

## [Transcript] Founders / #302 Napoleon (The Mind of Napoleon)

One of the most unique things about this podcast is that I know the founder of every company that advertises on founders. All of them listen to the podcast. And so it makes building a relationship a lot easier. And the reason I insist on doing this is because I only want supporters of this podcast that live and breathe their product. In every case, we share the same obsession for the quality of the products that we're making and the businesses that we're building. And so Eight Sleep is one of the supporters of this episode. And the founder Matteo and I actually live in the same city. A few months after I started to use Eight Sleep, I randomly ran into Matteo at a restaurant. I was with some founder friends of mine. And so I went over and said, Hi, when I got back to my table, my friend asked me, he's like, who are you talking to? I was like, Oh, that's Matteo, the founder of Eight Sleep. And then what my friend said was absolutely hilarious. He goes, Oh, he looks like he gets great sleep. Matteo is living and breathing his product. And before using his product, I didn't know what I was missing. I had never had the ability to change the temperature of my bed before. I had no idea how much that would improve the quality of my sleep. I keep my Eight Sleep ice cold. It is cold before I get into bed. So I fall asleep faster and I wake up less during the night. That feature alone is worth 10 times the price. My wife and I were just on an anniversary trip. And after a few nights at the hotel, she said to me, I miss our Eight Sleep. I told Matteo that too. And he laughed. There are very few no-brainer investments in life. An Eight Sleep is one of them. You can get yours by going to [eightsleep.com](https://eightsleep.com) forward slash founders. There was no internet in Napoleon's day, but one thing is for sure. If there was, Napoleon would have used Meter to make sure that his internet was fast, secure, reliable, and could scale up as his empire expanded. Napoleon was busy conquering the world.

You're busy building a world-class business. In both cases, it's smart to let Meter handle your internet and Wi-Fi while you focus on what you do best. And one of the great things is that Meter works everywhere. Meter gives you faster, simpler, more secure internet and Wi-Fi for any business or commercial space. That could be an office, a warehouse, a laboratory, everywhere. Another great thing. It's as easy to switch on as water or electricity. It is actually why the company is called Meter. There's power meters and there's water meters for every building. There should be one for internet networking and Wi-Fi. Meter gives you streamlined design and installation, powerful hardware and smart software. That's all fully managed and they provide expert support. That means all you have to do is give your address and the square footage of your commercial space to Meter and they take care of the rest. Even better, there is no upfront cost to you. As a business owner, you'll love Meter because it's going to save you money while your IT team will love Meter because it saves them time. And as your empire expands, Meter grows right along with you.

There's no more worrying about expensive upfront costs. You simply pay one monthly rate, check out their website, explains all the value Meter can provide for you. Go to [Meter.com](https://meter.com) forward slash founders. And finally, it could not be an episode of founders without support from our good friends at Tiny. In fact, I was just talking to the founder of Tiny Andrew Wilkinson. We have some surprise for you next week. Make sure you listen to the Tiny ad on the next episode. I think you'll be interested in one of the businesses that Tiny owns. But if you listen to any episode of founders by now, you already know what Tiny is. Tiny is the easiest way for you to sell your business. They provide straightforward cash exits for founders. Tiny is the place to go if you want to sell your

business without all the typical hassle and headache, and they can buy businesses of all sizes. In fact, they just went public. So I'm sure these numbers will even go higher in the future. They bought businesses in the past for as little as a million dollars to businesses for over a hundred million dollars. If you have a business that you want to sell now or in the future, make sure you get in touch with Tiny first, you can actually email them at high at tiny.com. They will respond within 48 hours. And of course, you can learn more from their incredibly designed website at tiny.com. This book is a selection of written and spoken quotes on a variety of subjects grouped according to broad themes and designed to give the reader an insight into the mind of a man who combined energy of thought and energy of action to an exceptional degree. Napoleon was a manipulator of things and men. For Napoleon, each thought is a step to an action. In Napoleon was a radiant power of the mind that cut through speculation, stripping all problems down to their simplest elements, discarding all obstacles to action. To his mind, inaction was unbearable. Work, he said, is my element. I am born and built for work. I have known the limitations of my legs. I have known the limitations of my eyes. I have never been able to know the limitations of my working capacity. Long before he played any political role, he had discarded whatever illusions might have prevented him from playing it. He knows that men have always been the same, that nothing can change their nature. It is from the past that he will draw his lessons in order to shape the present. To Napoleon, men were weak, ineffectually selfish, and easily guided. The strong are good, only the weak are wicked, he once wrote. This maxim was to become a cardinal principle of his politics. As for the purpose of life, his answer was definite. We are born for the enjoyment of life. Happiness is merely the enjoyment of life in the manner that conforms best to our nature. All my life, I have sacrificed everything. Comfort, self-interest, happiness, to my destiny. Destiny must be fulfilled. That is my chief doctrine. And Napoleon's idea that you must do everything to fulfill your destiny might be the main idea behind the book that I hold in my hand and the one I'm going to talk to you about today, which is *The Mind of Napoleon*, a selection from his written and spoken words edited and translated by J. Christopher Harold. This book is very old. It's actually first published in 1955. And the book is exactly what the subtitle says it is. It's about 300 pages of Napoleon speaking directly to you. And after you're done listening to this, if you haven't listened to the first episode I did on Napoleon, that's more of like an overview of his life. It's based on this book called *Napoleon, A Concise Biography*, this episode 294. I'd recommend buying that book too, because it's like a biography of Napoleon. I think it's like 130 pages or 140 pages, so you can read in like a weekend. It gives you a real like nice overview of who he is. This is going to be like the, this is the second book on Napoleon I've read. I plan on reading many, many more over my life. The reason I wanted to do this is because I want to also understand the people to be studying on a deeper level. And for some reason, pre-World War II, a lot of history's greatest founders keep repeating that they learned from and studied and read biographies of Napoleon. After World War II, they still talk about Napoleon, but then you have a lot of mentions of Winston Churchill in there as well. So there's something about the lives of Churchill and Napoleon that these founders seem to be drawn from and find benefit of studying. I want to jump right back into the introduction. And again, this is just, he's going to be talking directly to you and I,

you know, it's funny, a friend of mine texted me and asked me what I was doing and I happened to be reading this book at this time. Let me, this will give you an overview of what we're about to do here. So he's like, you know, what are you doing? And I said, currently being lectured by Napoleon that I'm soft and fragile and have failed to make the world remember my name for eternity.

So the scale in which this guy thought and lived and acted is just unreal. And so let's go back to what he considered his chief doctrine. I want to read that quote again. All my life I've sacrificed everything. Comfort, self-interest, happiness to my destiny. Destiny must be fulfilled. That is my chief doctrine. So figuring out what your destiny is. It's the first step and then doing whatever. All these ideas that come into your mind to Napoleon are just the prerequisite to action. He's constantly repeating, think about it, figure out what you want to do, and then make it happen in the real world. There's actually a quote from Marc Andreessen, which is one of my favorite quotes I've ever come across. I covered this back on episode 50 and this is what Marc's about to say here. Napoleon definitely would agree with and I think the truth of this statement manifested in Napoleon's life. The world is a very malleable place. If you know what you want and you go for it with maximum energy and drive and passion, the world will often reconfigure itself around you much more quickly and easily than you would think. And so to that degree, not only did Napoleon build his own world, but he built his own reality. And so he has his own definitions of words. This is how what he considers luck. A consecutive series of great actions never is the result of chance and luck. It is always a product of planning and genius. Is it because they are lucky that great men become great? No, but being great, they have been able to master luck. What is luck? The ability to exploit accidents. The vulgar would call this luck, but in fact it is the characteristic of genius when I got to that part. Maybe think of one of my favorite quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson. He said, shallow men believe in luck. They believe in circumstances. Strong men believe in cause and effect. Napoleon believed in cause and effect. Back to this idea about going after your life with maximum energy and drive and passion. Hesitation is fatal. Once an action has begun, it must be followed through with the utmost exertion of the will. And then a few pages later, he tells us what we should be directing our will at and that is figuring out what your destiny is. If I have any ambition, it is so natural to me, so innate, so intimately linked with my existence that is like the blood that circulates in my veins, like the air that I breathe. This guy has a way with words. To aim at world empire seemed to Napoleon a most natural thing. So something you and I have talked about in the past is this idea where the greatest founders, it's not like they have 100 different ideas. They identify a handful of principles. You see this over and over again. They identify a handful of principles that are important to them, important to the way they're building their business, and they repeat them for decades. It's the same case for Napoleon. This is something that he's going to mention the first time that's mentioned, I don't know, 15 times in this book that he's shooting for immortality. There is no immortality, but the memory that is left in the minds of men. To have lived without glory, without leaving a trace of one's existence is to have not lived at all. Remember that line because this is something that he's going to revisit. He uses different words, but that same idea. To have lived without glory, without leaving a trace of your existence is to have not lived at all. And then there's two quotes on this concept that you and I talk about all the time, which is founder mentality. Founder mentality is really this idea. It's like, I can start something that changes the world around me. And so it talks about Napoleon's temperament. The temperament is characterized by his

dissatisfaction

with the disorderly nature of the world, such as he finds it. He creates his own world. Entrepreneurs, founders, or world builders couple pages later. Now, in Napoleon's own words, he gives us his definition of creation, which I thought was fantastic. Again, founder mentality is this idea, hey, this thing doesn't exist. I can actually start something new that changes the world around me. The greatest, so Napoleon's definition of creation, creation, the greatest improvisation of the human mind is that which gives existence to the non-existent. Another theme that he's going to repeat over and over again is the fact that he believes in the great individual. And after reading this book, because Napoleon repeats it so much, I think what past founders are getting out of studying Napoleon is this just belief that you can actually change the world, that you are a great individual and that you can have an effect on things around you. And he's a bit of an elitist, and you see this here. Without great men, we have only mediocre men. And if there had never been anything but mediocre men, we would still be half apes. Okay, so that is the end of the introduction. And now we get into, from here on out, it's just quotes from Napoleon speaking directly to you and I. What I thought about is, I just did, I think it was episode 299, that fantastic new book on Steve Jobs was put out by the Steve Jobs archive. And the forward or the introduction of that book was written by Steve Jobs Widow, Loreen Powell Jobs. And she said something, I think it might have been the first sentence in her introduction, that I thought was excellent. And she says, the best way to understand a person is to listen to that person directly. That is what this book is for Napoleon. And so one thing Napoleon, I think, would tell you and I is ask why things are the way they are. And you need to think things through yourself. A few pages ago, he used the word illusions, that the things that you think are actually possible, like you're constrained by an illusion. And so he says, most sentiments are traditions, we experience them because they have preceded us. And so his point there is you can go on copying tradition and just doing whatever, what future, what previous generations have done over and over again, or you can actually create something new and think for yourself. A large part of the book is Napoleon breaking down various historical figures that he studied. In many cases, like, okay, I want these traits from Alexander or I don't want this trait from Charlemagne or whatever the case is. And one thing that he criticizes, like he would analyze other previous generals and their battle plans. And one thing he realizes, like some people were just sitting around thinking too much and not acting. And he says, the great majority of men attend to what is necessary only when they feel in need for it. The precise time when it is too late. Another strength of Napoleon is he had an extremely advanced understanding of human psychology. This is something he repeats over and over again, men are moved by two lovers only fear and self interest. A few years later, he says the same thing, men are guided by nothing else than self interest. This is something the founders of the advertising industry like Albert Lasker, Claude Hopkins, David Ogilvy, a generation later realized, and this is something we can use in our commercial lives that you're wasting your time talking about your product, or you're talking about your company, you just appeal to interest. The customer only cares what your product does for them humans are guided by nothing else than self interest. And then Napoleon shows us his view on human nature. There's a line actually went back through my notes and read wise, because it's like I've heard like there's the way Napoleon thinks. I would say it's very similar to this this line about Charlie Munger and Cicero and poor Charlie's almanac where he says his

underlying philosophical view was one of deep and realistic cynicism about human nature. I think he believed that about other humans and himself he says out he says I start out by believing the worst I defy anyone to trick me men would have to be exceptional rascals to be as bad as I assume them to be. And then he immediately demonstrates that this applies to himself as well. This is the thing about Napoleon he is unapologetically extreme to maybe more than any other person I've ever read about. He says my wife could have died and it would have not interfered for a quarter of an hour with the execution of my plans. And then later on we see another example of this this underlying philosophical view of deep and realistic cynicism about humans and life in general. And in funny this is actually intersection called life destiny and greatness. Your nephew Elliot has been killed on the battlefield. That young man had acquired valuable military experience. Someday he would have been a most valuable officer. He died gloriously and facing the enemy. He did not suffer for an instant. What reasonable man would not have chosen such a death. What man is there who in the vicissitudes of life would not have put down his money to buy such a way out of an often contemptible world. And then we go back to that reoccurring theme with Napoleon the fact that you go after life with maximum energy and drive and passion. You actually impose your will on the world. He says one must have the will to live and be willing to die. And he talks about this is actually interesting because I'm reading another biography of Anthony Bourdain who obviously committed suicide. And this is something that Napoleon mentions a bunch that it's a mistake no matter what essentially the mistake of suicide. And we go back to his the way he has with words the man who kills himself on Monday night might wish to live on Saturday. And yet one kills oneself only once. The man who breaking down under the weight of present evils ends his life commits a grave injustice towards himself and yields to despair and weakness to a momentary mood at the expense of his entire future existence. So suicide to Napoleon is the worst way to die. This is the worst way to live. When on rising from sleep a man does not know what to do with himself and drags his tedious existence from place to place. When scanning his future he sees nothing but dreadful monotony one day resembling the next when he asks himself why do I exist. Then in my opinion he is the most wretched of all. And then he goes back to some of his favorite themes on immortality on life destiny will greatness. This is a repeated saying what is a great reputation a big noise. The more noise you make the farther it will go laws institutions monuments nations all of this passes. But the noise it makes continues to vibrate through generations. And then he's writing a letter to other people giving the advice that he gives himself to other people die young and I so accept your death. But not if you have lived without glory without being useful to your country without leaving a trace of your existence. For that is to have not lived at all so that we've already heard him repeat that multiple times. When I got to this section it made me think of one of my favorite quotes from Charlie Munger he says don't be too timid go at life with a little courage. And then he's writing a letter to one of his generals and he repeats this this quest for immortality again. This actually reminds me of there's a section at the end of Steve Jobs biography by Walter Isaacson that goes into what drove Steve Jobs that I think echoes what Napoleon is saying here. Everything on earth is soon forgotten except the opinion we leave imprinted on history. I want to read you this quote from the end of that Steve Jobs book by Isaacson. I've read that book a few times the last time I made an episode on it was episode 214 if you want to listen to that. And so this is Isaacson



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describing what drove Steve Jobs and comparing him to other like other founders of his time. He had neither Larry Ellison conspicuous consumption needs nor Bill Gates philanthropic impulses nor the competitive urge to see how high on the Forbes list he could get. Instead this is going to remind me of Napoleon. Instead his ego needs and personal drives led him to seek fulfillment by creating a legacy that would awe people. A dual legacy actually building innovative products and building a lasting company. He wanted to be in the pantheon with and indeed a notch above people like Edwin Lan, Bill Hewlett and David Packard. And what did land Hewlett and Packard have in common at the time that Steve Jobs was still alive when Isaacson was writing that. It's that they were long dead and people were still talking about the legacy they left behind. Go back to what Napoleon just told us. Everything on earth is soon forgotten except the opinion we leave imprinted on history. Napoleon is going to keep repeating you've got to find out what your destiny is and then do everything you can to fulfill it. Men of genius are meteors destined to be consumed and lighting up their century. A man cannot excel unless he is of a unique caste. All my life I have sacrificed everything. Comfort, self interest, happiness to my destiny. Destiny must be fulfilled. That is my chief doctrine. And then he goes back to tying in destiny with immortality. And again, this comes from knowing yourself when he said early in the book, he's like, you know, my ambition is like the blood in my veins and the air I breathe. It's just who I am. It's a natural part of me. I don't even notice its existence. It is not enough for him to exist. He must also be known. He must know himself until then all endeavors are in vain. All schemes will collapse. And so something that you and I have in common with Napoleon is that we spend an excessive amount of time studying great people from history. This is something that appears in the beginning of the book, the end of the book. This section is about men of destiny. So he includes himself in there, George Washington, Muhammad, Jesus Christ. You know, he talks about Frederick the Great, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne just goes on and on. But this was I thought was fascinating. And it's fascinating because he's identifying what the English, the country of England, their view of the young, you know, upstart of America and their leader, George Washington, was just completely wrong. And listen to what he says about Washington. This is actually excellent. Your nation, the British, called Washington a leader of rebels for a long time and refused to acknowledge either him or the independence of his country. But his success obliged them to change their minds and acknowledge both. Listen to his punchline, what he's telling us. It is success, which makes the great man. Think about that. You fail to acknowledge him or the independence of his country, but his success obliged them to change their minds and acknowledge both. It is success, which makes the great man one of my favorite lines ever. And any book that I've ever read for the podcast came back on episode, I think it's 251. It's this biography, this dual biography of Ben Franklin and George Washington. If you haven't bought the book, I think it's like 250 pages, 300 pages. I'd buy it and read it. It's very fascinating because they have this life long partnership and their lives constantly intersect with each other over multiple decades. But this really is the advantage that new companies have new startups, right, creating something new has over existing players. If you think about the analogy between the young upstart in America and the British Empire at the time, I'm going to read you this, but I just saw.

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So in read wise, obviously, I store all of my highlights, right? I have over 20,000 highlights from all the books that I've read. And so I'm constantly rereading them and trying to figure out how stuff we've, you and I have discussed in the past and that I've read in the past connects to what were like the book that I have in my hand. And I'm reading, when I got to this section, I was like, you know what, that made me think of that is Napoleon's describing the British view of Washington and America. Well, what was Washington's view and America's view of the British

on this note, when I read this, you know, I don't know a year ago, whatever it was, I wrote Washington was a badass. And so it says, one of Washington's biographers captured his view, Washington's view of the American Revolution. This is excellent. Essentially, he saw the conflict as a struggle for power in which the colonists, if victorious, destroyed British pretensions of superiority and one control over half a continent, what a line. And that's the crazy thing is, there was examples, I think it was like two decades before that this actual war where Washington had realized, wait, the marketing of British superiority is not matching up with what I'm actually seeing them in the battlefield, because they were trying to fight, Washington was actually helping the British fight the Native Americans in that, in that actual story in the book. And he just realized like, hey, maybe there actually, there is a weakness here, and then we can actually attack that weakness. And the thing about that is a struggle for power in which if we are victorious, we will destroy British pretensions of superiority, and we will win controlled over half a continent. And what does Napoleon say it is success, which makes the great man. And then he tells us one characteristic that great effective men have. And again, you can make the argument that some of these people are effective, and maybe the results of what they actually focused on wasn't good for humanity. That's very, I complete in many cases, I would agree with that. But there is fascinating, like parallel here. I'm on the second book of this four part biography that Robert Caro is writing on LBJ. In the first LBJ biography, LBJ has this line, Lyndon Johnson has this line, that if you do everything, you will win. I think Napoleon agrees with that statement, all great events hang by a single thread. The clever man takes advantage of everything, neglects nothing that may give him some added opportunity. The less clever man, by neglecting one thing, sometimes misses everything. That is such a good line. The less clever man, by neglecting one thing, sometimes misses everything.

Warren Buffett has a line that I found in this book called All I Want to Know is Where I'm Going to Die, So I'll Never Go There, Buffett and Munger, Study and Simplicity and Uncommon, Common Sense. That was episode 286. He says that we are individual, opportunity driven. We see Napoleon echoing that same sentiment here. I had very few definitive ideas. And the reason for this was that instead of seeking to control circumstances, I obeyed them. And they forced me to change my mind all the time. Most of the time, I had no definitive plans, but only projects. This is one of my favorite lines in the entire book. This line is actually related to the next line where he's describing Alexander. The first line is Imagination Rules the World. A couple, like a paragraph later, he's describing Alexander. He says Alexander believes himself a God and he wants to make others believe it. And that notion came from Alexander's imagination. Imagination rules the world. Now we get into his Napoleon's definition of ambition. And really, after I finished reading the entire book, I went back, I always go through my highlights and read them multiple times. And then I start updating notes with the context of everything that's going to come

in the future from the book. And I was like, Oh, he's describing himself here. He could never quit ambition, which overthrows governments and private fortunes, which feeds on blood and crimes.

Ambition is a violent and unthinking fever that ceases only when life ceases. That is Napoleon's description of Napoleon. There is only one thing to do in this world. And that is to keep acquiring more and more money and power. And Napoleon spends a lot of time talking about history.

Essentially,

what he's telling us is that humans don't learn from history. It's the rare few that actually can change their behavior. Because again, learning is not just memorizing information, learning is changing behavior. And so Napoleon says, nation and individuals alike learn only from their own experience. And most of the time from misfortune. So he's saying, Hey, on average, humans don't learn from history. And then he goes right into Napoleon trying to learn from history. And there's all these great men of history that he constantly brings up. Alexander the Great is one of them. Alexander had barely outgrown his boyhood, when with a handful of men, he conquered a portion of the globe. And so I'm going to pause before I finish that part. What was playing out over the next few pages, I realized is like, Oh, to me, reading these biographies, like watching, it's like what an athlete does where he watches a game tape, right? And he's like, Okay, I want to emulate

these traits that this this person has in their game. And Oh, no, I want to avoid these other mistakes. Or maybe there's an advantage I can pick up here by the experience that this person had. And so in Alexander, when he goes describing what Alexander is doing to me, he's like, Oh, this is very much what Napoleon did. So he's like, I'll grab these traits from Alexander, and I'll use them in my life. And he's talking about like, how the hell did Alexander do this when he was just barely a boy? And he did all this, like, what was his approach? Everything he did was calculated deeply, carried out audaciously and managed wisely. And then he goes right into analyzing St. Louis. And he's like, Oh, I don't want to do with this guy. Remember, in the introduction, it says that to Napoleon's mind inaction was unbearable. And so he says, St. Louis spent eight months praying, when he should have spent them marching, fighting and consolidating

his hold over his country. In other words, he wasn't using his thinking as a step to action, goes into Frederick the Great, mentions him a couple of times. Again, more Napoleon learning from history on Frederick the Great. I think that he is one of those who knew their business best in all respects. Frederick was great above all at moments of great crises. This is the highest praise that can be given. And then he has a great line where he's speaking about the French Revolution,

but I think this applies for your, for what our purposes, right? Studying history's greatest founders is in many cases, studying like the birth of industries. And so when I read Napoleon say this, a revolution could be neither made nor stopped. A revolution could be neither made nor stopped. The only thing that can be done is for one or several of its children to give it a direction.

I think of commercial revolutions, things that you and I've studied, like the birth of the internet, the birth of human powered flight, the birth of mass produced automobiles with internal combustion engines. These were revolutions that could be neither made nor stopped. And the only thing to be done is for one or several of its founders to give it a direction. And later in the book, he revisits that idea. It may be possible to arrest the surge of progress or to throttle it,



but not to destroy it. A revolution can neither be made nor stopped. It may be possible to arrest the surge of progress or to throttle it, but not to destroy it. Another benefit of reading this book is that you see that Napoleon, for his legacy, for the fact that he has talked about hundreds of years after he died, he was human. And all humans are full of hypocrisies and contradictions. And the editor of the book does a fantastic job of having Napoleon say something emphatically. And then, you know, two years later, because all the quotes have the year in which he said it or he wrote it. And he realizes like, oh, like he just contradicted himself. Like we are all full of hypocrisies and contradictions. In 1806, he said, I say it once more, I do not want any censorship of books, because every bookseller is made responsible for the work that he sells, because I do not wish to take the responsibility for every nonsense that comes off the printing press. And finally, because I do not want some clerk to tyrannize over the mind and to mutilate genius. And there is a footnote at the bottom of this page. In 1810, however, Napoleon did establish book censorship. And then we see another example of a thought, an idea leading to action. This thought that, hey, most of what human behavior is, it's just traditions that if you actually stop and ask like, why are things like this? Did you realize a lot of the limits that you have are illusions? And, you know, he thinks on an unbelievably grand scale. He really just makes you think bigger, that you just realize that you don't have any limits in life can be built to your specifications. And to Napoleon, it didn't matter if you were the leader of a country, the leader of religion, if you got in his way, he was going to do something about it. Here's an example. I am informing the Pope of my plans and a few words. If he does not acquiesce, I should reduce him to the same status that he held before Charlemagne. Since nothing induces the Pope to behave reasonably, he will see that I am powerful enough to do what my predecessors have done, to depose a

Pope. And he believed that you needed to control your own message, that you could shape public opinion. And so Napoleon was definitely a master of propaganda. He believed and he explicitly stated that, you know, you need to guide public opinion, and that you do that with through the media and through information. Again, for our purposes, we're not trying to overthrow countries, hopefully. We're just trying to build great products and then make people aware of their existence. And so I think it's very valuable to study some of the best companies and individuals. They were able to get their message out there. This is an Napoleon's version. And he says, the masses must be guided without their noticing it. It is necessary to enlighten public opinion. With ink and paper, you can draw any picture you like, only by telling the facts simply and with details can we convince them. And he thought this was so important that he did it himself. The no I left myself here is do it yourself, act as your own minister of propaganda for your company. The best example of this is when Steve Jobs came back to Apple every Wednesday, they'd have like a long three hour meeting and go over all the marketing because he's like, hey, we already build great products. I want every single person on the planet to own an Apple device.

And for me to do for us to do that, we have to become a great marketing company. And so my interpretation of what he was telling us is like, if you truly believe that the product and the service that you're offering makes somebody else's life better, you have a moral obligation to get good at marketing because that's how you make them aware of its existence. And so Napoleon and Steve was demonstrating with actions how important it was

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because there was a book I read, I think it's called Insanely Simple. It was written by a guy that actually worked on the advertising and reported directly to Steve. And he says like, there wouldn't be a billboard in Missouri coming out without Steve Jobs approving it himself. Like literally saying he's like, I'm seeing every single external piece of marketing communication to our customers before it goes through and I'm going to approve it. We see Napoleon doing something similar to like this. Napoleon dictated all important army bulletins himself. Their purpose was multiple to inform the public, to counter ruin rumors, to mislead the enemy and to stir up enthusiasm. He served as his own minister of propaganda. The difference being, once you go down that path and you're the sovereign of a nation, you just kind of have complete control. This is just something that reappears over in human nature. It's never going to stop. If you give somebody unlimited power, they're going to want to control the information flow. And we see this in the early 1800s, when Napoleon was being shaved, I used to read the newspapers to him. I would always begin with the French papers. Skip it, skip it. He used to say when I read the French papers, I know what's in them. They only say what I tell them to. And so this idea that Napoleon was a micromanager reappears in multiple cases. He's talking about the propaganda aspect he micromanaged. But he also micromanaged things that he probably shouldn't have micromanaged with that's part of his personality. And he says something that actually contradicts with his actions. And he's talking about managing. It's under the section in the book called The Art of Ruling. So the good thing about the book is I read it chronologically. But if you happen to pick up this book, you could just, I don't, you definitely don't have to read it chronologically. It is just broken down and grouped by subject. And I think the book is actually better served. You just pick it up. And hey, what did he say on ruling? What did he say on history? What did he say on the human heart? What did he say on life, destiny and greatness and just go to the part that you happen to be interested in? Well, what was fascinating is this is another example of how he's constantly contradicting himself. And he's talking about this is how I'm a great ruler. The art of ruling consists in making others work rather than in wearing oneself out. That's, he definitely wore himself out. And so the editor says, this is good advice, but the following anecdote illustrates Napoleon's inability to leave even the most trivial details to others. And so Napoleon's first wife Josephine is going to like be healed in natural waters. Don't worry about that, but this is just hilarious what he did. Napoleon called me and said, Josephine is leaving tomorrow for her water cure. I must dictate her itinerary and outline her conduct. And so he's calling this guy is like, okay, I'm going to dictate you what we need to do, write everything down. And I'm about to say, and this is a crazy thing. And then he dictated 21 large sheets of paper. So this guy is the emperor of France when he's doing this. Okay. And it's like, he's got a million things to worry about. And again, I think the editor nailed it here. Napoleon's inability to leave even the most trivial detail to others. And so when you study Napoleon, something that pops up a lot is he just spends so much time communicating with his troops. And I think one of the reasons is because he really does believe how powerful the mind is the morale of your troops who are either strong and victorious or weak and beaten, depending on which they think they will be. So he spends an unbelievable amount of time sharing information with them and really guiding what they think. And it is in the war section that we get just how extreme. I don't know if he's psychopath or what you want to call it. But this is an example that Napoleon while watching the city burn

says, it's like Vesuvius erupting. Don't you think this is a beautiful site? And the person standing next to him says, this is horrible site. And this is Napoleon's response. But remember, gentlemen, the corpse of an enemy always smells sweet. There's just one story he's telling, he's just walking past thousands of dead corpses. And yet there's an injured dog. And he's like, what is wrong with me? Like I'm brought to tears and agony over this injured dog. And I didn't even weep or think twice about passing all these dead humans. And I bring that up and I want to repeat that because I think it's really important to understand like you and I are right now we're studying one of the most extreme people that have ever lived. And he was extreme in mindset and action. In fact, in addition to reading this book, I read another book on Napoleon. I may turn it into like a bonus episode or something. It's called The Roots of Strategy, the five greatest military classics of all time, complete in one volume. And it's all these military generals throughout history. I think the book is very, very old, but the introduction to Napoleon gives us a description of just how extreme this person's lived experience was. Napoleon fought more battles than Alexander, Hannibal, and Julius Caesar combined. He is, beyond any doubt, the greatest of European soldiers. And so part of this extreme way that Napoleon went out of life is he just goes back to this idea. It's like rules are just words written down on paper, and they apply to other people and they do not apply to me. And I'm going to tie this with something else that I learned as well. So in this section, he's having a conversation with this guy named General Mack. General Mack was a commander of the Austrian forces that just surrendered to Napoleon. And so they're having this conversation and Mack says to Napoleon, it is said that your majesty has troops marching through Switzerland, whose neutrality we have respected. So Switzerland is supposed to be a neutral country that is agreed upon. You're just violating their neutrality. We refuse to do that, right? In other words, saying you're not fighting fair, which this guy had a really poor understanding of human nature and the psychology of humans. Napoleon responds, I have not recognized this neutrality. Consequently, I have a right to enter its territory. Again, other rules don't apply. Their rules are for other people. They are not for Napoleon. Mack, ah, we were always the dupes of our good faith. And then he continues that Napoleon not only violated the neutrality of Switzerland, he also did it for Prussia, which gave him an advantage in this battle against Mack. He says your majesty had also violated neutrality of Prussia, thus gaining eight days in effecting the junction of your forces. This premature junction gave you the opportunity to crush us. And yet, if I had wished to violate Prussian territory, I could have easily cut off your retreat. Napoleon responds first by smiling and then says, why didn't you do it? And so this to me is one of the most important reasons to study history and to read biographies because the in present day, right, people are alive now, they're always going to be presenting like their best side to the public life, like just something humans do over and over again. In these stories, right, mostly people long dead, they really reveal not human, like human behavior as we want it to be, but how it actually is. This idea where you think you're engaged in combat in an act of war, you're trying to kill each other, the person that kills the most other people wins. And you think this guy is going to give, he's going to care about neutrality agreement in Switzerland and Prussia. Why would he not care? Napoleon thought he was destined to rule the world. And this is the important part. There's Napoleons alive today, this personality type, maybe not, you know, conquering other nations and maybe that could occur. But there's Napoleons in politics, in business, in sports, in everyday life.

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I'm going to give you an example. So I'm going to leave a link down below in this fantastic episode of Invest Like the Best. My friend Sam Hinky, I think it's called Find Your People. But Sam Hinky is the one that turned me on to, like, really push me to read Caro. I had read The Power Broker, but I had never gotten to Caro's multiple part series on Lyndon Johnson. And he said something in this interview that, in this podcast, that I wrote down, and I really think applies to what is this story with General Mack, misunderstanding human psychology to the detriment. He's lucky he's alive. This misunderstanding could have killed him. This is why it's so important to understand humans as they actually are, not as we want them to be. So Sam says, Robert Caro, the author of The Power Broker and the four part series, hopefully five part series on Lyndon Johnson, right? Robert Caro profiled two men whose seeds were not high in the tournament of life. Napoleon's seed was not high. They were without many advantages. And to get all the way to the top, you probably had to sacrifice everything to that effort. The meta lesson is if you are not willing to pay that price, presume someone else will. General Mack was not willing to pay that price. Napoleon was, Sam continues, if you want something like the presidency, and then I wrote are being a billionaire or building a very valuable company, you should presume there is someone out there who will devote all their time, money, relationships, sense of ethics. Is that not where we are in the book? This idea where Mack saying this is unethical, what you did, Napoleon doesn't give a shit about your ethics. You should presume there is someone out there who devote all their time, money, relationship, sense of ethics, everything in sacrifice of that one goal. Of course, that person would win that race in many ways in the biographies that you and I go over. It's not that we in many cases, a lot of them get to their lives almost like a cautionary tale, right? It's like, I want to know these people exist, not so necessarily as I could be like them, so I could avoid them. They will chew you up and spit you out. They will destroy everything in their path in many cases to get what they want. I do not want to be roadkill on the modern day Napoleon's path to glory. And then Napoleon goes into building the importance of building his army's morale. Again, he's building an army. We're, you and I are building teams, right? This idea that you have to influence the way people, the way they feel, their perception of the events that are taking place inside of your company, inside of your team. He's doing the exact same thing, but he's doing this in 1796. When I arrived, the army's morale was being undermined by all the malcontents. I took strong measures and I used every means to reorganize the supplies and then victory has done the rest. Momentum solves everything. Winning solves everything.

In the introduction, he talks about it. It's super important to be successful in your endeavors. Be successful. I judge men only by the results of their actions is what he was quoted at saying. Winning solves everything. And this guy had an unbelievable way with words. And this is what he says. You know what words can do to soldiers. So then he gives a speech in 1796 to his soldiers. Soldiers, you are ill fed and almost naked. The government owes you a great deal, but it could do nothing for you. Your patience and courage do you honor but give you neither worldly goods nor glory. I shall lead you. I shall lead you into the most fertile plains on earth. So he's saying, the government owes you a bunch. They've done nothing. I will. Your patience and courage do you honor but give you neither worldly goods nor glory. I shall lead you into the most fertile plains on earth. There you shall find great cities and rich provinces. There you shall find honor, glory, and riches. And why is he doing this? Because he's saying a general. So you and I

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are going to change that word. A leader, right? A general, a leader's principal talent consists in knowing the mentality of his soldiers and in winning their confidence. A leader's principal talent consists in knowing the mentality of your team and winning their confidence.

So then we get into some of Napoleon's maxims for this is the art of war. At the beginning of a campaign, much thought should be given to whether a strategy is to be adopted. However, once the offensive has started, it must be sustained to the last extremity. So that's another example of this idea for him. Thoughts are only valuable to the degree that they lead to actions. This is going to remind me of Steve Jobs. This is something that Napoleon repeated. The ancients had a great advantage over us in that their armies were not trailed by a second army of pen pushers.

And so this is about Napoleon's notion of this ideal he called squareness. So squareness is actually an equilibrium of intellect and character. His definition of character would be physical courage

as well as perseverance and daring. So you want to be courageous, not quitting, and a little bit daring and bold. And so you want to have equal distributions of character and intelligence.

And individuals that had an equilibrium of those two characteristics were described as squareness, which is a high compliment from Napoleon. This is another idea that Napoleon goes into what your greatest fear in life should be, and that's actually not death, but a wasted life. These three things you must always keep in mind, concentration of strength, activity, and a firm resolve to perish gloriously. These are the three principles of the military art, which have disposed luck in my favor in all my operations. Death is nothing, but to live defeated and without glory is to die every day. And then he goes back to this idea, this LBJ, Lyndon Johnson idea, if you do everything you will win. Napoleon prepared to such an extraordinary degree. And this is part of the reason why war consists of nothing but accidents, and that a commander should never overlook anything

that might enable him to exploit these accidents. The vulgar call this luck, but in fact is a characteristic of genius. Back to this idea of paying attention to the tiniest detail, sometimes a single battle decides everything. And sometimes too, the slightest circumstance decides the battle. Little things are big things is how I would summarize what he's saying there. This he's talking about how do you learn how to be a great general, really what he's saying here.

I wrote same with entrepreneurship. Knowledge of the grand principles of warfare can be acquired only through the study of military history and of battles of the great captains and through experience. So you and I are doing this for business, right? There are no precise determinant rules. Everything depends on the character that nature has bestowed on the individual. That is so good. Knowledge of the grand principles of warfare can be acquired only through the study of military

history and of the battles of the great captains and through experience. Obviously you and I are using that for metaphor. There are no precise determinant rules. Everything depends on the character that nature has bestowed on the individual. People are power law and the best ones can change

everything. And then he describes his personal historical curriculum. The principles of warfare are those which guided the great captains whose high deeds history has transmitted to us.

Alexander,

Hannibal, Caesar, names a bunch of other ones, Frederick the Great. The history of their 83 campaigns would constitute a complete treaties on the art of war. The principles that must be



followed in defensive and offensive warfare would flow from it as from a common source. And so then he talks about knowledge he learning from these people, but they learned from each other. Caesar's principles were the same as Alexander's and Hannibal's to keep his forces united, to be vulnerable at no point, to strike speedily at critical points, to make use of every possible opportunity of increasing his chances of victory on the battlefield. Think about it. Let me pause right there. To make use of every possible opportunity of increasing his chances of victory on the battlefield. Do everything and you will win. That maxim pops up over and over again in the book. That's another way of him saying the same thing, to make use of every possible opportunity of increasing your chances for victory. Caesar took great risks in the adventures into which he was pushed by his boldness. His genius got him out of his difficulties. He was a man whose genius and boldness were equally great. So that's another example of this idea of squareness, this equilibrium of two valuable traits that Napoleon seemed to admire and value. He's running through all these anecdotes on all these historical people. This is in the art of war section of the book of all what he learned from studying. Again, he's watching game tape, right? And he's just going to repeat this. This goes on for multiple pages. And really what I wrote down is Napoleon admires boldness. Napoleon wants you to be bold. The boldness and length of these marches astonished France. And until they were justified by success, they were the target of the criticism of mediocre men. So he's talking about people that came before him. What distinguished Frederick the great most is not the cleverness of his moves, but his boldness. He's using the word bold again. And then the editor does a fantastic job of tying all this together for us. Boldness is the common quality signaled out by Napoleon in the seven great generals whom he cites as examples. What is the opposite of boldness that would probably be timidity, right? And that he's saying right here, then when it comes to planning, he is timid. What does that mean? So he uses this word pucillat, it's called pucillanimus, which is showing a lack of courage or determination and timid. There's no man more pucillanimus than I when I am planning a campaign. I purposely exaggerate all the dangers and all the calamities that the circumstances make possible. I am in a thoroughly painful state of agitation during planning. Once I have made up my mind, everything is forgotten, except what leads to success. So timid and careful when planning, yet bold and relentless when acting. And an odd thing piled to my mind when I got to this section, because he's like, you know, I'm essentially planning for every worst case possible, the worst case possible, make sure you have all these contingencies. One of my favorite things that Paul Graham, not only his essays are fantastic, but then you can reduce some of the lines down to like maximums that you can remember. And one of the things he says for company founders is that you need to be hard to kill, be hard to kill. And so I'm going to read from Paul Graham's essay, I'm pretty sure this is episode 275. He says, the way to make a startup or any business recession proof is to do exactly what you should do anyways, run it as cheaply as possible. The main theme from the history of entrepreneurship, if you could pick one thing that reoccurs over and over again, is this idea that you need to watch your costs. It is by far the most common trait that all of the people that you and I study have, right? They are fanatical about the expense side of their business. For years, I've been telling founders that the surest route to success is to be the cockroaches of the corporate world. The immediate cause of death in a startup is always running out of money.

So the cheaper your company is to operate, the harder it is to kill. And what is Napoleon doing in that paragraph I just read to you? He's figuring out, okay, how can I make my army hard to kill? And then towards the end of his life, he's going back and trying to figure out like he surveys his career. And he's talking about like how he's going to be remembered in history. I'm going to read you the paragraph and I'm going to my mate, one of my main takeaways from the book or reoccurring thought that I had when I was going through the book. It will be argued at length whether my absolute authority and my arbitrary actions were the effect of my character or my calculations. Whether they were caused by my inclination or by force of circumstance. Whether I waged constant warfare, that's one way to put it, he waged constant warfare. We just said that other books said he did more battles than what Caesar, Hannibal and Alexander combined. Whether I

waged constant warfare to indulge my personal taste or whether I was pushed into it against my will.

Whether my immense ambition was spurred by lust for power or thirst for glory or for the necessity of establishing order or my love of general warfare. And it's when I get to this page and I had reread all of my highlights and I'm almost at the end of the book. And I realized, okay, this is my main takeaway from spending time with Napoleon, right? Because it's like to hold this book in your hand is to literally go into his mind and live there for, you know, it took me eight days to really absorb this book. And it's not that long, it's just really trying to think about what the hell he's trying to convey to us. And so my main takeaway from spending all this time with Napoleon is like, whatever you do, do it constantly and massively increase, this is a note to myself, whatever you do, do it constantly and massively increase the scope of your ambition. As I was reading this book, I was constantly thinking I'm not doing enough. He goes back to this idea that winning is winning solves everything. Winning is the main thing and that you need to keep the main thing the main thing. My power is dependent on my glory and my glory on my victories. My power would fail. My power would fall if I did not base it on still more glory and still more victories. Conquest has made me what I am and conquest alone can keep me there. And then he goes back to this

idea that he sacrificed everything, his comfort, everything in life to fulfill what he thought was his destiny. Power is my mistress. I have worked too hard at her conquest to allow anyone to take her away from me. And it goes back to this idea that ambition is all consuming, right? It only ceases as a fire that burns and it only is extinguished until that life is extinguished.

He's talking about himself. I know what this has cost me, the sufferings, the sleepless nights, the scheming. Remember, the God of war and the God of success are marching alongside me. My soul is made of marble. Lightning has found no grip on it and has had to slide off. As far as my detractors, I have no fear of becoming their victim. They will be biting into granite. I wanted to rule the world and in order to do this, I needed unlimited power. I wanted to rule the world. Who wouldn't have in my place? The world begged me to govern it. I realized that the destiny, the future, and the fatherland depended on my soul person. And that is where I'll leave it.

For the full story, I highly recommend buying the book. This is another hard to find out of print book. Like I said, it was first published in 1955. I paid like \$130 for it. I've seen it for sale for as much as like \$500 and \$2,000. I'll leave a link down below. I think there was two copies that I was able to find on bookfinder.com. But I will also leave the Amazon link because the inventory on Amazon is constantly updated. So if you buy the book, if you happen to find the book

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