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MBS ([00:01](#)):

My surname is Bungay Stanier, now it used to be just Stanier, but when I got married back in 1995, [Marcella 00:00:09] and I combined our surnames. Stanier Bungay was never going to work so Bungay Stanier it was, and so it remains. Now, the origin of the word Bungay, Marcella's original surname is location. There's actually a town, Bungay, I think they call it Bungay in Suffolk in the Northeast of England. That's the kind of bulbous bit off on the right hand side there. I mean there's even a castle there, if you ever want to check out Bungay Castle.

MBS ([00:37](#)):

And Stanier, well the etymology of that is actually profession. It's a Celtic version of the word, stone hewer. So someone who carves obelisks and the like. All of which to say, when people get my surname right, which is definitely not 100% of



the time, there's not much expectation that it's a clue to who I am or where I'm from or what I do.

MBS ([01:02](#)):

But that's not the case with my guest today. Her surname and how she shows up in the world appear to be a perfect fit.

MBS ([01:12](#)):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS. This is the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. A book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. And today, I'm speaking to truly, somebody who's a dear friend of mine, someone I look up to a great deal and something of a unique presence in the management and leadership development world. Liz Wiseman is justly celebrated for her book, *Multipliers*, and she will be for her current book which is just coming out, *Impact Players*.

MBS ([01:44](#)):

And we'll come back to Wiseman, you'll see why I think there's such a nice connection. But she doesn't call herself a wise person. She doesn't call herself a consultant, or really an author. She is, and these are her words, a researcher. And that's an important word and it's a loaded word.

Liz ([02:00](#)):

Well, it's either an appropriate description of what I do or it's a string around my finger, like a reminder to me, which is, "You are not in the business of just tossing out opinion. Go do the math, do the work, formulate a question. Pursue it. Pursue it deeply. Get the data, dig into it. Get a big sample size. Work with more than an N of one," which is what I think a lot of people do in the management authoring space.



MBS ([02:35](#)):

Yes. That old N of one. I had to look this up because I'm not that wise on statistics, but basically an N of one is when someone thinks, "Well, if it happened to me, it's probably the universal truth." And if I think about it, there's probably a correlation between which cards of privilege you've been dealt and if you suspect and kind of hope that this is the way the world works.

MBS ([02:58](#)):

While it's definitely true of course, that we have shared humanity, it's not one size fits all. And that's why data is central to Liz's work. But that's earned wisdom. It wasn't a lesson that Liz hadn't actually figured out when she applied for her first job. She was all gung ho and ready to start teaching leadership.

Liz ([03:18](#)):

It was like, "I'm going to go get a job doing this," and I went to go interview for one of the premiere management companies at the time and kind of announced myself and my intention and like, "Here am I. And I would like you to hire me." And it was Ed Musselwhite, the president of Zenger Miller and he's like, "Well, Liz, you seem great. But why don't you get some management experience before trying to teach people how to manage? Like, how's that for an idea?" And I thought it was so narrow-minded.

MBS ([03:51](#)):

Yup, obviously Liz did not get that job. Instead, her career took some interesting and unexpected turns.

Liz ([03:59](#)):

I went from, "I want to teach leadership," to someone saying, "Go get a job leading." And then I take a job at Oracle and then I get my first leadership opportunity and I say no to it.



MBS ([04:13](#)):

So she'd been working there as a project manager and after a year, the company restructured. And Liz was free to find a new job within the company. She found a team and had the perfect pitch for them. Something that she was passionate about. Yup, once again, leadership.

Liz ([04:28](#)):

"Bob, have you noticed, there's a lot of managers who don't know what they're doing." He's like, "Yeah, I've noticed. Everyone's noticed." And I'm like, "Hey, I can help with that. I would love to build a management bootcamp." And I'm totally excited about this, passionate. And I'd love to do this." And Bob says to me, "Well Liz, you're great. We'd love to have you join this group, but your manager has a different problem." He said, "She's got to figure out how to get 2,000 new college grads up to speed on Oracle technology in the next year, and what would be great is if you could help her do that."

MBS ([05:02](#)):

So this is interesting. At every turn, Liz had wanted to focus on leadership in her way. But ended up coming at it sideways. Arriving via a more circuitous route. There's a lesson here.

Liz ([05:15](#)):

What he was saying was, "Liz, make yourself useful. Open your eyes, look at what's happening around you. Instead of pursuing your passion, figure out what's important here and help us do that." And it set something in me. An orientation and actually I took that job, figured out how to teach 3GL coding to a bunch of hotshot programmers from MIT and Cal Tech.

MBS ([05:43](#)):

Good for you.



Liz ([05:44](#)):

That's a whole other story. But then, within a year, they tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hey, we want you to manage the group." I'm like, "I don't want to manage the group. I'm having a great time with my little ruse here teaching programming to programmers." And they're like, "No, we really want you to do this." And I'm like, "No, have So-and-So do it, she wants the job, I don't. I'm having fun."

Liz ([06:09](#)):

"No, we really want you to do this." And that's when, I think, it was the second time I have to give up the job that I want to do the job that's needed. Like, there is incredible opportunity that comes in subordination. And not subordinating ourselves to another person, but subordinating our will to a more collective need.

MBS ([06:41](#)):

That's interesting, because the book you're best known for, Multipliers. And your new book as well, speaks to, less about individual glory and more about in a way servant leadership. "How do I understand and serve the bigger cause, the bigger organization, the people around me?" Rather than, "How do I climb my own particular mountain?"

Liz ([07:07](#)):

Yeah, I do think it is this common theme and I think it's maybe a virtue that America was sort of built on this idea, but yet we, as a culture, a nation, a people have become so individualistic, and I guess like my own experience has been, "I have had this rich experience and rich career, like interesting, fun, rewarding work, but it came, not by pursuing what I was intent on." It did not come from goals, it came from just saying yes when there was a need. Maybe it's an underappreciated path.



MBS ([08:00](#)):

Right, yeah. The CEO at Box of Crayons, the company I started, her thing at the moment is around being customer centric. And at the heart of that is around understanding service, and this idea of what's being asked of me? How can I be useful? And how do you fully orient around that? And we've tried to do that before, but I think we're about to step up our game around that, and I think it carries that core insight you have, which is in service, you can unleash an unexpected form of leadership, perhaps.

Liz ([08:39](#)):

And I think we think of service is like, service is smiling at annoying people. And not punching the person on the airplane who's annoying you. That's service. And it's like very surface and behavioral, but it's really about what it means to serve. And serving is about an orientation. It's like where are you pointing yourself and are you pointing yourself at the right problem? Or are you off doing your thing?

Liz ([09:12](#)):

Are you like the little kid out on the soccer field who's picking daisies while the game's being played?

MBS ([09:21](#)):

Where do you think that seed was planted for you around service being central to the way you see not just leadership, but the world, I think?

Liz ([09:32](#)):

Yeah, it was probably planted in graduate school. I had a professor, Carrie Patterson, was one of my favorite professors, as was J. Bonner Ritchie. And there were two stories that he told that really stuck with me and one was an experience he had in the Middle East, and particularly when he was a visiting faculty member in Jerusalem. And this actually came after I was one of his students. But he was



there doing some really interesting work teaching some leadership and management workshops at our school's Jerusalem Center.

Liz ([10:14](#)):

And he's driving through Jerusalem and he's in East Jerusalem and he's driving through the village of Isawiya, and this is a Palestinian village there and he's driving in and all of a sudden all these rocks hit his car and they crash through the windows. A bunch of teenage boys came out, starting wielding these rocks that were more weapons than pebbles, and he ends up going to the hospital. He's got 30 pieces of glass embedded in his arm, in his face. He's a bloody mess.

Liz ([10:47](#)):

And he takes a day to recuperate and Bonner Ritchie, who's one of the most curious people I know, goes back. And he goes back, and asks to see... He parks his car outside the village. Takes an interpreter with him and he asked to see the muhtar, the mayor, and he says, "I want to talk to the boys who did this." And now the mayor knows exactly what has happened, and everyone know what has happened. And these teenage boys come out, you can imagine.

Liz ([11:20](#)):

And he's known in the area because he's a professor there and he says to the boys, he's like, "Why did you do this?" And it was just like this most honest, "Tell me why." And then they told him and it was about the yellow license plates on this car, were for them, a symbol of occupation and oppression. And he just listens to understand their point of view. And they become friends. They later at the Center, bring him gifts and it was... He then goes about his work and he's teaching these workshops that involve both the Palestinian and the Jewish community.

Liz ([12:01](#)):

And it was several years later, it was early in 1993, he gets a phone call, someone saying, "Yassar Arafat wants to meet with you. And he's heard about you, that



you're a bridge builder and that you don't take sides." So he... secret tunnels and, "Hello, can you serve as head the whole thing?" And he goes to Tunisia and the headquarters and Arafat says to him, "I've heard of you and that you don't take sides, but you seek to understand. And I have this opportunity. It's unprecedented."

Liz ([12:33](#)):

He's got this opportunity to enter into what became then, the 1993 Oslo Accords. And he said, "I have this opportunity to begin peace talks with Israel. But my cabinet, half of them are vehemently opposed to this." And he says, "Can you work with them?" And that has always stuck with me, of just, what happens when you just stay curious a little longer, to quote one of my favorite authors. And just what does it look like from the other point of view.

Liz ([13:11](#)):

It's about community and seeing okay, bigger than your own needs. And he became instrumental in that process. And he implanted something in me.

MBS ([13:23](#)):

Yeah, I see that.

Liz ([13:24](#)):

And there was this other thing he mentioned. It was a very quick thing, a quick experience. He took his son, he was probably a young teenager, or maybe middle school, high school. One summer he took him on a tour of the United States, not a tour of the United States but they went from ballpark to ballpark. Went to every major baseball park in the United States. And at the end of the summer, one of his professor friends, said, "Bonner, I didn't know you loved baseball that much." And Bonner said, "Well, I don't. But I love my son that much."



Liz ([14:00](#)):

And the thought for me that comes out of that is, "What happens when we take something that's important to someone who's important to us?" And then we make it important to us. This isn't important to me, but it's important to someone who matters to me, so I'm going to make it important to me. And when we do that inside of organizations, something kind of magical happens.

MBS ([14:29](#)):

Yes. Liz, will you tell us about the book that you've chosen to read from?

Liz ([14:36](#)):

I would love to. This is a book that I read because I read an OpEd that just lit me up. And it is one of my favorite columnists, maybe my favorite columnists, David Brooks, and the book is, *The Road to Character*.

MBS ([14:53](#)):

Right, which I haven't read. I've got his book, *The Second Mountain*, just on my floor over there, because it's the basis for some stuff I'm writing about at the moment, but I love that you picked David Brooks.

Liz ([15:04](#)):

Oh, it's so fun. Here on the flap it says, "He focuses on the deeper values that should inform our lives." And he basically challenges people from thinking about the resume virtues, achieving wealth, fame, status, and think more of the eulogy virtues, like kindness, bravery, honesty, faithfulness, focusing on what kind of relationships we formed. And it's a struggle with this.

MBS ([15:30](#)):

Yes, that's kind of the two mountains. The first mountain is the resume values and the second mountain is the eulogy values. And how did you come... Which pages



did you choose to pick from it? Because I'm always curious to know how people figure out what to read?

Liz ([15:48](#)):

Well, I am on page 21, and it's called Summoned, the section is Summoned, and it's from a chapter called The Summoned Self. And it begins with the story of Frances Perkins, who became this very impeccable actress, but shall I go ahead and read it?

MBS ([16:07](#)):

I think you should jump right in and read it. I can't wait.

Liz ([16:15](#)):

Today, commencement speakers tell graduates to follow their passion, to trust their feelings, to reflect and find their purpose in life. The assumption behind these cliches, is that when you are figuring out how to lead your life, the most important answers are found deep inside yourself. When you are young and just settling into adulthood you should, by this way of thinking, sit down and take some time to discover yourself, to define what is really important to you, what your priorities are, what arouses your deepest passions.

Liz ([16:45](#)):

You should ask certain questions. What is the purpose of my life? What do I want from life? What are the things I truly value, that are not done just to please or impress the people around me? By this way, life can be organized like a business plan. First, you take inventory of your gifts and passions and then you set goals and come up with some metrics to organize your progress towards those goals.

Liz ([17:10](#)):

Then you map out a strategy to achieve your purpose, which will help you distinguish those things that move you toward your goals from those things that



seem urgent, but are really just distractions. If you define a realistic purpose early on and execute your strategy flexibly, you will wind up leading a purposeful life.

Liz ([17:30](#)):

You will have achieved self-determination of the sort captured in the oft-quoted lines from William Ernest Henley's poem, *Invictus*. "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." This is the way people tend to organize our lives in our age of individual autonomy. It's a method that begins with the self and ends with the self. That begins with self-investigation and ends in self-fulfillment.

Liz ([18:00](#)):

This is the life determined by a series of individual choices, but Frances Perkins, the woman profiled earlier in the chapter, found her purpose in life using a different method. One that was more common in past eras. In this method, you don't ask, "What do I want from life?" You ask a different set of questions, "What does life want from me? What are my circumstances calling me to do?"

Liz ([18:27](#)):

In the scheme of things, we don't create our lives, we are summoned by life. The important answers are not found inside, they are found outside. This perspective begins not with the autonomous self, but with the concrete circumstances in which you happen to be embedded. This perspective begins with an awareness that the world existed long before you and will last long after you.

Liz ([18:54](#)):

And that in the brief span of your life, you have been thrown by fate, by history, by chance, by evolution, or by God, into a specific place with specific problems and needs. Your job is to figure certain things out. What does this environment need in order to be whole? What is it that needs repair? What tasks are lying around waiting to be performed? As a novelist Frederick Buechner put it, "At what points do my talent and deep gladness meet the world's deep needs?"



Liz ([19:29](#)):

And then he goes on to describe Viktor Frankl's experience and the circumstances that he found himself in, and Michael, I can read those paragraphs but I feel so many of us are familiar with his story. But maybe for those who don't. It's just Viktor Frankl described this sort of call in his famous 1946 book, *Man's Search For Meaning*. Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist in Vienna who was rounded up in 1942 by the Nazi's and sent to a ghetto and then to a series of concentration camps.

Liz ([20:03](#)):

And I think most of us are familiar with his experience where everything is taken from him. And it's about his search for meaning and for him, as Brooks said later, well, Frankl wrote, "It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us." And his task there in that camp was as Brooks put it, "His moral task was to suffer well and to be worthy of his sufferings."

Liz ([20:37](#)):

And Frankl's other task was to take the circumstances into which he had been put and turn them into wisdom he could take to the world. And then it kind of goes on to tell about his experience and what he did when he found himself in this extraordinarily life ending, life altering circumstance. And then here's what Brooks concludes at the end of the section. "Few people are put in circumstances that horrific and extreme, but all of us are given gifts, aptitudes, capacities, talents and traits that we did not strictly earn. All of us are put in circumstances that call out for action, whether they involve poverty, suffering, the needs of family or the opportunity to communicate some message. These circumstances give us the great chance to justify our gifts.



Liz ([21:30](#)):

"Your ability to discern your vocation depends on the condition of your eyes and ears, whether they are sensitive enough to understand the assignment your context is giving you."

MBS ([21:40](#)):

That's wonderful. Thank you, Liz. And beautifully read as well and it connects very nicely to what we were talking about before around service and noticing what's the second job that I didn't want to take that I ended up taking, because that's what the world asked of me.

MBS ([22:02](#)):

Liz, I'm wondering for you, when you sit with that question, which is like, "What does life want from me?" How do you go about figuring that out? I mean it's an orientation to ask that question, but then you've still got to figure out what's the answer to the question. How do you explore that?

Liz ([22:26](#)):

Yeah, because the goal here is not to, I think Brooks used the term, "a purposeful life". He didn't use this term, but it's still a term that I think of, it's how to live a meaningful life, which I think is a higher calling than a purposeful life. Because you can be very purposeful about, "I want this, and I want the house, the yacht," but a meaningful life, and I really deeply believe we are meaning seeking creatures.

Liz ([22:55](#)):

People want to make a meaningful impact, they want meaning in their lives, and it's not about just chasing needs, "Oh, this person needs this. That person needs that." We end up frenzied when we do that, and I think in many ways, under contributing. I think it's about intersections.



Liz ([23:13](#)):

And there was a piece in here, as the novelist Frederick Buechner put it, "At what points do my talents and deep gladness meet the world's deep needs?"

MBS ([23:28](#)):

Love that phrase, "a deep gladness", what a wonderful phrase that is.

Liz ([23:32](#)):

Yeah, like what brings you deep gladness? So it's not about completely forsaking self, which is, "Oh, you want me to teach programming? Oh, I'll teach programming. You need a programmer, I'll do that." It's not about forsaking our gifts, it's looking [inaudible 00:23:44] these intersection points, which is, "Where is there a deep need and I have deep or nascent talent or capability?" And then it's allowing those two things to meet.

Liz ([24:01](#)):

For example, when they asked me like, "Hey," Bob never said this, he was much more polite, but the message was clear, "Liz, make yourself useful. Truly." And I knew they needed technical trainers. I don't have a lot of Techno expertise, but I love teaching. And so I'm like, "Okay, that is, there's an intersection there. There is a need, and I have capability. I don't know that I would call it deep capability because I couldn't program." I'd had one or two classes in college, but I will offer my capability there, and it's not enough.

Liz ([24:46](#)):

Something happens, I think, when... I look for magic points in organizations and work. Magic happens when you have just enough capability to say yes to something, to start a project, but not enough capability to finish it.



MBS ([25:02](#)):

Oh, I love that. That's wonderful, that's wonderful.

Liz ([25:07](#)):

I think that's what leadership, good leaders do is they give people work that like, "You know what? This person has enough capability, I can ask him to start, but they're not going to be able to finish the job on what they got, which forces learning."

MBS ([25:21](#)):

That's wonderful.

Liz ([25:23](#)):

And so we look for these intersection points. "Where is there a deep need, and where do I have just enough capability to walk into that space and say, 'I can help?'" But we don't need enough to finish the job, we just need enough to say yes.

MBS ([25:39](#)):

I love that. It's such a wonderful insight. How do you manage the plethora of choices that you have being Liz Wiseman. And I feel like I have some of this as well, being me, which is, you know what? I have deep gladness around a range of different things. I love walking on stage. I like writing books. I like running podcasts. I like brainstorming with people. I like starting companies. I've got a bunch of deep gladness-

Liz ([26:15](#)):

You've got a bunch of deep gladness. You do, my God. See, you have the curse of talent.



MBS ([26:21](#)):

You know, people might-

Liz ([26:24](#)):

And enthusiasm. Add enthusiasm to that.

MBS ([26:27](#)):

Possibly not necessarily in that order. Enthusiasm often trumps talent and a degree of self-belief which I'm kind of wired to, I think. And there's a way that I'm like, I sometimes get a little overwhelmed by, I'm not quite sure how to make the choice, because I can see possible magic in a range of different choices.

MBS ([26:49](#)):

And I would guess that, that might be something similar for you as well. So I'm wondering how you have the courage to say yes to something and in doing so, say no to some of the other things you could be doing?

Liz ([27:06](#)):

Oh boy, I wish I had a great system for this, but I'll tell you how I sort of feel around in the dark. And there's a part I think I have a bit of a system, but the part that involves feeling around in the dark is where is that biggest overlap between need and capability? And I do believe that we each are, we're sort of like, I don't know, arrive here in life with a set of talents. And that some of these, like for me, they're God-given. Or, I don't know where else they come from. They come from somewhere.

Liz ([27:43](#)):

But having had four kids, they come sort of with their baggage and their-



MBS ([27:48](#)):

Totally.

Liz ([27:49](#)):

They come fully loaded. And so I'm looking for places where, where do I have native talent there? Or sometimes, I call this native genius in my book, Multipliers, which is the thing that you do easily, freely, astonishingly well and if I've got, if there's a piece of work that touches on an area where I have-

MBS ([28:17](#)):

A native genius, yeah.

Liz ([28:19](#)):

... actually work here comes easily to me. I don't have to labor at it, it just flows from me. I tend to say, yes to those things, so that's one. Where is the need deepest? And benefits the most number of people? And where are you the goodest at this? And if you can bring those together, I say yes to that. And for me, it doesn't really involve dollar signs. I'm not like, "Oh, where's the biggest return?" It's just like, "Where's the biggest need and my biggest capability?" And then I think about people who I have obligations to. People I've already said yes to, and it's like my family and my colleagues.

Liz ([29:06](#)):

I'm like, "No, I've made commitments to these people, so I can't make competing commitments." And I think about that and then I kind of, I practice the art of blanket noes.

MBS ([29:20](#)):

Very helpful.



Liz ([29:22](#)):

I just say no to everything in this category. Like for years working at Oracle and I had a big job and I was also raising young children. I just said no to every networking, professional association mix, mingle. Because any one of them, I'd be like, "Of course I want to do that. That looks like fun." And I said, "No, I have to just say no to all of it."

MBS ([29:48](#)):

Yeah, that's great. My wife has one of the best blanket noes I've come across. Early days of Box of Crayons, I was like, "I'd love you to come out to this thing with me, networking and socializing. So it looks like I'm not a lonely bachelor, looks like I've got a real wife." And she's like, "If my attending this event is the thing that stops Box of Crayons from failing utterly, I will attend with you."

MBS ([30:11](#)):

I'm like, "Okay." And there are still, people who have known me for 20 years, who are not entirely convinced I'm actually married because they've never met Marcella, they've never actually seen her live. And I'm like, "It's annoying, but I really respect that clarity of, 'This is the boundary for me.'"

Liz ([30:28](#)):

So Michael, this is fantastic. I love that we're at the set. So have there been times where you have played that card, with just like, "No, this is a game ending. The company will go down if you are not by my side."

MBS ([30:42](#)):

There's only one event that I sort of insisted that she attend. It was, we had a big party to celebrate 15 years as a company and she co-owns the company with me. And I'm like, "I really want you to come along for this, because the people that we hire and the people that we work with and there are people who've been the



context for our success. Be part of this." And she was. And she was happy to do that.

MBS ([31:06](#)):

But all the other times, I'm like, "I think the company's going to survive whether she comes to this or not." So it was helpful.

Liz ([31:12](#)):

So Michael, what's one of your blanket noes, where you just say, "I have to say no to everything in this category"?

MBS ([31:21](#)):

I'm not sure I have a blanket no, as a strategy. But I do have, like I use text expander, and I just have a thing I type in which is ; fully and it pre-populates an apology that says, "I'm not available for this." So it gives me the freedom not to think I have to craft a no. I just have to make a decision that it's a no. And then I just send a pre-set message which just says, "Look, I really appreciate the invitation, but I'm fully committed with other projects, so I'm afraid I'll have to respectfully decline."

Liz ([31:59](#)):

This is so great. Michael, can we call that like an auto no?

MBS ([32:03](#)):

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:32:04].

Liz ([32:04](#)):

We have blanket no, and auto no. I thought a time or two of doing that.



MBS ([32:09](#)):

Yeah, it's really helpful, because I will entangle my brain if I'm trying to figure out how to apologize gracefully and sincerely that I can't say no. So I'm like, "Here it is. Here's my standard no," and people are fine with it, which is the other remarkable thing.

MBS ([32:25](#)):

And Liz, tell me how this conversation is connected to your new book, *Impact Players*?

Liz ([32:34](#)):

I think I picked this because it's an issue I've been thinking a lot about. It's not addressed directly. In fact, I have to confess I love this Summoned Self concept so much and the OpEd that Brooks wrote on this. And it's called, I think, *The Summoned Self*.

MBS ([32:54](#)):

It is. You sent it to me and I read it before the conversation, yeah.

Liz ([32:58](#)):

[crosstalk 00:32:58] in *New York Times*. And I tried so hard to weave this into the book. I tried three or four times, and my colleagues were like, who edit for me and tell me what's bad, Lauren's like, "Liz, you're doing it again. I see what you're up to. You're forcing this into this chapter."

Liz ([33:14](#)):

I'm like, "I know, because I really like it." And it never ended up in the book, which I feel like it's a shame, but I respect my colleagues calling me on my stuff. But I think it is this principle that underpins what we see. So this new book is called *Impact Players*.



Liz ([33:30](#)):

And it's a look at the people who are not just smart, talented and hardworking. But are having a huge impact in their work. They're doing work that's valuable, that's meaningful and it's based in a study where I'm not looking at those people versus the dummies of the world. It's what are they doing compared to other smart, talented, hardworking people who are showing up to work wanting to make an impact but yet something is impeding that.

Liz ([34:03](#)):

And it is one of the things that we see across the most influential and impactful people, is that their orientation is not on self. It tends to be on others.

MBS ([34:18](#)):

Interesting, and slightly counterintuitive, right?

Liz ([34:20](#)):

Yeah. And they focus on... They find out what's important to their organization, and they make it important to themselves and their bosses... We did 170 interviews and I did about 70 of those myself and I heard their leaders say things like, "They learned me. They figured out what was important to me." Not as in they gamed me, they managed me. It's like they took the time to understand my job. What's on your radar? What are you thinking about? What is your boss thinking about?"

Liz ([34:54](#)):

So they're ferreting out what's important, the agenda, essentially. And I think it's one of these art forms that a lot of people, we don't talk about. We think about figuring out people's hidden agendas. But there's an important-



MBS ([35:13](#)):

Just figure out their real agenda, and then help them with it.

Liz ([35:17](#)):

And there's the real agenda, which is here's the official goals of the organization. Then there's the sneaky, hidden agendas. But the real agenda is, "Here's what is important and what we're trying to do that maybe is so important we just haven't had time to write it down." This is what's deeply important. And amazing things when you figure out what the agenda is and then you work on this agenda. And it's something that we saw in the most impactful people, is they do this.

Liz ([35:54](#)):

They have better vision than other people. I shouldn't say than other people. When we operate in this mode of working and thinking, we have better vision, because we're perspective taking. We're like, "Okay, if I work for Michael, I'm going to spend time thinking about, 'What does this issue look like from his point of view? What does this look like to our customer's point of view? What does this look like to my colleagues?'"

Liz ([36:21](#)):

I wouldn't say they're second-guessing themselves, but they're constantly getting out of their seat intellectually to see it. And they have upward empathy and they kind of see with a different lens. Like this isn't a threat. This is actually kind of an opportunity to be helpful.

MBS ([36:41](#)):

Is it a learnable skill?



Liz ([36:44](#)):

I think it's so learnable. It's so learnable. I'll give you one quick example of, just I thought was such a fast turnaround. So I was doing a little webinar and I was talking about this idea of working on the agenda. And what happens when you're on the agenda. Because when you are working off agenda, meetings get canceled, there's no budget. You're like pushing the boulder.

Liz ([37:09](#)):

But when you're working on the agenda, magic happens. So this guy who is a worship leader at a megachurch in California. He's like, "Oh, well that explains everything." I'm off agenda. So my guidance to him is figure out what's important to your boss and make it important to you. And I kind of give him a simple little recipe for this. He does this. He says, "My weekly emails were being totally ignored by the senior pastor." And this guy, this worship leader was hardworking, he was talented, did a great job. All those things. Kept his boss informed.

Liz ([37:46](#)):

He changed his weekly email and he said, basically told his boss two things: "Here's what I understand to be the most important work. And here's how I'm working on what is most important."

MBS ([37:59](#)):

That's perfect.

Liz ([38:02](#)):

And so he writes me and says, "Wow, I got a very different response."

MBS ([38:07](#)):

I am back on agenda.



Liz ([38:09](#)):

I'm on agenda. He said, "My weekly emails used to go into this black hole. I never knew if they were read." He goes, "Now, I'm getting responses, encouragement, coaching." And of course, the pastor's thrilled because he's like... so I got thrown into management early. I have a lot of empathy for what it's like to be the leader. Do you know how good it feels to have someone say, "I understand what we're trying to do and I'm working on that." You've got some hallelujah choruses going on in the background.

MBS ([38:41](#)):

Exactly. And even probably literally for your pastor. But even if you're wrong. If you're like, "Here's what I think is most important." And now he's at home working on it and if you're wrong, they're like, "Actually, that's not quite right. Here's what's most important." You're like, "Oh, next week's email. [inaudible 00:39:01] and there's that thing."

Liz ([39:01](#)):

Exactly.

MBS ([39:01](#)):

So it's a great self-correcting exercise as well.

Liz ([39:05](#)):

And it's this wonderful coaching invitation for leaders because it's hard to say, "I've got to go from zero to 100 miles an hour on this to explain to someone what's important." But if they can say, "Here's what I understand to be important right now." Boy, if I can just give a little bit of correction to that, like "Okay, that's it. But it's a little bit different, actually this is at the heart of that." Man, that feels good.



MBS ([39:29](#)):

That does feel good.

MBS ([39:36](#)):

See, Wiseman or wise person perhaps, I told you there was a correlation between her surname and how she just is in the world. I mean here's what I love about Liz's work, and it's not just that it's research-based. It's about one, how to bring out the very best of people so that they can, two, have an out-sized impact in the work that they do. I mean that basic idea gets talked about all the time. I mean every leadership book probably has that implied at least.

MBS ([40:05](#)):

But I do think Liz's work goes deeper than most, deeper than many, because she is someone who, in my mind, has come to absolutely embody the idea of service. All those stories she shared with us, what are they needing Liz? What do they want?

MBS ([40:22](#)):

Well, they now weave through the work she creates and she shares with the world. So Liz is a multiplier and she is an impact player, because she's figured out what it takes. And yup, you can tell that I am a fan.

MBS ([40:37](#)):

So do good and buy her books. You may already have a copy of Multipliers, it's been out for a while. But pick up a copy of her new book, Impact Players. I would encourage you to use an independent bookstore if you can. They need our help.

MBS ([40:51](#)):

If you want to find out more about Liz, you'll find that at wisemangroup.com, wisemangroup.com.



MBS ([40:58](#)):

If you enjoyed my interview with Liz, I'm sure you did, there were two other possible interviews you might want to check out. Matthew Barzon is the first. That interview is called, What To Do With Power. He's the author of a really good book called, The Power of Giving Away Power. He made his money in the dotcom days. He helped raise money for Obama. Really helped, kind of invented the whole subordination thing and was the ambassador of the US to the UK, so it's a pretty story rich book. And I thought our conversation was wonderful. It's about the power of giving away power.

MBS ([41:31](#)):

And the second interview I'd suggest for you is Vikram Mansharamani. His conversation is entitled, The Power of Being A Generalist and again, it's about how do you show up to have the most impact in the work that you do?

MBS ([41:46](#)):

Thank you so much for listening. It's always a pleasure. Thank you for those of us who've given us a review on your favorite app. Thank you for those of you who passed an interview on. That word of mouth is just the nicest way to grow the podcast. So if you can help us out with that, I appreciate that very much.

MBS ([42:01](#)):

And if you're looking for just a little bit more, if you got to the website, [mbs.works](#). Find the podcast tab, you'll see the Duke Humfrey's. It is a private membership site, totally free. Named after my favorite library at Oxy, where all the cool, old books were. But my Duke Humfrey's has transcripts of the podcast, access to all the podcasts that are no longer hosted on the public page. Some podcasts we haven't released and some other downloads as well.



MBS ([42:28](#)):

Thank you for listening. You are awesome and you're doing great.