

# Lesson learned from a Multi-Billion dollar bank turnaround

*By Ronald K. Wills*

***“People want to do better: they just need Vision and Leadership to get there.”***

John Morton, III, a former Maryland National Bank executive was asked to take over Perpetual Bank when the leadership of the bank was asked to step down. John is an outstanding businessman and entrepreneur who is the former Chairman of Maryland Stadium Authority and previously Chairman of Fortress International Group, Inc. and president and CEO of several financial institutions. John took on the challenge and began hiring his team.

I was hired by John to join the team of 8 with the goal to save Perpetual Bank, or if we couldn't, conduct an orderly shutdown for the regulators. Perpetual Bank was one of the largest banks in the region, approximately \$15 Billion in assets in today's dollars.

This was a daunting task where the bank was suffering from brain drain as most of the A and B level employees had left for other jobs in the industry. What we had left were the C and D employees that needed to be rallied to save the Bank from failing. And they did rally. Unfortunately, Perpetual Bank's loan portfolio losses quickly stripped the institution of any viable alternatives and we sold the Bank to Crestar.

However, the systems I developed for Perpetual Bank during our turnaround efforts: systems that tracked all the assets of the institution with data from an antiquated mainframe computer

spilling into our newly designed systems, was so good that the Resolution Trust Corporation asked me to bring my team over to track 12 institutions from Maryland through Florida.

Given the right Vision and support, the team developed rapidly and became a true "A Team" for the company and subsequently the Resolution Trust Corporation. The lesson I learned is that there are many good employees languishing throughout companies across this country that just need the Vision and Leadership to become productive and valuable. Give your staff the Vision and Leadership they deserve and they will serve you well.