

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MT. VERNON

“When I speak of a knowing farmer, I mean . . . above all, Midas like, one who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards gold.”

~ George Washington

When George Washington listed his profession at the Constitutional Convention, he described himself as “farmer.” Though he had commanded the Continental Army for eight and a half years, and served as president for eight, he spent forty-five years running Mt. Vernon as, in the words of one historian, the CEO of “WashCorp.” That was no easy task; when Washington took over Mt. Vernon the plantation was a fairly small outfit planting the ruinous – both in terms of what it did to the land and to his pocketbook – crop of tobacco and running more deeply into debt every year. By the time of his death Washington had made his plantation one of the most advanced and profitable of its kind in the entire nation. **The story of Washington’s transformation of Mt. Vernon into a thriving and profitable estate offers great insights for today’s leaders.**

This session begins in a seminar room before going mobile to tour Washington’s pioneer farm, gristmill, and distillery. This seminar can be used as a window into leadership and performance development in general, or to talk more deeply about any one or two particular competencies. In the first few years after taking over Mt. Vernon, Washington’s **Business Acumen** made clear that the estate was not profitable or sustainable. Washington used many of the sub-competencies of **Results Driven** – including problem solving, entrepreneurship, accountability, and decisiveness – to identify a solution. That solution, diversifying the crops he grew and emphasizing wheat production, required Washington to **Lead Change**. In order to stay on top of the cutting edge thinking and newest advances in agriculture, Washington **Built Coalitions** of pen-pal buddies that stretched around the globe. Finally, to implement his ideas, Washington had to exercise the competency of **Leading People** both with his free and enslaved workers. Ultimately, through **strategic planning, innovation, and investing in the future**, Washington was able to create an operation that was **efficient, sustainable, and profitable**.

After concluding our estate tour we return to the seminar room where participants reflect upon what they have seen during the tour, what insights it might offer that they can apply in their daily jobs, and what steps they might take in the next week and month to begin integrating some of those ideas.



Washington’s
gristmill and
distillery.

