon Bonaparte had blind spots that he would cover with staff officers. For example Marshal Berthier, the Emperor's chief of staff, who endured the burning intellect of Napoleon. Berthier's responsibilities were: controlling the division of labor on Napoleon's staff, all finances, and all appointments; he supervised the issue of all of Napoleon's orders regarding troop movements, operations, and artillery and engineer employment.

[5]Napoleon needed Berthier in order to translate broad instructions into clear, concise orders fit to be delivered to the corps commanders. As David Chandler notes, " Bonaparte owed much of his early success to the administrative talents of Berthier." [6]His ambitions knew no definite limits believing his will was strong enough to triumph over the nature of man and the nature of things alike. To him, the impossible was only " a phantom of the timid soul and the refuge of the coward." [7]Napoleon did not know moderation, nor could his temperament accommodate itself to peace. He did not believe in harmony but in mastery, not in compromise but in struggle and decision. Napoleon was unwilling for France to become a great state among other states and for himself to be a king equal to other kings. He had to be the first of all, the emperor of the Occident. He was repeatedly offered

favorable peace conditions that would have left France in possession of many of its conquests, but he rejected them. His stake was everything, the alternative was nothing. The words of this man of genius sound sometimes like pronouncements of our times: " There is only one secret for world leadership, namely, to be strong' because in strength there is neither error nor illusion: it is naked truth." " Succeed! I judge men only by the results of their acts." He was a dynamic force, for whom " the world is but an occasion to act dangerously." [8]

## **Conclusion**

How can we explain twentieth-century history without reference to Napoleon Bonaparte? Or how can any policymaker in any capital try to explain the world today without recourse to the personal goals and beliefs of Napoleon Bonaparte? According to Napoleon Bonaparte " A leader is a dealer in hope." [9] Leaders shape not only a state's goals and capabilities but also the manner in which the state employs its resources in pursuit of its goals. Napoleon's personal ambition was not the only facet of his personality that made him a crucial factor in the international relations of his time. Napoleon was also a military genius, one of the greatest generals in history. [10] When Napoleon was at his best, he could achieve almost anything as a general, regardless of the forces arrayed against him. At his worst, he still inspired his troops to superhuman efforts and terrified even his most able opponents. Ultimately, Napoleon proved so uniquely important to French aggressiveness and power that the other European powers broke with centuries of tradition and made his removal a principal war aim. [11] Napoleon was a soldier first and last. Wellington said that Napoleon was worth 40, 000 men on the

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battlefield and that is why with Napoleon leading its armies, France could be defeated only by the combined forces of all of Europe.[12]