

# Conventional Defeatism

*"If everyone tells you you're drunk, you'd better sit down." -- Anonymous*

The above statement is what is known as "conventional wisdom." Often, it's valid. Sometimes, it's even wise. In this case, it can also be an outright lie -- having a whole crowd of people telling you you're drunk doesn't make it so.

But "conventional wisdom" can also distill down to "conventional defeatism" -- and that's no kind of wisdom at all.

Let me explain -- and help us understand why this concept is so important.

If you wished to grade a person on their skill at speaking the French language, would you choose a judge who understood French? Or would a non-French speaker do?

That's silly -- if you're going to grade someone else, the person doing the grading/judging has to have the skills necessary to understand the concepts involved.

And yet, we all make rash statements without having a knowledge of what is behind the problem. We judge without having knowledge; we criticize without having the necessary experience. It's the old "Monday Morning Quarterback" at work again -- a great coach's plans are criticized by people who have never been in his shoes, and who often haven't ever played the game outside of high school -- if then.

We see this in our businesses. Janitors criticize the Chief Financial Officer's performance (all right, in some cases, the janitor might be right); managers make rash decisions on concepts they don't understand; people who have never sold a mortgage (like me) make rash pronouncements on how to get the mortgage business back on track (don't lend to people who can't afford to pay it back is a good start). Financial "analysts" make broad predictions with little evidence to back it up -- and then markets move up and down based on those bogus predictions. All these are examples of events that make for what we term as "conventional wisdom."

When you get a group of these no-nothings making decisions and creating pronouncements, you gain "conventional wisdom." It's conventional, all right --

but most of the time, it's sure not wisdom.

So let's look at some pieces of conventional wisdom from the past, and see how good they did: "Man will never fly." "Hitler and the German Army cannot be defeated." "Man will never walk on the moon." "You can't make an electric light bulb." "America will never elect a black president." "Amazon.com won't last a year." and the ever-popular "That marriage won't last six months."

You see how "conventional wisdom" is, much of the time, not wisdom at all? It's defeatism, pure and simple.

Great people can change conventional wisdom, by finding new and exciting ways to do things. It doesn't matter how often an opinion is expressed -- what matters is the truth behind the matter. Many of the ideas expressed in "conventional wisdom" over the years has been disproved -- by unconventional thinkers who refused to give in to defeatist ideas.

In our lives, we should eliminate "conventional defeatism" ideas from our vocabulary. We should actively challenge our own beliefs. We should re-evaluate our ideas and concepts. We should change our minds when the unconventional results contradict the conventional wisdom.

We should be unconventional people, you and I. We should put defeatism in its place -- the trash can.

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