

## Lessons from an impressive expert

I had high expectations of General Colin Powell and I'm pleased to say he didn't disappoint. He also wasn't what I expected: a crusty general with a tough, impenetrable exterior, barking out his speech as if he were leading us into battle.

Instead I found him genuinely funny, warm and surprisingly approachable. He even does a terrific impression of Ronald Reagan.

General Powell told us his life changed when he left office as Secretary of State. "One day," he said, "every king, president and diplomat requests a day with you. Every news outlet and reporter want an interview. One day you are the center of the universe, and the next day you ain't."

He doesn't miss his high-powered positions, except possibly his private plane. He told us he always looks through the windshield. Never the rear window, never the side mirrors. Specifically, General Powell discussed three areas he believes makes for better leaders. He learned these lessons from a sign at Fort Benning that simply read: "Follow me."

The first key to leadership is about inspiration. He said, "Your role is to put your followers in the best possible environment and spirit to accomplish the mission. Take care of them, give them the best skills and training tools. Invest in the followers. They will be inspired by you and move forward with your values.

"And get your people to believe in you. If you're not enthusiastic, why should they? Be the example. Inspire your followers and they will motivate themselves."

The second key is to recognize performance. Sure money is always nice, but the most rewarding is a heartfelt pat on the back or handwritten note.

And lastly: solve problems. He said, "You can't work around them. You can't avoid them" And possibly the best line of the day: "You can't PowerPoint your way out of a problem."