

The Power of Visibility In Leading

By Mary Jane Reed, SPHR

While recently traveling in Pennsylvania, I stopped at Valley Forge America's Revolutionary War Encampment for yet another visit. I had just been with a group of leaders discussing how organizational re-structuring was taking a toll on their work force. With that conversation in mind, I recalled how during those two brutal winters, General George Washington frequently wrote to Congress to ask for aid for the struggling Continental Army that might as well "starve, dissolve or disperse".

General Washington spent endless hours writing numerous pleading letters to Congress and State Governors requesting financial assistance and also negotiated provisions with nearby farmers, however, he never missed his daily ritual of dressing in full uniform, mounting his horse and riding through the camps to inspect the conditions of his soldiers and listen to their woes. He would share any news that he had and attempted to bolster the spirits of his troops by reminding them of their grander purpose. Many historians have credited these daily acts as the primary reason Washington was able to keep his rag tag and desperate Army together during those terrible two winters.

Washington's actions are a great reminder that when our organizations are in crisis or when our "troops" are exhausted with work, uncertainty, and deadlines then we, as leaders, must make the extra effort to get out of our offices and visit with our teams on a regular, if not daily, basis. Although you will not literally "mount up" on a horse, it is critically important that you "step up" and convey confidence through your posture, manner and empathetic listening. I call it 'leading by walking around'how are you measuring up?

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