

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

- 1469 - Born to an impoverished gentry in Florence, Italy
- 1498 - Secured a position in the city-state govt. Skilled in observation and writing he became a successful Renaissance bureaucrat. He was sent on numerous assignments as an unofficial emissary to every major city-state in Italy and several foreign nations.
- 1512 - Lost his position in government with the return of the Medicis to power. He spent the rest of his life writing about history and government ; his two most notable works being The Discourses and The Prince.

The Prince - in this work Machiavelli set forth the precepts for the successful operation of a state by identifying certain skills which a Prince could acquire and utilize in addition to or in lieu of innate ability. His advice to Renaissance government leaders are really principles of leadership and power which can be generalized to the management of organizations.

The several broad themes of the book can be classified as follows:

1. Reliance on mass consent- a prince can choose between gaining power through the nobility or through the people, he should choose the latter.
2. Cohesiveness - the most effective way a prince can maintain unity is by retaining a firm hold on his friends; living in territory he conquers where he can exercise control. The crucial element of cohesiveness is that the people should know what they can expect of their prince and in return what is expected of them-the principle of clear out responsibility.
3. Leadership- A prince should by his example seek to inspire his people to greater achievement. " ... pay attention to all the groups, mingle with them from time to time, and give them an example of his humanity and munificence, always upholding, however, the majesty of his dignity, which must never be allowed to fail in anything whatever."
4. Will to survive - A prince should be constantly on the alert for disorders in order to stamp them out while they can still be remedied. To preserve the kingdom he can take cruel measures dropping all pretensions of virtue if necessary.

Source: George, Claude S., Jr. The History of Management Thought.