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## Be the Calm in the Storm: Lessons from Hurricane Matthew and the Palm Beach Four Seasons Resort

October 4, 2016. I boarded my flight from Philadelphia International Airport en route to Palm Beach's Four Seasons Resort, where I was to attend Alan Weiss's 7th annual Thought Leadership Conference. Joining me there would be Dr. Dan Gilbert, Harvard psychologist and author of *Stumbling on Happiness*, along with 30 of the world's leading experts in corporate growth, workplace performance, leadership excellence, innovation, IT and more. Colleagues from 4 continents would be arriving that evening. This promised to be an exceptional week, filled with learning and the rapid development of new and exciting intellectual property to help my clients thrive. And to top it all off, the conference was taking place at one of the country's most beautiful and luxurious venues. I was thrilled to be part of it.

## Join the conversation



## Quick Links About Liz

[Testimonials](#)

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## What Clients Are Saying



*"I had the pleasure of working with Liz directly as an executive coach. Liz brought a keen insight of where I fit within the organizational dynamics and made excellent suggestions which were directed at facilitating my onboarding into the company.*

*I would recommend her without any*

As it turned out, Hurricane Matthew had other plans in store. Within hours of my arrival in Palm Beach, talk of evacuation began to swirl. It wasn't immediately clear whether, when or where the storm would make landfall. But it was increasingly apparent that Matthew would have a significant impact and was not to be taken lightly.

October 5. The barrier islands of Palm Beach County, along with many other communities throughout Florida, were under order of pending evacuation. By noon, the decision was made to cancel the remainder of the conference. Immediately, my colleagues and I got on the phone and Internet to arrange our way home. And the Four Seasons jumped into action.

The concierge and front desk personnel communicated calmly, clearly and confidently about what was to happen and when. They arranged new flights quickly and competently. They struck a perfect balance of urgency and steadiness, moving their guests with appropriate haste yet without causing undue alarm. The staff conveyed a genuine sense that it was all under control. While there was no attempt to minimize the reality of a looming Category 4 hurricane, there was no sense of hysteria or panic at any point in the process.

The leadership of the Four Seasons made the right call to close the resort and shuttle any remaining guests to an airport hotel for the night. They clearly had planned ahead for this type of situation. When the time came to communicate and execute the plan, each employee knew what to do and how to do it. The result? A smooth evacuation and an outstanding customer experience.

*hesitation to any organization or individual looking to effectively enter into a new leadership position and culture."*

**Mark Holtz,  
SVP of Operations  
& COO, Greater  
Waterbury Health  
Care**

**[Forward to a Friend](#)**

How well prepared are you and your organization for potential bad weather? Have you paused from the day-to-day long enough to anticipate and plan for any set of potential circumstances? Take a lesson from the Four Seasons. Storms will come. How you handle them will make all the difference for your company, employees, customers and clients.

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## **Are you a recognized leader or best kept secret? How to rapidly boost credibility, recognition and influence**

Let me tell you about one of my favorite clients. For today's discussion, I will call him Ted.

Let me begin by saying this. Ted is an extremely smart guy. He's a true technical expert who can rapidly analyze and simplify even the most complex information. Ted is, by nature, calm, steady and a self-described introvert. Over the years, he has been promoted to leadership positions of increasing responsibility due to his rockstar intellect and impressive base of knowledge.

So far so good, right? Well, yes and no. You see, although Ted's got the big job, the impressive title and a terrific team, he has been struggling to gain adequate recognition as a true leader within his company. He's seen as a very smart guy, yes, and the person anyone would want on the team... but not as an influential leader with endless potential.

Perhaps you are a bit like Ted. Maybe you are a tech guru, financial whiz, strategy genius, marketing maven, scientific innovator or engineering mastermind. Whatever your particular line of work or functional area, if you have risen from technical expert through the ranks of leadership, chances are, you can relate to Ted's dilemma.

Although **you know** you've got what it takes, although you are already leading a remarkable team and advancing your company's goals, you're having a heck of a time demonstrating that to the leaders around you. With your peers and superiors, it's as though you are a well kept secret.

So here's what I told Ted to do: *Prioritize relationships and ramp up communication*. It worked wonders for him. It will work for you too. Here's how to do it.

### **Take stock of your most important relationships.**

Be completely honest with yourself. Which relationships call for more time and attention than you're currently giving them? Which relationships are good-but not yet great? And which relationships are in need of a major overhaul? Figure that out, create a relationship-building plan (I call it a Stakeholder Priority Plan or SPP) and stick to it.

It's pretty straightforward. If you don't have top-notch relationships, you can't influence. If you can't influence, you can't lead. Get your relationships in order.

### **Prioritize the time with others.**

Good relationships and meaningful conversations won't just happen. You should schedule consistent meetings with your key stakeholders and keep them on the calendar. Be available for ad hoc conversations, too. This is a great way to find out what's most important, exciting or worrisome to your team, peers, managers, customers, business partners and industry influencers. Uncover and explore divergent points of view. Be genuinely open to new ways of thinking.

### **Find your moments of impact.**

If you listen more than you talk, that's great. But don't allow others to misperceive your silence. If you fail to speak up and interject your point of view, you may come across as disengaged, confused, or lacking in leadership. So find your spot to ask a thought-provoking question, pose a new perspective, or add an important nuance to the discussion.

Remember those hold old EF Hutton commercials? *When EF Hutton talks, people listen*. Channel your inner EF Hutton.

That's what Ted did and when Ted talks, people listen. He's gained leadership recognition, increased his influence and positioned himself for a wide array of leadership opportunities.

How about you? Are you a recognized leader or still a best kept secret?

Great leadership demands honest, direct, clear communication. It's that simple. If you don't tell people what's going on, they will make it up for themselves...

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### **About Liz Bywater**

Dr. Liz Bywater is an expert in leadership. Working at the intersection of business and psychology, she brings together practical experience (advising top executives across the Fortune 500), advanced education (she's earned a PhD in Psychology) and a dynamic personal style to inspire, engage and advise her clients.

For over a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AmerisourceBergen and more. Drawing upon her expertise in human behavior, she helps her clients drive commercial success, propel innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, NY Times, Fast Company and USA Today. She is also a featured guest on such broadcasts as CBS radio's Philadelphia Agenda with Brad Segall and BenFM's Woman of the Week with Marilyn Russell.

Liz earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies and her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University. She is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting.

She is also a popular speaker and author of the eagerly anticipated forthcoming book, *Slow Down to Speed Up: How to Make the Best Decisions and Get the Right Things Done!*

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