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ALEXANDER THE GREAT – THE MACEDONIAN KING



Alexander the Great, known as Alexander III was a true leader. As King of Persia and Macedonia, he built one of the biggest empires in the ancient world and is now known as a military genius. Alexander overthrew the Persian empire, united the Greek city states, carried Macedonian arms into India and set the grounds for the Hellenistic world.

Born in 356 BC in Pella, the ancient capital of Macedonia, Alexander was son to Philip II of Macedon and Queen Olympia, daughter of King Neoptolemus.

From a young age, Alexander was given an enormous amount of responsibility, which led to great successes. In 340 during Philip's attack on Byzantium, Alexander, only 16 at the time was left in charge to rule Macedonia in his absence as regent. During the battle, Alexander gathered an army, led it against the rebels and conquered the Maedi. He commanded the left wing at the Battle of Chaeronea, and demonstrated great courage in breaking the elite military corps of the Sacred Band of Thebe.

After his father's assassination, Alexander succeeded the throne at the age of 20 and commenced the dynastic purging of enemies. During his reign, he spent most of his time on a military campaign through northeast Africa and Asia. Alexander was undefeated in battle.

There are a number of leadership lessons that can be learnt from Alexander the Great. Some include:

1. Have a Clear Vision

Alexander's success can be largely attributed to his clear vision and strong desire to achieve it. He was determined to undertake a Persian expedition as it was Philip's dream, and thus, became Alexander's inheritance when he succeeded his father. Alexander conquered territory by territory and was victorious in his battles. He knew what he wanted to achieve, and with his oratory and dramatic gestures, he was able to gain commitment from his army. A clear vision is essential in order to reach a goal.

2. Be Motivated

Alexander was exceptionally motivated to accomplish his vision. He believed that if you set your mind to it, you can achieve almost anything. As Alexander said, "there is nothing impossible to him who will try." A good leader will be extremely motivated, which will encourage those around them to want to follow to the vision.

3. Inspire those Around you

Alexander was inspiring and courageous. He was extremely dedicated to training his soldiers, rewarding them with honours and gave speeches to instil confidence and devotion. This allowed him to ensure loyalty from his men, who would follow him anywhere, and if need be, die in the process.

4. Know your Strengths

Alexander understood the strengths of his army and used these to his advantage. He recognised that the disorganised Persian army would be unable to bear his phalanxes, so ensured he utilised them efficiently, pushing the Persians to retreat. A true leader will appreciate and leverage their own and their teams strengths to provide themselves with a greater likelihood of achieving success.

5. Promote Innovation

Alexander utilised innovation to provide his army with an edge. He encouraged his engineers to build creative battlefield weaponry to surprise opponents. His war machinery was particularly advanced for the time. One of these innovations was the 'Scorpion', which was the originator of the cannon, as it could shoot bolts for long distances. It is essential that leaders encourage innovation in their team, to produce different ideas and creativity.

6. Be Strategic

Alexander established his empire with an army of only 40,000 men. This meant that he had to be strategic in order to overcome the large numbered armies that they came across. To combat this, Alexander thought up smart strategies during battle. Even though his army

were outnumbered in battle, he demonstrated his skill for military strategy to produce formations which would defeat the Persian army, forcing them to flee. He used tactics, mobility, terrain and weaponry to beat his opponents. A good leader will focus on their fundamental skills and will be strategic in their decision making. This is vital.

7. Learn from the Best

From the age of 13, Alexander's father hired Greek philosopher Aristotle to be Alexander's tutor to educate him on cultural, military and political matters. He sparked Alexander's interest in medicine, scientific investigation and philosophy and later, had a huge influence on his interactions with those that he conquered. Aristotle encouraged the view that Greeks were naturally slaves, encouraging Alexander's desire for conquest. From a young age, Alexander learnt from his father Philip, as he accompanied him on military campaigns and battles. Learn from those around you, particularly those who possess greater skill.

8. Lead by Example/from the Front

Alexander was constantly there with his troops, fighting alongside them and demonstrating his great military skills. Anything that his army had to endure, he did too. He understood it was essential that he create a strong army and engage with his soldiers in a language familiar to them. He did this through cultural symbols, strong emotions, along with his skill for leading by example. This helped him to gain respect and loyalty from those around him and sparked motivation. A good leader always leads by example and leads from the front.

9. Adapt your Strategy to the Current Environment

During his conquests, Alexander faced an extensive variety of cultures and armies. To overcome the ever-changing economic, political, cultural and military environment, he planned methodically, analysed information which he was given, and created a number of alternatives. This better prepared him for battles, reduced any risk, improved his flexibility and allowed him to operate at a faster pace. To be a good leader, you must ensure you adapt your strategy to match the current environment and situation. This will involve extensive and strategic planning, and considering a range of options when making decisions.

10. Be Imaginative

Alexander was particularly intelligent, and from a very young age. His intelligent character was revealed through his capability and great success as a General. He was skill full and imaginative which helped him to win many battles. Today, Alexander is seen as a military genius. Good leaders are imaginative in their thinking and decision making.

Alexander III, the Macedonian King certainly deserves his title as 'Alexander the Great' as he is considered as one of the most successful military commanders of all time. Many of his leadership qualities can be directly applied to business today.

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