

# Napoleon on Project Management,

## Timeless Lessons in Planning, Execution and Leadership; by Jerry Manas

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### Book Review by Stacy Goff

Last Winter we reviewed Mark Kozak-Holland's excellent *Churchill's Adaptive Enterprise*. This Summer we received and read Jerry Manas' book, *Napoleon on Project Management; Timeless Lessons in Planning, Execution and Leadership*, but have not had the time to post our review of it. So here goes. *Napoleon on Project Management* continues the thread of great reads with useful information for Project Managers. Given that most of today's most effective Project and Program Managers are Renaissance Women and Men, it makes great sense to Learn Lessons from history, literature, and all the other resources available to us beyond just our practice publications. And what better way to add to your Executive point-of-view than to learn from arguably the most effective Executive of the 1800's!

#### What I Liked

As a history enthusiast, I especially appreciate the extent of research Manas put into this book. For example, he not only pointed out nuances in Napoleon's leadership style, he reported stories of how he used that style to gain the confidence of his troops. Then Manas establishes the connection between each of these stories and the lessons today's Project Managers can apply from them.

#### Blow-by-Blow

Part 1: Rise To Power. I felt like it started slow. I had trouble figuring out the structure or direction. I finally decided Manas was laying the groundwork for what was to come. Even after I finished the book, I went back, wondering if my pick-it-up-and-read-a-bit approach was to blame. That was, in fact, part of the problem.

Part 2 started strong. The Six Winning Principles gave this section the sense of structure I was looking for in section 1. This is the heart of the book, and each chapter went over one of the Six Winning Principles with allegory, detailed steps for fulfilling the Principle, and projections into today's application.

Part 3: The Downfall introduced Four Critical Warning Signs. Each Warning Sign breaks down into components that are evident in many of today's projects.

Tee-ups: Each Chapter selected a transferable theme, explored Napoleon's application of an insight or tool, and then usually applied that learning to today's projects and Project Managers.

Executive Summary and Marching Orders: Each chapter ended with a list of the key learnings in that chapter. This was especially useful for going back to find where certain innovations (such as Critical Chain) were mentioned. There was no index, probably due to page count limitations.

External Resources: Manas has extensive references to other books and resources. Unlike some authors, most of the references are not to his own works. If I had followed each cite to delve into how it supported the point the author was making, I still would not be finished with the book. This was mostly a strength, although sometimes it disrupted the flow of the storyline.

Innovations: Manas has Napoleon inventing, or at least establishing as prior art, many of today's PM tools and toys. Everything from Earned Value Management, to Goldratt's Critical Chain, to Portfolio Prioritization and Resources Allocation, and many others. Geez, if I didn't know better, I'd suspect Jerry Manas to be Bonaparte reincarnated, trying to get credit where it is due.

Audience: This book has a wide-ranging potential audience. However, practicing Project Managers will appreciate more of the insights and comparisons than most others. Executives can gain from the perspective of Napoleon as a leadership model as well as a hard-charging CEO. The book could probably work well in the classroom, given the effective debriefing at the end of each chapter.

Disappointment: It is not the book's fault, but I was saddened to recall the details about Napoleon's final Project Closure. I'd forgotten that part from my Jr. High School history classes, and I grew an attachment to the man through Manas's stories. I think Jerry Manas did as well.

Reviewer Rating of this book (4.5 out of 5):  — Stacy A. Goff, PMP

Ed. Note: *Napoleon on Project Management* is available at the Amazon website. I am surprised to see that as of this posting there are only two reviews (I did not look at them until after I wrote the one above). Our recommendation: Enjoy this book!