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# Powell's Principles

We're all fighting a battle. Our goals are to grow our business and help people overcome inactivity. To arm your daily "skirmishes," I offer the following *thoughts* from U.S. General (Ret.) Colin Powell, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Secretary of State.



**Bill McBride**  
IHRSA Chairperson

The following observations are drawn from "Quotations from Chairman Powell: A Leadership Primer," by the late Oren Harari, the author of *The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell*. Comments within quotation marks are Powell's own; those without are Harari's amplifications.

"Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier." The ripple effect of a leader's enthusiasm and optimism is awesome.

"Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off." Good leadership involves responsibility to the welfare of the group, which means that some people will get angry at your actions and decisions.

"The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or concluded that you do not care."

"Keep looking below surface appearances. Don't shrink from doing so (just) because you might not like what you find."

"Powell's Rules for Picking People: Look for intelligence and judgment, and most critically, a capacity to anticipate—to see around corners. Also look for loyalty, integrity, a high energy drive, a balanced ego, and the drive to get things done."

"Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt, to offer a solution that everybody can understand." (Powell is quoting writer Michael Korda.) Effective leaders understand the KISS principle, Keep It Simple, Stupid. They articulate vivid, overarching goals and values, which they use to drive daily behaviors and choices among competing alternatives. ... The result: clarity of purpose, credibility of leadership, and integrity in organization.

"Part I: Use the formula P=40 to 70, in which P stands for the probability of success and the numbers indicate the percentage of the information acquired. Part II: Once the information is in the 40 to 70 range, go with your gut." Powell's advice is don't take action if you have only enough information to give you less than a 40% chance of being right, but don't wait until you have enough facts to be 100% sure, because by then it is almost always too late ... Procrastination in the name of reducing risk actually increases risk.

General Powell knows what he's talking about!

Here's to all of us winning! And here's to improving the nation's health! —

— Bill McBride, [Bill.McBride@ClubOne.com](mailto:Bill.McBride@ClubOne.com)