



# Managing Senior Executives: Getting the Right Support at the Right Time for Your Project

Speaker: Michael Campbell, PMP

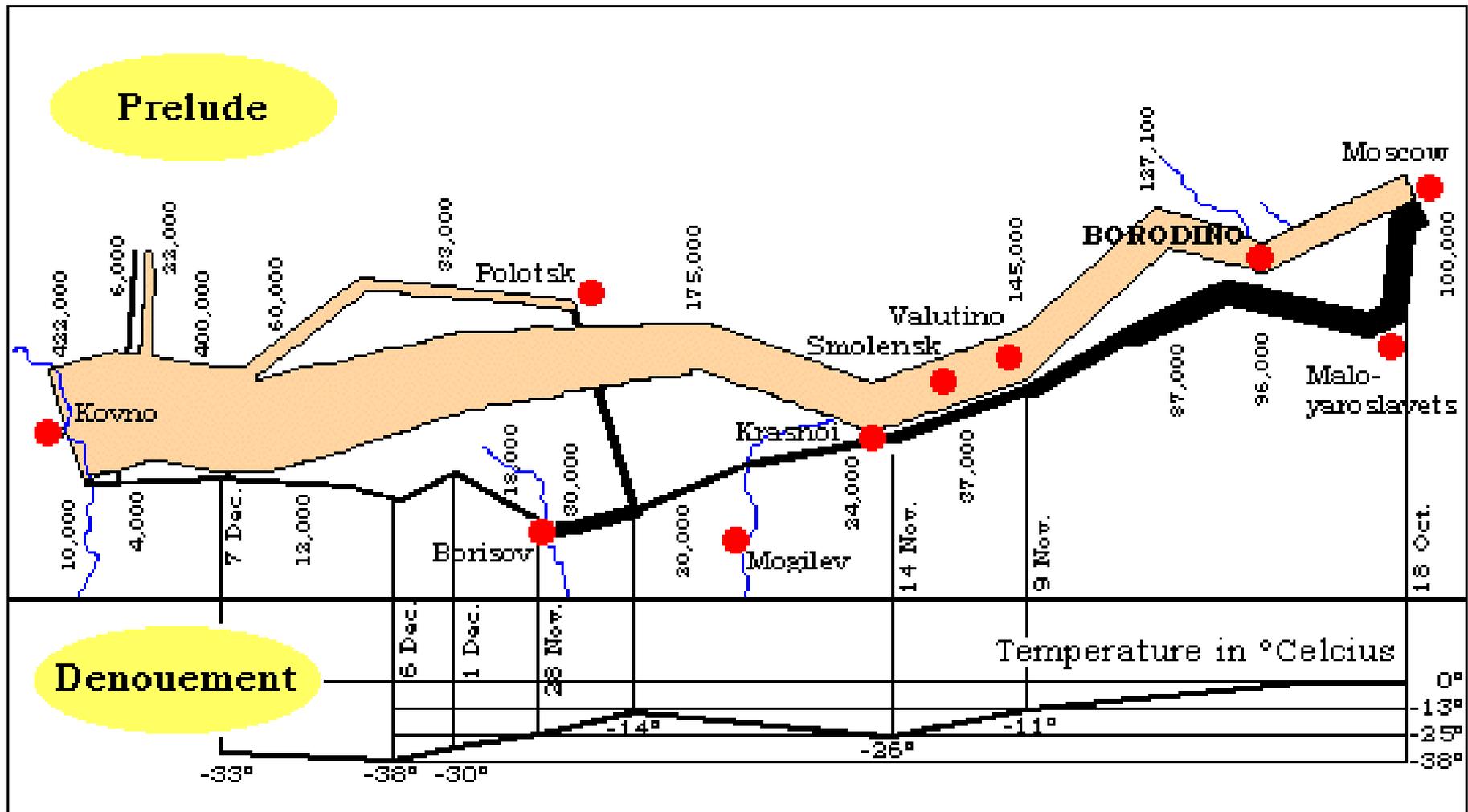
Company: MCA International

Website: [www.mcaintl.com](http://www.mcaintl.com)

Welcome to the PMI Houston Conference & Expo and Annual Job Fair 2015

- Please put your phone on silent mode
- Q&A will be taken at the close of this presentation
- There will be time at the end of this presentation for you to take a few moments to complete the session survey. We value your feedback which allows us to improve this annual event.

# Leadership's Traditional Role in a Project as Illustrated by Napoleon's March on Moscow



1869 chart by Minard

# What We'll Cover ...

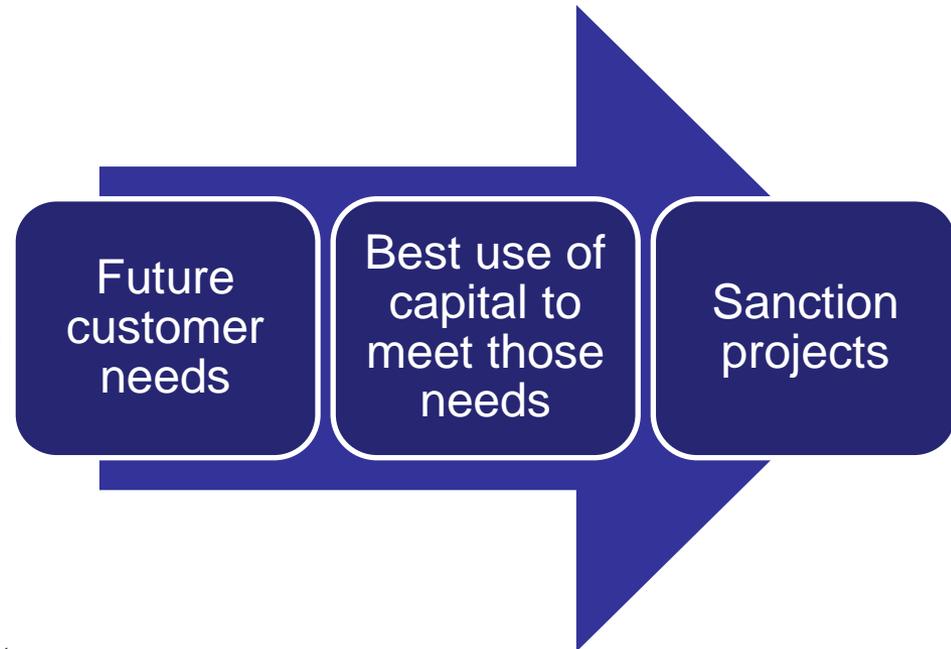
- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

# Why Is Managing Leaders So Difficult? The Facts of Life

- Pressure to meet expectations for operations
  - From corporate
    - Constant pressure on P&L
    - Minimize headcount
    - Increase productivity
    - Improve efficiency
  - From customers
    - Lower prices
    - Better service

# Why Is Managing Leaders So Difficult? Facts of Life

- Senior management considers and balances
  1. Operational needs to get products and services out the door and get paid
  2. Sanction projects to ensure the organization will be competitive in the future
- Once they have made the decisions, the projects are usually assigned and are not thought about again by this group – except for the executive who is assigned the Sponsor role



# Politics and Leadership

- Highest levels are all about politics
  - “The first rule is not to lose. The second rule is not to forget the first rule.” – Warren Buffet
  - Perception (attitude based on what is observed or thought) about strength or weakness carry great weight at this level
- If a Sponsor does not appear to be in control or there is a negative perception about a project, there is a political price to pay so don't be surprised if they begin to distance themselves
  1. Manage stakeholders to prevent issues from rising to the top
  2. Protect your Sponsor by managing perceptions

# What We'll Cover ...

- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

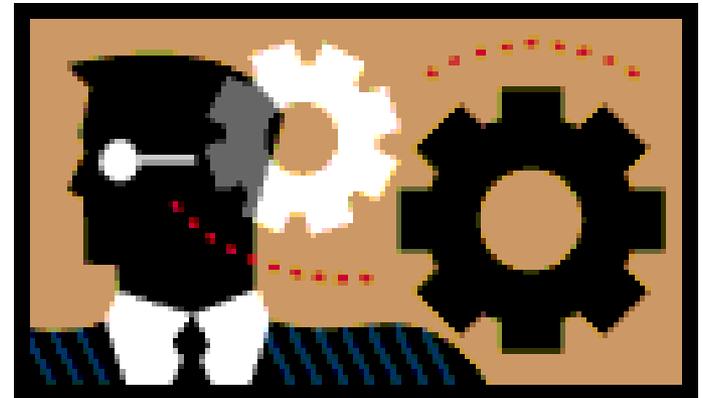
# Role of Leadership in Projects

- Set direction that provides the answer to “why are we doing this project anyway?”
- Build commitment through visible support
- Reach across boundaries to create alignment
- Manage dissention and disagreements



# Case for Change

- Case for Change
  - Why are we doing this project from a business perspective?
  - Why are we doing it now?
  - What are the benefits of doing this project?
  - What will happen if we do not successfully complete this project?
- Work with your Sponsor to craft answers to these questions
- Purpose: Helps you get inside the head of your Sponsor and provides the basis for a communication plan to stakeholders



# Charter

- View the Charter as a communication document for the project
- Project agreement, based on the contract, between project team and customer
- Important components:
  - Project success factors
  - Scope definition
  - Project deliverables
  - Initial cost and schedule estimates



# Make Sure You Know Who Your Stakeholders Are Talking To!



# Managing Up

- Understand what is important to your Sponsor
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Be specific about what you need
- Respect your Sponsor's time
- Make sure your Sponsor looks good
- Let them know when they've done a good job

# What We'll Cover ...

- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

# Internal Communications

- Communicate in the best way they receive information
  - Read – write it
  - Hear – say it
  - Numbers – quantify it
- Regular face-to-face over breakfast
- Provide information about successes, even if they are interim, because a Sponsor likes good news
- Provide information on feedback from your communication and engagement plan for stakeholders

# External Communications

- Communications intended to persuade must come from the commercial side, not the project
  - Expertise (SME)
  - Authority (Sponsor)
- Determine which messages must come from senior management
- Use face-to-face methods for important messages
- Error on the side of over-communicating

# Dangerous Assumptions Made by Operations

- Operations assumes that it does not “own” the preparation for an implementation — the project does
- Operations will underestimate the complexity and difficulty of getting ready to accept the project deliverables
- Operations does not appreciate the amount of time and money required to create alignment within work processes

# What We'll Cover ...

- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

# Handle Problems Effectively



Copyright MCA International LLC

PMI Houston  
Conference & Expo 2015

# Engaging with the Sponsor about Problems

- First, and most important rule, never surprise your Sponsor!
- Have a pre-determined escalation process in place for handling problems
  - Have a definite process for analyzing problems using a working group that includes representatives of all affected stakeholders
  - Ask the working group to formulate options and assess the risks for each option
- Explain the options for solving the problem based on their decision-making style

# Engaging with the Sponsor about Problems

- Determine how to “frame” the situation
  - Framing is defined as describing a situation through communicating in such a way as to encourage a certain perception and discourage others
  - Don’t attempt to “sugar coat” the message, it will backfire on you
- If they need to inform the rest of the leadership team, build the message for them
  - and keep it balanced!
- If a decision is time-sensitive, let the Sponsor know

# Help with Cross-Functional Problems

- Again, never surprise your Sponsor!
- Using your pre-determined process for analyzing problems
  - Define the problem from each of the competing stakeholders point-of-view
  - Identify the option that each stakeholder sees as the solution and assess the risks for that option
  - Provide input from a Subject Matter Expert on the project
- Frame the options for solving the problem
- If a decision is time-sensitive, let the Sponsor know

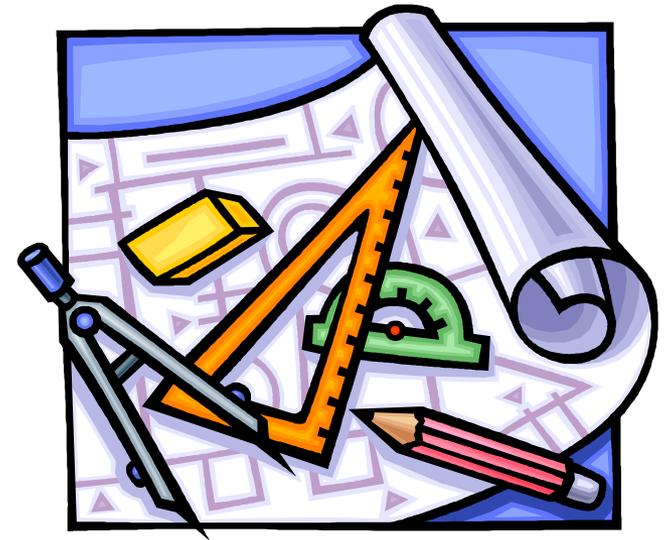
# Working Group



- Represent the functional areas affected by the project
- Provide expert business understanding to the project
- Evaluate the pros and cons of various options and ensure the business integrity of the solutions
- Ensure that source information on business processes, data, and reports are available
- Provide consistent communication between the project and the business

# Monitor Other Initiatives

- Other initiatives that may impact your project
  - Open lines of communication with the managers of those other initiatives
- Determine how the initiatives fit together and develop a mitigation plan in the risk register
- May be a place where the Sponsor must work across functional groups



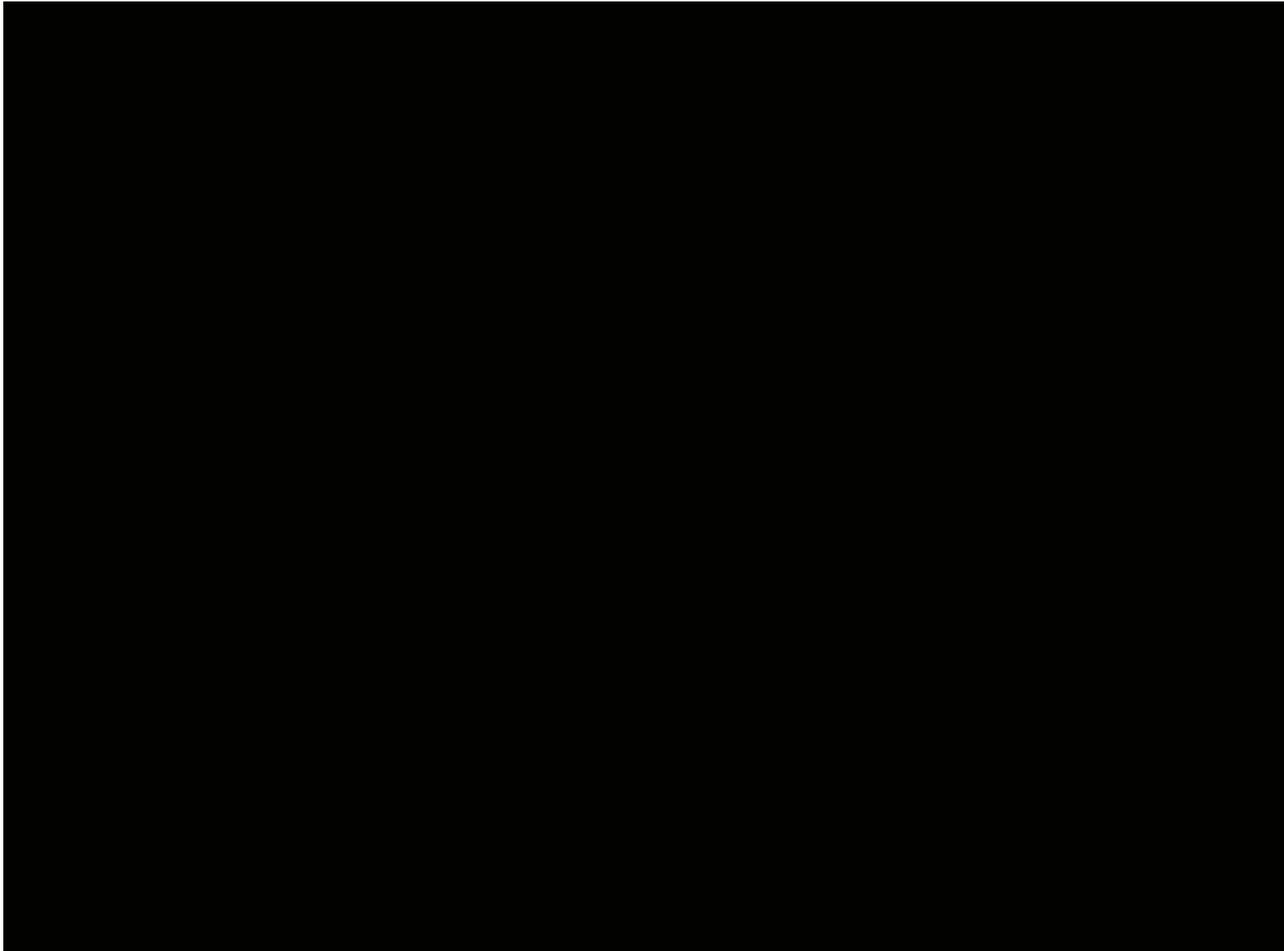
# What We'll Cover ...

- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

# Logical Conclusions

1. Remember the realities when engaging with your Sponsor and others in senior management
2. Project managers must manage communications and engagement carefully with the support of your Sponsor
3. Engage with your Sponsor about problems in a way that frames a perception of stability and control in the minds of other senior managers

# Stability and Control



# What We Covered!

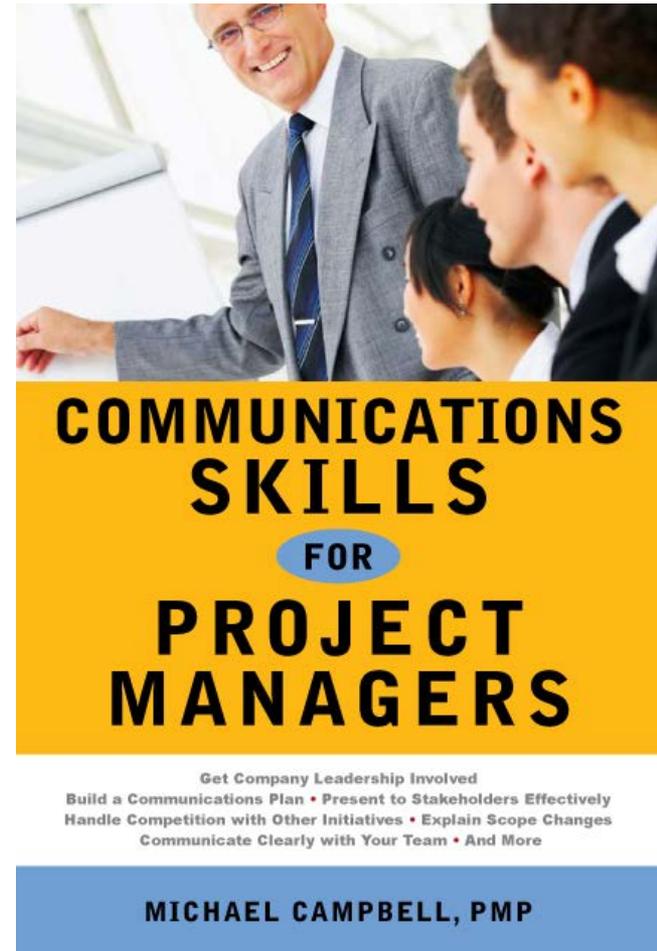
- Why is managing leaders so difficult?
- Role of leadership in projects
- Communications – internal and external
- Engaging with the Sponsor about problems
- Logical conclusion

# Resource

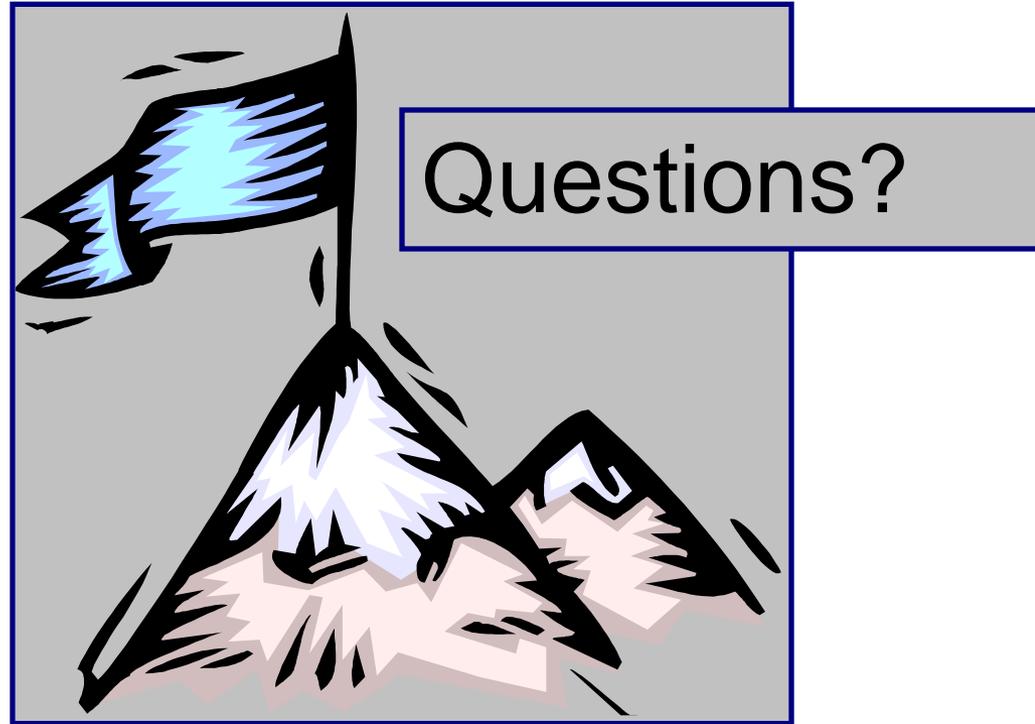
- Book

*Communication Skills for Project Managers*

Michael Campbell,  
AMACOM American  
Management  
Association, 2009



# Your Turn!



**How to contact me:**  
**Mike Campbell**  
**Mike.Campbell@mcaintl.com**

# Final Thought



A noble woman once inquired what troops the Emperor considered the best, to which he replied “Those which are victorious, Madame.”

- Napoleon I