

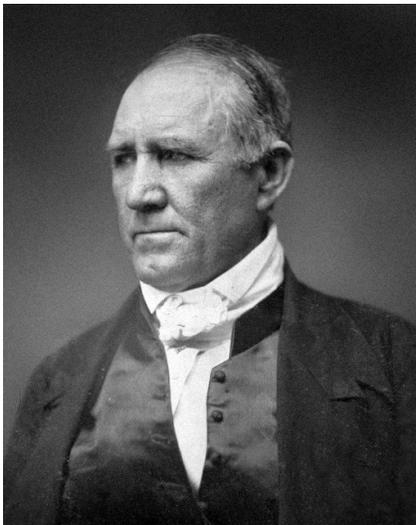
Great Leaders Are Not Afraid of Setbacks

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This month we look at a moment in leadership from the Texas Revolution. In mid-March of 1836, Sam Houston, commander of the provisional army of the newly declared Republic of Texas, learned that the 186 Texans manning the Alamo in San Antonio had been wiped out by the Mexican army. That army, led by Mexican President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, was headed east — directly toward Houston’s rebel forces and determined to snuff out any hopes of Texan independence.

At the time the Alamo fell, Houston’s “army” was little more than a ragtag collection of a few hundred raw volunteers — many of whom had no weapons. He needed time to provision, grow and train his little army. Houston knew that if his army were defeated, the Republic of Texas would be crushed. The men of the Alamo would have died in vain.



Houston was under pressure from his men and his superiors to strike a blow against Santa Anna. But Houston needed time. He decided to retreat. His decision was unpopular with his men, his officers and his superiors. But Houston had his eye on the big picture.

For more than a month the Texans retreated. Throughout the retreat, Houston had to repeatedly deal with threats and complaints from his officers and men. Some almost mutinied. Some wanted to depose Houston.

But he endured it all.

On April 21, 1836, Houston’s army had swelled to 900 men. His men were rested, armed and itching for a fight. Concealed in the woods at the junction of Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto River, the Texans were in a perfect position to surprise the Mexican army which was camped just 500

yards away. After pursuing the always retreating Texans for over a month, Santa Anna and his 1,400 men had nothing but contempt for the “cowardly” rebels. So much so that on the afternoon of April 21st Santa Anna, along with much his army, was sleeping. The last thing they expected was an attack.

But that’s exactly what Sam Houston did. After weeks of humiliating retreats, threats of mutiny and dismissal, Sam Houston saw his chance to turn the tide. He acted decisively.

The late afternoon attack by the Texans caught the Mexicans totally by surprise. The battle was over in 18 minutes. Despite being outnumbered, Sam Houston and his Texans had achieved total victory. Santa Anna was captured. What remained of his army was forced to retreat back to Mexico. Texan independence was secured.

Today’s leaders can take solace in Houston’s perseverance. So often, leaders are expected to achieve instant success — quick results. But the wise leader never loses sight of the big picture. The great leaders are willing to endure setbacks and criticism — if they are confident that their course of action is the right one.

As the history of the Texas Revolution vividly shows, the path to big success is often littered with little defeats.

To learn more about how you and your team can benefit from the leadership lessons of the American history, check out Ox Hill Leadership Tours at www.oxhilltours.com or contact them directly at 703-531-8837 or info@oxhilltours.com.