



## **WASHINGTON: FOUNDER OF THE FIRST GREAT AMERICAN STARTUP**

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We can look at George Washington as an 18th-century startup founder. The startup he helped found was no less than the United States of America.

Washington led his emerging nation through the phases of an enterprise. America hurdled different startup stages: pre-seed, seed, early growth, expansion, and exit. Funding the birth of a nation was expensive. Washington raised around one million sterling to finance the American Revolution.

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His first angel investors were ordinary Americans who contributed to the war chest. Traders, merchants, planters, growers, and hardworking citizens chipped in to fund their 'startup.' It was an early version of crowdsourcing.

While the seeding ensued, Washington led the war with the British. He settled internal disputes in his management teams as battles raged from all sides.

He addressed endless concerns and issues coming from various aspects of the operations. Is this not the kind of chaos founders face in the early phase of their startups?

Washington wasn't an armchair leader. He led battles on the front lines. He almost got assassinated and suffered terrible losses. Not everything went as planned. Britain was an 18th-century military juggernaut second to no one during that period. It seemed impossible to defeat a competitor with more resources.

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On July 4, 1776, they succeeded in founding a great startup: the United States of America.

Looking at him as a startup founder, we can draw these leadership and business lessons:

**You can't do it alone.** No leader can succeed alone, no matter how great, gifted, and talented. Achieve with and through others. Trust your comrades and delegate other tasks.

**Have a 'no excuse mindset.'** Washington and the founding fathers had many reasons to fail and not achieve their goals. Yet, they did not justify their failures with excuses. Instead, they learned from their failures and improved their system, processes, and plans.

**Plan succession.** Washington served two terms as the first U.S. president, from 1789 to 1797. He refused to run for the third term to avoid setting a precedent for future presidents. Washington didn't want to die while in office, for it might give people the notion that the presidency is a lifetime appointment.

**Before the emergence of the great 21st-century startup founders, there was George Washington.**