

MISTAKES AREN'T FATAL... AS LONG AS YOU LEARN

Leaders in the United Kingdom in the first half of the 20th Century tended to operate with a highly risk-averse, fixed mindset approach. They suffered from significant blinders in terms of strategy and approach. Churchill exemplified a different type of leader. Opinionated, bellicose and difficult to deal with, he was nevertheless nimble, creative and available to persuasion by those with more compelling arguments. **During his first stint at the British Admiralty, he shook up a tradition-bound command staff. He was responsible for transforming the fleet from a coal-fired Navy to petroleum-based and other innovations. He designed and commissioned a “land warship,”¹ what we now know as the tank.**



He brought both focus and urgency to issues that his people faced. As the Minister of Munitions, he initiated the requirement that information routed upward be delivered “on one sheet of paper.” He was renowned for his memos that required “Action This Day.” Undeterred by his setback at Gallipoli, he lobbied for and was posted back into the military and transferred to the Western Front in Belgium. Returning to a familiar role as an Army officer, and despite the justifiable bias against politicians who secured military postings in order to promote their careers, Churchill quickly earned the support and respect of the men who served with him.

Ultimately recalled from service on the Continent by the Prime Minister, Churchill was named Minister of Munitions, a post outside the Cabinet. Throughout the war this Ministry, although pivotal for the war effort, sadly, had underperformed. After he took over, he generated immediate and substantial increases in the production of tanks, machine guns, aircraft and mustard gas. As the champion of the development of the tank, derisively labeled “Winston’s Folly,” he persevered in its production. In November 1917, 378 British tanks helped capture 10,000 German prisoners. Production of matériel increased so much so, that General Haig acknowledged, “Only in 1918 was it possible to

conduct artillery operations independent of any limiting consideration other than that of transport.”²

Churchill was destined to face his greatest leadership challenge two decades later, when Europe faced domination by the Fascist onslaught. Two previous Prime Ministers, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, had, with the best of intentions, driven England and the British Empire to the brink of servitude to Nazi Germany. **In the face of overwhelming odds, Churchill steadied and then rallied his people as they withstood the juggernaut alone until the United States and the Soviet Union were dragged into the conflict.**

SAME PEOPLE, DIFFERENT LEADERS, BETTER OUTCOMES. Winston Churchill, his mettle having been tested and wizened by past missteps during World War I, proved there are no bad teams, only bad leaders.

¹ Churchill and...War, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/rising-politician/churchill-andwar>

² Andrew Roberts – Churchill Walking with Destiny p. 254