

## **THE NMBC GLOBAL AT WORK**

*Using Gen. Colin Powell's Leadership Principles*

*As a Guide for Success in the International Business Arena*

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Something prompted me to revisit Gen. Colin Powell's leadership principles around mid-summer 2008 as I faced the challenge of taking the National Minority Business Council, Inc., on another "global adventure." Rasta se follow di spirit.

Since its establishment in 1972, the NMBC has served the specific interests of small entrepreneurs. My comments and the initiatives and programs we continue to offer are therefore always guided by our desire to provide our members with relevant services for the success of their businesses.

I last had reason to publicly reference Colin Powell's Principles more than twelve years ago. At the time I was one of the few blacks among more than 30 senior executives in a large corporation, who were seeking ways to more effectively manage the corporation's diverse workforce and wider community in the New York metropolitan area. I used Gen. Powell as an example of exemplary leadership when given the opportunity and trust. To my surprise, a white female executive in the room reached into her pocketbook and took out a printed copy of Powell's Principles, which she carried with her. The lessons of Powell's Principles were personal then, but more so now in a global business environment where survival trumps profit and where America struggles with a new paradigm of shared global leadership. It was not surprising, then, to hear Colin Powell refer to the intellect, style and substance of Barack Obama—another man of high principles--as he endorsed him for President. .

Colin Powell well understands the role of ego, optimism, ambition, power and other attributes in the drive for leadership evidenced in entrepreneurs and others. As an organization committed to the survival and success of small businesses, we will use these principles in conducting business with persons of different cultures, values and interests across the globe.

We are undertaking the challenge of putting together sound business deals for our members globally at a time of unprecedented economic and political transformation and as entrepreneurs increasingly are being called upon to help resuscitate our ailing economy,. Our Web site, [www.nmbcglobal.org](http://www.nmbcglobal.org), will identify business opportunities and provide information that is vital to the success of ventures undertaken by our members with overseas partners.

***In the order given by Gen. Powell himself, here is a summary of leadership principles through his eyes:***

- 1. Promote a clash of ideas. Allow subordinates to argue and clash with you. Once you've heard enough, make your decision, and then count on your team to execute it with full passion,*
- 2. Encourage a noisy system. Put people at ease by listening to them; genuinely desire to want what people know.*
- 3. Remember that only people get things done. A leader must give followers an environment to get things done. Take a third of the time to plan, and give two-thirds of the time for people to execute.*
- 4. Maintain an open-door policy. Let people see you when you're there, and be sure to give special access to those closest to you.*
- 5. Probe the organization. Walk the "grounds" everyday, allowing people access to you. If you uncover something affecting your organization or team that requires attention, close the loop and let those involved know the outcome.*
- 6. Reward your best performers and get rid of your non-performers. You must constantly prune. Otherwise, the leader who doesn't prune out the bad risks watching the good turn bad.*
- 7. Be prepared to anger and/or disappoint some people.*
- 8. Check your ego at the door. Don't tie ego to title.*
- 9. Have fun in your role. Maintain hobbies outside of work that can settle your mind.*
- 10. Fit no stereotypes.*
- 11. Remember that perpetual optimism is a force multiplier. Always assure those around you that the team will make it, that the problem will be solved. At the same time, don't do so with false statements.*
- 12. Things always look better in the morning. Be optimistic of the day ahead.*
- 13. Avoid war if at all possible. But when battles erupt, use your same processes to make decisions, then accept the fact your decisions will have to come faster.*
- 14. Trust the element of instinct.*
- 15. Prepare to be lonely.*