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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

**Resident Bloggers**

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**Management Tips: Colin Powell's Leadership Primer, Part 2/2**

I thought, "What a great blog!", after reading [Graham's piece](#) on management. It brought to mind Colin's Powell's (CP) lessons on leadership which I'm reproducing here as extracts in a two part blog. [Part I](#) appeared on Tuesday. Here is Part II of this series.

All of them apply to IT Managers. I have added a few words of interpretation to each as I see them.

Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, FCIPS, I.S.P.

**Part 2/2****CP 10: "Never let your ego get so close to your position that when your position goes, your ego goes with it."**

You and the value and resources you represent are not defined by your role. Look to continually grow your skill sets, and the differentiation and value that you provide. Over time, this builds your value and it's not role dependent.

I have blogged about this in:

Career Tip: Change or Stagnate! – Personal SWOT Analysis for Career Growth

<http://blogs.technet.com/cdnitmanagers/archive/2006/06/13/435631.aspx>

Moreover look towards your next position and moving forward. Develop your team to take over your current duties.

**CP 11: "Fit no stereotypes. Don't chase the latest management fads. The situation dictates which approach best accomplishes the team's mission."**

In talking with many senior executives, I find they follow a series of core or basic principles and then keep to them. They add to this core due to insights they develop over time however they don't make a wholesale shift in their core views. They also are agile in their ability to assess threat and opportunities and to react quickly which is essential to survival and growth today. If you get a chance, look at some of the writings/views of Warren Buffet.

**CP 12: "Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier."**

If the nearly 300 interviews I have conducted since 2001 with the top authorities in business and technology, this is one common attribute--continual optimism including under the most serious challenges. As a manager, motivation is driven by taking a forward looking view of enablement and success for your team. And encourage an entrepreneurial risk taking approach or continual innovation, even incrementally.

**CP 13: "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 a drive to get things done."**

I find that attitude and approach are the best predictors of future success for picking your team and those you want to engage with on a long-term basis.

The rules say it all!

**CP 14: "Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt, to offer a solution everybody can understand."**

There are various indices for writing where the writing level is measured. One example is the FOG Index. The key is to simplify and it's a rule for general publication writing too.

These principles apply to any kind of communication. If you can't communicate your ideas simply, no matter how great they are, you will lose your effectiveness and this will delay your career.

One side note: It is always good to contribute to a discussion through new research, experience examples, and summarizing existing arguments. Simple agreement and non-agreement is not enough. I call this dynamic learning. You will notice that Graham Jones in his blogs and comments is always looking to add value. The famed, Gary Kawasaki, talks about this too.

**CP 15: Part I: "Use the formula P=40 to 70, in which P stands for the probability of success and then numbers indicate the percentage of information acquired."****Part II: "Once the information is in the 40 to 70 range, go with your gut."**

This is the most common challenge I encounter with ICT professionals. It is easy to get into 'preparation paralysis' where you put something off since you are not 100% ready. I use a mountain analogy sometimes to describe what I mean. Imagine it's dark and you have to get to the mountain top. You can't see the entire path but you can make out the next 50 meters which is the extent of your flashlight. So go the 50 meters and you will see the next 50 along the path to the top. You will get there if you are patient and keep trying!

**CP 16: "The commander in the field is always right and the rear echelon is wrong, unless proved otherwise."**

One of early lessons I learned is that you need to reach out to your team and listen to their views. They are on the front lines and can give you a perspective from actually being involved directly and on a day-to-day basis with your products, services, and with customers/clients. I have seen companies fail when this continual interaction and communication is not occurring with the team—the front lines. I recommend



Barnaby Jeans  
IT Pro Advisor  
Microsoft Canada  
[LinkedIn profile](#)



John Oxley  
Director IT Pro Evangelism  
Microsoft Canada



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this approach no matter what level of management you reach. As a board director, I found it of great value to talk with developers and project managers. You get insights that you can not get any where else.

**CP 17: "Have fun in your command. Don't always run at breakneck pace. Take leave when you've earned it: Spend time with your families. Corollary: surround yourself with people who take their work seriously, but not themselves, those who work hard and play hard."**

This blog from Barnaby speaks to this  
<http://blogs.technet.com/cdnitmanagers/archive/2006/07/14/441858.aspx>

**CP 18: "Command is lonely."**

Ultimately it's your responsibility and this entails making the hard decisions. However it always helps to be an inclusive as possible and to have transparency in dealing with associates. Be up front but also solicit valued input.

**"Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible."**

Published Thursday, July 20, 2006 10:13 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)  
Filed Under: [Stephen Ibaraki](#), [Guest Bloggers](#), [Career Tips](#)

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**# re: Management Tips: Colin Powell's Leadership Primer, Part 2/2**

Sunday, July 23, 2006 12:38 AM by [jointer](#)

I read with interest Colin Powell's Leadership tips, which I had not seen before, and Stephen's equally erudite comments. This got me thinking and I found myself trying to put some 'one liners' (or close) to go with each of the tips.

I offer them here as my personal interpretation:

CP 1: "Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off."

Leadership is not a popularity contest!

CP 2: "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. Either case is a failure of leadership."

If you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

CP 3: "Don't be buffaloeed by experts and elites. Experts often possess more data than judgment."

10 'experts' may give you 10 different opinions but in the end only one opinion counts.

CP 4: "Don't be afraid to challenge the pros, even in their own backyard."

There is no such thing as a 'stupid question'; only those to which you don't know the answer.

CP 5: "Never neglect the details. When everyone's minds is dulled or distracted the leader must be doubly vigilant."

Take care of the details and the rest will take care of itself.

CP 6: "You don't know what you can get away with until you try."

It is easier to get forgiven than to get permission.

CP 7: "Keep looking below surface appearances. Don't shrink from doing so (just) because you might not like what you find."

Beware the fine line between 'leadership' and 'arrogance'.

CP 8: "Organization doesn't really accomplish anything. Plans don't accomplish anything, either. Theories of management don't much matter. Endeavors succeed or fail because of the people involved. Only by attracting the best people will you accomplish great deeds."

You are only as good as your 'team'.

CP 9: "Organization charts and fancy titles count for next to nothing."

When you are 'in the trenches' the 'bullets' don't know who you are.

CP 10: "Never let your ego get so close to your position that when your position goes, your ego goes with it."

Ego will get you 'despised' and not 'advised'.

CP 11: "Fit no stereotypes. Don't chase the latest management fads. The situation dictates which approach best accomplishes the team's mission."

Be yourself otherwise you will immediately lose credibility.

CP 12: "Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier."

Nil illigitimum carborundum.

CP 13: "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 a drive to get things done."

A proactive 'doer' who takes calculated risks.

CP 14: "Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt, to offer a solution everybody can understand."

KISS

CP 15: Part I: "Use the formula  $P=40$  to 70, in which P stands for the probability of success and then numbers indicate the percentage of information acquired."

Part II: "Once the information is in the 40 to 70 range, go with your gut."

It takes guts to go with your 'gut'.

CP 16: "The commander in the field is always right and the rear echelon is wrong, unless proved otherwise."

You cannot sail the ship from the Captain's cabin.

CP 17: "Have fun in your command. Don't always run at breakneck pace. Take leave when you've earned it: Spend time with your families. Corollary: surround yourself with people who take their work seriously, but not themselves, those who work hard and play hard."

The people who 'play' best together 'work' best together.

CP 18: "Command is lonely."

The leader is part of the team and yet must be apart from the team.

"Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible."

If leadership is an 'art' then it can appear in many forms, and indeed this is true. You can study the habits and traits of the best leaders but you will still find it difficult to distil it down to its essence. The best leaders have certain indefinable qualities, which set them apart. There is a clear and important difference between 'management' and 'leadership'. Good managers don't necessarily make good leaders and vice versa.

Cheers  
Graham J.

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**# re: Management Tips: Colin Powell's Leadership Primer, Part 2/2**

Tuesday, July 25, 2006 2:25 PM by [Stephen Ibaraki](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca),  
[FCIPS,I.S.P., sibaraki@cips.ca](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca)

Graham,

Well said ... and concise too!

Well done.

Cheers,  
Stephen Ibaraki

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