



**Tell us about your very unique business! Why did you choose this particular line of work?
What does it do for you that no other field can?**

My business provides three types of services: 1st – Guides organization's through the process of developing a focused, clear strategic plan that outlines where they want to take their organization 3, 4, 5+ years from now; 2nd – Guides the development of succession programs and plans to identify needed bench strength to support, manage & lead their organizations' 3, 4, 5+ years from now; and 3rd – Develop and provide Leadership Development Training to help build management and leadership skills throughout the management team.

Ironically, this is my dream job. I first heard about "management consulting" when I was taking my capstone class as a senior at the University of Wisconsin. The teacher wasn't a PhD. He was this thing called a "management consultant" and would share case studies from his clients with us – as he'd apply principles from our text. It was fascinating – especially when he'd simply tell his clients what the problems were, how to fix them, -- and then bill them for his advice! I thought it was a dream job that provided a beautiful way to help companies while maintaining professional independence. From that moment on, I changed my focus from wanting to be an international commodities broker to a consultant. However, I had no experience and no right to offer advice to business owners. So I worked with the U.S. Department of State for 10 years in a great job, ironically learning to coach and counsel managers and leaders. However, I started my company after I attended one of those one-day seminar training programs. I sat in that program calculating how much money that company was making by having all of us attend, and thinking to myself, "I could be teaching this stuff!" So I quit my job and started my company as a basic training company – any topic, anywhere. It's not a strategy I recommend to others now, but it gave me a lot of practice and helped me learn to research and craft curriculum quickly. Soon, my clients started asking me to help with other projects as a result of the positive feedback they were getting from my training programs and my ability to hone in on core leadership issues they were facing systemically – as an organization. My business allows me to help managers and leaders in a variety of ways: train; coach; consult; write books, blogs, and other social media outlets; and give speeches and interviews. I'm able to work with really smart people: business owners who have created multi-million dollar businesses from nothing, senior government officials, association executives, boards of directors, managers and leaders from a variety of industries – manufacturing, finance, business services, government, transportation, etc. I'm always learning from my clients. They're always pushing me to be a bit quicker, smarter, and faster than they are. It's a great career.

You define yourself as a Leadership Accountability Expert. What does that mean to someone who may not be familiar with your line of work?

My nickname is The Dragon Lady of Leadership Accountability™ which my clients love – because they know by that title, I'll help them do their jobs as leaders of their organizations more effectively. Leadership accountability is a basic concept, but one that many wannabe leaders fail in exemplifying. Leadership accountability in understanding – in your gut – you need to model 24/7 – the behaviors you expect of every person who works with you or who represents your organization. Leadership accountability means you understand your job is more than simply ensuring you ship X number of widgets today or your department surpassed its sales quota for the quarter. Leadership accountability means you did those things – as a given; you also spent a good bit of time ensuring your team members had the tools they needed to do their jobs, you identified what additional skills they need to start developing now so they're prepared for future requirements, you communicated with them ahead of time on upcoming issues, shared good/bad & ugly information with them, and held THEM accountable to do their jobs and help the organization achieve its goals. You did your job as a well-rounded leader.

What would say is your strongest competitive advantage? How do you set yourself apart from other businesses that offer similar services?

I've been a manager. I am a business owner. I've supervised people in over 129 countries, I've managed multi-million dollar budgets, I've hired & fired employees. I know what it feels like to have to DO many of the management tasks I hold my clients accountable to do. I'm also able to speak with them honestly about the realities of the ramifications to them, their employees, clients, etc when they fail to do their jobs as leaders. I've got a consulting style to my speeches, training programs, books, etc – I'm constantly trying to educate my clients. I don't make them feel inferior and dependent upon me to always be there. I want them to get better at what they do.

You obviously are very passionate about your work! What do you most enjoy about it? Where do you derive the greatest satisfaction?

It's cliché, but it really is nice to know something I've said or written has made a positive impact on a person or company. I recently bumped into a woman who had attended a seminar I gave early last year. She told me she thinks about me every morning as she's driving to work. In that program, I emphasized the need to Be Intentional in how you create your "Leadership Brand." That wasn't even the main point of that presentation, but it resonated with her and made a positive impact on her and her team.

Also, I have several clients I've worked on and off with for years as they attribute my work with them for helping them grow as an organization and management team. It's a neat feeling knowing I've helped them employ hundreds of people, and often add additional employees when others are being laid off.

Is there a specific challenge that many of your clients share? In other words, what common obstacles do your clients come to you with, if any? (if this question doesn't apply, NA, we can skip it)

The biggest problem most of my clients have is not knowing how to develop skills in their employees and being afraid to hold their employees accountable – and doing these things in positive non-punitive ways.

What kind of Clients do you most enjoy working with? Why?

I work best with organizations led by people who are willing to learn, change, take risks, admit mistakes, and push themselves and their teams to be better. I know that sounds grandiose, but there are people out there like that – though not as many as I wish! Seriously though, I see the greatest success with my client groups that are led by a person or team who admits s/he has made mistakes and is willing to be THE example of how to learn to lead differently. It's a huge risk for the leader/owner, but the results are phenomenal.

I LOVE that you placed a photo of yourself on your home page! It tells visitors immediately who they are hiring and creates a sense of relationship, so the visitor feels compelled to go deeper into the site and learn more about you personally. Was using your photo on the home page an easy or natural decision? Or did you struggle with it? I ask because many small business owners are apprehensive about using their own "face" as the face of the brand.

Putting my picture on the home page of every one of my websites was a strategic decision. My speaking/author site: <http://Liz-Weber.com> was an obvious site to include my picture. My blog was another fairly obvious decision <http://wbsllc.com/blog> but my company's consulting/training site took more thought & pushing by my team. For years we had marketed this site as "The Company" site with the specific intention that down the line, I'd sell the training business, etc. However, after many debates with my team, I agreed to put my picture on the home page of this site. We ran the analytics on the site – people were hitting the site because they were looking for me – Liz Weber – not my company. Also, my clients don't focus on my company name, they want me or the select team member I assign to their project. So putting my picture on the home page – with strategic wording about the services my team can provide- works.

You clearly put a lot of effort into the design of your book, Something Needs To Change Around Here. What was the objective for the design of the book? How did your effective design help you achieve your goals?

The 5 Stages model I outline is one I've used and enhanced over the years to guide my clients in understanding why they're feeling the frustrations they are with their employees, teams, organizations & businesses. From my experience, their frustrations are often of their own making: They are not managing or leading their employees the right way at the right time. This model is not Ken Blanchard's Situational Leadership. It's closer to Michael E Gerber's EMyth,

but takes the EMyth ideas a bit further and in a different direction. The model is a simple graphic representation to help business owners, managers & other leaders understand how they need to shift their thinking of their own roles & responsibilities to better lead their team members. Simple premise. Not easy for many managers/biz owners to do.

This book has been in the works for over 1 year for a number of reasons:

- -- I needed to hone the content down to very simple terms and examples to make it more appealing across industries and to a broader market, etc.
 - -- I wanted to work with a publisher who would work with me in designing a book that met several criteria:
 - Had to be a quick reading Airplane book (i.e., easy for business travelers to read in a 2-3 hour flight)
 - Had to easily fit in briefcases, in purses, and be easy to read if you were stuck in the middle seat of an airplane
 - Had to be formatted so key points would be readily apparent for both busy execs as well as more content-driven, how-to managers
 - Had to be visually appealing to both sexes (over 50% of managers are now women)
 - Had to be a bit more sophisticated but designed along the lines of Jeffrey Gittomer's Little Red book series
 - Had to be visually appealing overall so it would stick out and be more likely to be picked up vs a big name author's in airport book stores
- I think we've accomplished all of the above.

I went with a publisher locally who really took this project to heart – instead of working with a big name publisher & getting lost in the shuffle of all their other authors. The preliminary reviews are all positive. I talked with a CEO of a company last week who read it. I asked for his feedback on the content, but he said, “No, let's first talk about the overall design of this book. It's perfect. The size, the colors, the layout inside, the way you highlighted key points, etc”

You have several web sites, and the visual brand is consistent throughout, thereby creating a sense on "family resemblance" which I believe attributes to brand recognition. What was your strategy for how you arrived at the total brand look-and-feel?

We're really focused on brand management. Everything we put out has to make it easy for a client or prospective client know it's my work, my quality, etc. Looking at least similar on our various sites was a must. Next year, we'll be updating some of our product icons that have been out for a few years in line with our newer product brand / look.

What's next on the horizon for WBSLLC? (I'm not asking you to share details, maybe just give us a "hint" that no business is stagnant and that you're evolving so readers feel inspired that they CAN continue to add/expand/grow their businesses, in case they're feeling stuck).

Ah great question! There's always something planned here! My team and I will be getting together in another few weeks to review and update our business strategies – we do this ~ every quarter. I'm happy to say we've accomplished just about everything we set out to this past year: More products (2 books – e books & audiobooks, on-line leadership learning program, more diversified client base, stronger – focused social media presence, etc. Next year, we'll be focusing on more speaking engagements to share the leadership insights from my book, *Something Needs to Change Around Here*, as well as my leadership book targeted to women: *Don't Let 'Em Treat You Like A Girl – a Woman's Guide to Leadership Success*. We'll be moving into video blogs and interviews with experts from various fields – so I learn and my clients will learn more as well! But most importantly, I'll be paying attention to what leadership issues my clients are anticipating 2, 3, 4+ years from now and determining if there's a way my company can help meet their leadership challenges.