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## Business Innovation Group (BIG) News

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## David Handlen speaks at William Freeman Lecture

April 15, 2013



Working for the Air Force and taking classes at a university at the same time can be a trying effort. Late night classes, relocation, and university transfers can create barriers that make achieving an education difficult. Nevertheless, David Handlen's determination and drive helped him to overcome these obstacles and achieve his Bachelor's in Business Administration at Georgia Southern College. With this degree, Handlen **(pictured left with Luke Pittaway)** went on to successfully manage and develop several snack food plants leading to millions of dollars in profit.

Handlen spoke to a crowd of over 100 Georgia Southern students and faculty members Monday night at the Nessmith-Lane Assembly Hall. Handlen's lecture covered his journey as an entrepreneur, the different opportunities he encountered, and what he learned from the experiences.

Handlen's speech was a part of the William A. Freeman Memorial Lecture Series. Handlen was the fifth speaker of the series which takes place annually honoring William A. Freeman, a successful graduate of Georgia Southern who sponsored many scholarships and awards at the university.

After seven years in the Air Force, Handlen attended Georgia Southern and graduated with a BBA in Management in 1971. He then started his career in production management with Frito Lay Foods. Slowly making his way up the executive ladder, Handlen's salary increased with each new job he took. *"With every job you gain more experience and therefore you're worth more," Handlen said. "Don't take anything else."*



At Frito Lay, Handlen was a first line supervisor that worked his way up to production manager. At this time, Frito Lay was growing so quickly the company was building three to five plants in one year. Handlen was part of what brought on such success.

From Frito Lay, Handlen went to work for Laura Scudders, a snack food company in California that no longer exists today. With 600 employees and a failing production, Handlen was brought in to turn things around. After four years, the company was running so smoothly it was ready to sell- all thanks to Handlen.

Even with 25 years of experience, Handlen was still learning new things. *“If you’re going to run a company be willing to learn the different functions so you can teach others,”* he said. Handlen made sure he took the time to ask questions and learn every aspect of the snack food business.

As for the young women in the crowd, Handlen encouraged them to be confident and work hard. *“Although this field is male dominated, it is important for you ladies to step up to the plate,”* he said. *“Make sure that in the first 15 seconds you make the right first impression.”*

Handlen asked the students to take a minute and think about how they are perceived by their peers and their teachers. *“You must remember that you’ve got to be confident and be able to project that in order to be successful,”* Handlen said.

In his closing remarks, Handlen made sure to leave the students with advice he learned through his years of consulting. *“Make sure you know when to leave a company,”* he said. *“When you realize you aren’t contributing anymore, make it your move to leave and not the company’s.”* He also encouraged students to be prepared to sell their ideas, do their homework and be prepared, and most important of all sharpening their listening skills. *“I’ve met a lot of young people in the last few years that talk too much,”* Handlen said. *“Sharpen your listening skills to understand your customers.”*

Consulting would be Handlen’s last full time job before he retired three years ago. Although retired, he still finds time to substitute teach three days a week at local high school in Fort. Worth, Tx. He also enjoys gardening and playing racquetball.