

Getting Rid of the Rock

When St. Petersburg, Russia, one of the most splendid and harmonious cities in Europe, was being laid out early in the 18th century, many large boulders brought by a glacier from Finland had to be removed.

One particularly large rock was in the path of one of the principal avenues that had been planned, and bids were solicited for its removal. The bids submitted were very high. This was understandable, because at that time modern equipment did not exist and there were no high-powered explosives.

As officials pondered what to do, a peasant presented himself and offered to get rid of the boulder for a much lower price than those submitted by other bidders. Since they had nothing to lose, officials gave the job to the peasant.

The next morning, he showed up with a crowd of other peasants carrying shovels. They began digging a huge hole next to the rock. The rock was propped up with timbers to prevent it from rolling into the hole. When the hole was deep enough, the timber props were removed and the rock dropped into the hole below the street level. It was then covered with dirt, and the excess dirt was carted away.

This is an early example of what creative thinking can do to solve a problem. The unsuccessful bidders only thought about moving the rock from one place to another on the city's surface. The peasant looked at the problem from another angle. He considered another dimension – up and down. He couldn't lift it up, so he put it underground.

Considering all points of view is always a wise course.

– Beecher Hunter