



Seeking Wise Men **by Aaron Crowley**

On a bitter cold Christmas Day in 1776, General George Washington and a force of 2400 men found themselves outside and freezing, hundreds of miles from their loved ones, leading the daring attack that turned the tide of the Revolutionary War. He and his men had braved bone chilling wind, sleet, and ice to cross the Delaware River before slogging nine miles to Trenton, N.J. where they surprised and overwhelmed the German mercenaries tasked with defending the town. It was a small victory in terms of strategic importance, but the boost in moral for the beleaguered army was enormous.

Up until that point, events had not gone well for the Continental Army. In fact, the war had almost ended before it had even officially started, the previous winter.

That winter, General Washington and his Rebel Army had been hunkered down in tents and crude shelters on the outskirts of Boston MA where the British Army was waiting out the winter. His men, haggard and dressed in ragged clothes, huddled around small fires that popped and hissed from the falling rain and snow.

Inaction, inadequate supplies, and expiring enlistments gave our nations future father cause for grave concern as he considered his few options. His instincts told him to attack, as he thought that a victory there might end the war.

He pressed his counsel of war for their agreement but they believed it too risky and were unanimous in their opposition. On multiple occasions, using every ounce of argument they could muster they persuaded and eventually convinced The Great General to reconsider his plan.

To their relief Washington brilliantly conceived of another strategy using cannons captured earlier that winter and a hill overlooking Boston called Dorchester Heights. In one daring night, Washington's men installed defenses and aimed their cannons down the hill towards the well defended city. Upon waking up to all those brass barrels bearing down on them, the British generals did the only thing they could do; they got out of Dodge, retreating to their ships anchored in the harbor.

If you are wondering what possible connection this story has to managing a business in the stone industry, please read on.

Upon entering the city and inspecting the amazing defenses the British had constructed, it was clear that a direct assault on Boston would have been a disaster.

Today, historians believe that **had Washington ignored his war counsel's advice, the Rebel Army would have lost the battle and probably lost the war.**

The point is that the greatest leaders in history made mistakes and were in need of wise counsel and sound advice. In fact, the greatest leaders, finest athletes, and most successful CEO's, all have this in common: a profound ability to value, listen to, and rely on wise advisors, coaches, and boards to help them achieve their goals and objectives. So should we.

With Tiger Woods, arguably the greatest golfers alive, still relying heavily on a swing coach and Jack Welch, probably the greatest CEO in recent corporate history being accountable to a board of directors, **there is no shame for a fabricator admitting the need for guidance and direction.**

Hopefully this Christmas finds you *inside*, warm, and with family, perhaps reading a story about the wise men seeking a baby in a manger. And if you are alone in the leadership of your company, let this be the season where you begin imitating the likes of Washington, Woods, and Welsh, and seek the advice of wise men.

Merry Christmas!