

Colin Powell's 13 rules for how to lead

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Colin Powell (1937-2021), led the State Department as secretary of state and the military as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He also served as a four-star general in the U.S. Army. Even so, Powell “wasn’t overly concerned with hierarchy,” said current Secretary of State Antony Blinken on October 18. “He wanted to hear from everyone ... Powell was simply and completely a leader, and he knew how to build a strong and united team.”

Powell offered 13 rules for leadership in his 2012 memoir, *It Worked for Me: In Life and Leadership*.

1. **It ain't as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning.** Leaving the office at night with a winning attitude affects more than you alone; it also conveys that attitude to your followers.
2. **Get mad, then get over it.** Everyone gets mad. It's a natural and healthy emotion. My experience is that staying mad isn't useful.
3. **Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.** Accept that your position was faulty, not your ego.
4. **It can be done.** Have a positive and enthusiastic approach to every task. Don't surround yourself with instant skeptics.
5. **Be careful what you choose: You may get it.** You will have to live with your choices. Some bad choices can be corrected. Some you'll be stuck with.
6. **Don't let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.** Superior leadership is often a matter of superb instinct. When faced with a tough decision, use the time available to gather information that will inform your instinct.

7. **You can't make someone else's choices. You shouldn't let someone else make yours.** Make sure the choice is yours and you are not responding to the pressure and desire of others.
8. **Check small things.** Leaders have to have a feel for small things — a feel for what is going on in the depths of an organization where small things reside.
9. **Share credit.** People need recognition and a sense of worth as much as they need food and water.
10. **Remain calm. Be kind.** Few people make sound or sustainable decisions in an atmosphere of chaos.
11. **Have a vision. Be demanding.** Followers need to know where their leaders are taking them and for what purpose. Good leaders set vision, mission, and goals.
12. **Don't take counsel of your fears or naysayers.** Those who do risk wasting their time and energy.
13. **Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.** If you believe in the likelihood of success, your followers will too.

Who on your team does a great job with one/many of these?

