



George Washington on Leadership

Richard Brookhiser

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FIRST IN WAR, FIRST IN PEACE, FIRST IN LEADERSHIP. Richard Brookhiser's revolutionary biography, *Founding Father*, took George Washington off the dollar bill and made him live. Now, with his trademark wit and precision, Brookhiser expertly examines the details of Washington's life that fullscale biographies sweep over, to instruct us in true leadership. *George Washington on Leadership* is a textbook look at Washington's three spectacularly successful careers as an executive: general, president, and tycoon. Brookhiser explains how Washington maximized his strengths and overcame his flaws, and inspires us to do likewise. It shows how one man's struggles and successes 200 years ago can be a model for leaders today. Washington oversaw two startups-the army and the presidency. He chaired the most important meeting in American history-the Constitutional Convention. Washington rose from being a third son who was a major in the militia, to one of the most famous men in the world. At every stage in his career, he had to deal with changing circumstances, from tobacco prices to geopolitics, and with wildly different classes of men, from frontiersmen to aristocrats. Washington's example is so crucial because of the many firsts he is responsible for.

George Washington on Leadership Details

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From Reader Review George Washington on Leadership for online ebook

Greg Strandberg says

This is a great book for those interested in politics, business, or leadership.

It goes with lessons, but does so in a generally biographical and chronological way. There's lots on the other Founding Fathers, and I really liked how you get stuff from Seneca and Aristotle and other Greeks. Those ancients all influenced these people, after all.

Some stuff that I remember and liked were the mentions of Washington having a big problem with smallpox in his army. I knew nothing of that.

It was also interesting to hear that John Madison wrote Washington's First Inaugural Address. As a member of the U.S. House, he also wrote the rebuttal. He then went ahead and wrote Washington's response to that rebuttal.

If you like history and biography, this is a great book. I enjoyed Brookhiser's Alexander Hamilton, American, and this is another good one of his. He's the editor of the National Review or something, so maybe a bit more on the right, but he's got some good storytelling. Maybe that's because he majored in English, not history.

Either way, consider this book.

Henry Chavez says

It was a good idea, perhaps not an original one, but an idea to combine historical knowledge with leadership principals. I bought this book from the value bin, as it looked interesting and I had want of a book on the subject to share with my daughter. The first portion of the book was interesting, but went downhill from there. Much is repeated and even re-referenced in parentheses in the later portions of the book to make a new point or elude to a past point. It seemed to me, that he just ran out of material and simply repurposed what he had. A good editor would have cut much of the end off and made this book a nice pamphlet with some good material. To be fair, there are good pieces of information that are presented well. As I said the first portion of the book is good.

Best,
HC

Dave Stadel says

The book was good, not great, and worthy of maybe 3 1/2 stars. To be fair, I didn't begin reading this book with the idea that Brookhiser was an expert in leadership, or that he had a proven track record in the subject. I think he's more of a historian. Perhaps that jaded my perspective.

The book has some value and may be worth reading for someone looking to learn a few interesting facts about Washington and how he applied his leadership. I'd recommend it as a light read or a for the beginning stages of study in subjects of Washington, American history, or leadership.

I read 'Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington' by Brookhiser about 10 yrs ago and found that book a more interesting and overall more insightful than this book. I was able to discern his leadership ability and some application through the Founding Father book, even though it wasn't the sole intent of that book.

Jeff Scott says

Brookhiser, an expert on the subject of Washington and the Founding Fathers, gathers leadership lessons from Washington's decisions. From General Washington to President Washington, Brookhiser puts forth snippets of crises Washington had to endure and the morals and lessons are provided at the end of each section.

Some examples of this technique:

On Washington insisting on digging latrines, a little used process of sanitation not used by the army: "What is obvious to you as a leader may not be obvious to everybody; if it's necessary for the health of your organization, then it's necessary for you to keep after it." p. 15

On Washington going to the constitutional convention in spite of the fact that he didn't like the politics and that it would make him president: A leader must be flexible enough to leave old worlds, and tough enough to survive in new ones. p. 36

Overall it is an good book on Washington and presented many of his experiences into leadership lessons. However, I think the approach is a little too spoonfed for me. I can read a biography of Washington or any leader (my preference are presidents), and pull leadership lessons from it. It is a little too Aesop's fables of Washington for me, but overall a good book.

Phil says

An interesting blend of George Washington idiosyncrasies and basic management techniques. The anecdotes were interesting and relevant to the leadership message associated with each story. Unfortunately, the leadership message was usually listed as only a short sentence or two at the end of each section. The organization of the book primed the reader to go back and reread each section after reading the end quip, just to see the tie-in. I think the messages would have been deeper if they had been intermingled into the anecdotes a little more real-time.

Tamara says

The book examines basic leadership principles and uses examples from George Washington's leadership roles - from surveyor and military leader to US President to illustrate the nation's first president's leadership philosophy and abilities. This was a very interesting and informative read about George Washington, but not tremendously ground-breaking from a leadership/business book standpoint. I liked it, but at times Brookhiser goes off on a tangent or two - especially toward the end of the book. Specifically, he begins to compare compare and contrast other early president's leadership styles such as Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe to Washington's. It was unnecessary and almost a distraction for a book that up until that point had seemed tightly woven with anecdotes and descriptions of the personalities Washington encountered and governed.

Jerry Goidosik says

After I stopped my gag reflex from the authors apparent love affair for Alexander Hamilton and our modern banking system it turned out to be a good book. I have read a few biographies of George Washington an I was impressed with the historic view point, my highlights came in chapters 15 and 16 in developing yourself and other people.

JP says

I enjoyed every bit of this biography organized around themes of leadership. Washington lived an outstanding life, stepping up time after time to fulfill duties, and exhibiting industry on his own initiative in the rare moments afforded him. What I most valued were the examples of how he leveraged his natural strengths, such as visual acuity and commanding presence, while working through others to supplement his weaknesses in oratory and writing.

E says

Noteworthy use of Washington as a model

Richard Brookhiser, a National Humanities Medalist, is a popular author, journalist and biographer. Considering his stellar previous work about America's founding fathers, as well as his deep knowledge of George Washington, you would expect his book about the first U.S. president's leadership traits to be good. And so it is, interesting and full of well-told stories. Yet, it does falter sometimes. For example, the opening chapter lauds Washington's prescience for installing latrines in his soldiers' encampments. Such praise overlooks the fact that the Roman Army routinely dug latrines for its soldiers 2,000 years ago. Overall, Brookhiser usefully translates episodes from Washington's life into management lessons for today's executives, though it may strain the use of metaphor to rename his Mount Vernon plantation WashCorp and to classify the presidency as a start-up. Despite such small lapses, Brookhiser works many intriguing anecdotes into his narrative and demonstrates vividly just how Washington became such a significant leader.

getAbstract welcomes his history-based examination of how to use Washington's leadership lessons.

James says

Among the books on management and leadership, there is a subcategory which looks at the topic from a the perspective of a historical person. A quick perusal of the bookshelves suggests that a CEO can learn from Aristotle, Queen Elizabeth or even Attila the Hun. Often, these books are a little too clever for their own good. Reducing Jesus' teachings to bulletpointed tactics or applying Napoleon's life lessons to the boardroom seem a bit trivial. Nonetheless, the genre is not without some benefit. The greatest is that these books create a new audience for biography and history. Richard Brookhiser's book on leadership through the example of George Washington is one of the best books of its type.

The author is not a business writer who tries his hand at history. Instead, Richard Brookhiser is a biographer first. As a result, his stories about the founding father are told well. The usual leap from the pages of history to modern application doesn't appear forced to Brookhiser. The depth of his knowledge of the subject makes Washington as contemporary as today's newspaper.

Brookhiser creates three broad categories for his reflections: problems, people, and self. As he explores each category, specific topics emerge, and then the author explores events from Washington's life and career. In a more traditional biography, some events would necessarily be edited out. For example, I never knew of Washington's concern for the building of latrines to protect his men from disease. The only problem with this approach is the difficulty of finding some coherence. Some events are relayed several times for different reasons, and the reader sometime gets mental whiplash trying to keep the chronology correct.

One of the greatest benefits of the book is that Brookhiser doesn't write a hagiography. He is willing to show Washington's leadership mistakes. For example, he writes about the shortcomings of his collaborative leadership style. Although a collaborative approach might adopt the wisdom of several ideas, it can also promote the weaknesses of each. George Washington is shown as a fallible human being with his own personal failings. His greatest is derived in part from a self-knowledge which allows him to compensate for those failings.

George Washington was a farmer, a soldier, a president and a patriot. Throughout all his career, he was a great leader. Brookhiser reminds us why we should continue to study and emulate the man.

SJ Barakony says

This is no doubt a very solid read, however, it wasn't reaching me on the first attempt, so like with about 10 or so books in the past, I've put it back onto the shelf, and will re-visit it in the future --- this is no reflection on the author. It's always about making sure that when you read, you are present & getting enough out of the pages w/o making reading a chore.

Ken Lang says

Having an interest in leadership principles and utilizing them when I serve in leadership roles, this book was

given to me as a gift and I found it to be a gem. It uses particular moments throughout Washington's career and recalls the facts that led to his monumental decisions. The author does not follow a timeline of events which made the book feel more conversational as he allowed the themes to dictate what topics he wished to discuss. For anyone who serves in a leadership role and has a passion for American History, this book would be a great supplement to your leadership library.

Ramon says

So far is good. This book is an interesting look at leadership through the lens of George Washington. I can't say that it is a quick read or that I can't put this book down, but I will say it is nice to think of Washington as a multifaceted leader and to see how he navigated his role as president, owner, statesman, diplomat, friend, husband, etc.

I love the myriad lessons that we can learn here. Brookhiser shows us the many ways that Washington led. He brings to light things he did well and things he needed to improve on.

Jason says

George Washington on Leadership is a condensed, and topic specific approach to a biography of Washington with specific applications to leaders today, in all sorts of fields. This work avoids hagiography of Washington, but because this is not a straight biography, you end up with sections of the book that place successes together and then failures together, often not chronologically or with great context. As such, this book is ideal for leaders of organizations who want to use Washington as a case study of successful leadership for today's problems.

Brookhiser, a writer and editor for publications like National Review, has made extensive studies of the founding generation of the American Republic, and especially how contemporary American can learn from the decisions that men like Washington and Hamilton made, and apply them for decisions that effect our future.

In this book, he treats Washington as a start - up CEO, particularly of two start - ups, the Continental Army and the new government under the Constitution. He is not writing a traditional biography, but neither is this a traditional business book, as this work leans more heavily towards history than it does application of modern leadership studies. To his credit, the author focuses a good bit of text on Washington's failures in command, particularly his failures in military decisions and personnel and more importantly, how he handled those failures going forward.

The Washington that Brookhiser presents as a model, had a high degree of emotional intelligence, especially of his own strengths and weaknesses and was often not surprised of his own failures but pushed to improve himself his whole life. So this work certainly is a fleshing out of how Washington's youthful Rules for Civility played out in the heavy demands of leadership he was faced with. Certainly the strength of this book is how Washington worked with his flaws to manage men for successful outcomes.

Consuela says

I've had this book over a year and was determined to finish it. But I gave up half-way through it. It started out promising (the title...) because I love reading good well-written books about George Washington. Apparently the author, Richard Brookhiser, is supposed to be an authority on Washington. I had two problems with this book: 1) it jumped all over the place in an attempt to fit Washington's life in tidy little bromides on how we can incorporate Washington's life into our own work situations; and 2) it's not very well-written. This is what gives history books a bad name. I've read many writers of history who made it so interesting that you could not put the book down even though you knew the outcome. These include William Manchester, Barbara Tuchman, David Hackett Fischer and even Winston Churchill, to name a very few. (Fischer's book "Washington's Crossing" is fabulous.) But this guy tried to make it sound very "with it" and it was jarring. He writes "If the United States has been a basketball team, it would have had a great first string, and a deep bench." Huh? And how about this: "But Jefferson himself was not to be found, having gone to his house in the suburbs." I assume he means Monticello. "Suburbs" is a modern expression, and sounds jarring to the ear. There are many more examples, but also it needed much better editing. "The Jacobins who succeeded, and killed, them were Stalinists..." Somehow this slipped by the editors. It should have been something like "The Jacobins who succeeded and killed them were Stalinists." There are many more incorrect uses of commas throughout the book.

I'll close with a passage I DID like: "When Adams was in retirement, and Washington was in the grave, he wrote a long, quirky, thoughtful letter about the leadership qualities of the first president. Adams listed several—looks, grace, wealth. But the most interesting quality on Adam's list, especially considering the source, was this: Washington 'possessed the gift of silence. This I esteem as one of the most precious talents.'"
