



Communications Digest

*Telling stories of how small businesses succeed while giving back to the community.
Let me tell your story!*

Welcome Mid-April!

After enjoying some mild days during March, we have returned to winter (cold and snow) this month. However, milder temperatures are coming and Saskatchewan's glorious sunshine still helps!

In last month's issue, I discussed some of the emotional challenges of entrepreneurship, with insights from Seth Godin, Kristin Neff and in memory of our local entrepreneurial expert, the late Raj Manek, Sr.

In "Word Nerd's Corner," I shared etymologist Bryan Garner's insights on using the term "half."

In this month's issue, I review a recent memoir by Fed Ex Canada President Lisa Lisson (a true trailblazer for women in leadership). Lisson provides her own application and interpretation of professional and personal "resilience" that are well worth reading.

And in "Word Nerd's Corner," Bryan Garner clarifies the confusing case of "garnish" and "garnishee."

I dedicate this issue of "Communications Digest" to the friends and family of the Humboldt Broncos, who lost a full 15 team members to a horrific crash. And thanks to all of those who are raising funds on their behalf.

Enjoy this weekend's return to "plus side temperatures," until we finally put this winter behind us!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

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Article One: Another take on "resilience": Reading FedEx Canada President Lisa Lisson's memoir

Last fall, on her "YouInc.com" network, venture capitalist Arlene Dickinson (of "Dragon's Den" fame) tweeted on the topic of resilience. She recommended the recent memoir of Lisa Lisson, President of FedEx Express, Canada. The memoir is called *Resilience: Navigating Life, Loss and the Road to Success* (ECW Press, 2017).

That reference piqued my curiosity, since, as Lisson's book was released, I had recently launched my own book on the topic, a collection of interviews with remarkable local entrepreneurs and artists, called [*Keep Going: Five Creatives Build Resilience*](#). The electronic format of my book is for sale on my website and analyzes various concepts of resilience in its introduction.

As serendipity would have it, on the same day that I listened to a talk on women entrepreneurs' innovations (see my blog of March 29th), where experts spoke of persisting gender inequality in business, I received a copy of Lisson's book. It shares thoughts from her work and life that are pertinent to women everywhere who seek professional and personal fulfillment. It reminds me of a less academic version of Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* and *Option B* combined (both of Sandberg's books were also discussed in earlier postings of this enewsletter).

Spoiler alert: I can't share and review Lisson's book without disclosing the dramatic event at the heart of it, so if you want to read the book without knowing its content, stop reading this post now!

In 2007, some 14 years after meeting her high school sweetheart (Patrick Lisson), graduating with an honours' degree in marketing, getting married, bearing four beautiful children AND being promoted to VP at FedEx Canada, Lisa Lisson seemed to live a charmed life. As her husband said the night before his near fatal heart attack, the couple seemed to "have it all." Then inexplicable cardiac arrest blocked oxygen to his brain, leaving him in a mentally vegetative state.

Resilience details the 14 years prior to, and the 10 years since, Patrick’s sudden heart attack in 2007.

Lisa uses the term “resilience” infrequently in the book, after citing as an epigraph a definition from *Psychology Today*: “Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever.”

But her memoir earns that name, as she details some of the darker underbelly of her mostly charmed life, of facing years of gender discrimination, even when working at her “dream” company—notably feeling guilty and resentful about having to leave meetings early to pick up children from daycare; having to swallow rage when disrupted by male colleagues in meetings, and having to find an outlet elsewhere for that rage); an unequal division of labour at home (which she managed by recruiting her husband to help and by delegating to their nanny); still unequal pay structures (Canadian women continue to make only 87 cents for every dollar earned by men; and in SK, only 75 cents); suffering produced by the threat of stereotypes (becoming self-fulfilling prophecies) and by female “socialization” that left her doubting her own worth and capabilities more than her male colleagues did theirs. And so on.

Lisson’s business insights are shrewd and ultimately fortifying, especially for professional women. She stresses the importance of being thoroughly prepared for everything from one’s first job interview to one’s application for a “dream job,” through self-directed study, reading and consulting those who can mentor others into such roles. She refers to doing a “deep dive” of research into companies that interested her, long before applying to them—learning their creation stories, philosophies, histories, performance and growth records and leveraging them into her early stage conversations. She says that most careers are about being thrown into the deep end, so that one has to cultivate “a long, neverending process of self-education” (67). Lisson has never waited to be taught anything and instead has taught herself. Self-directed reading and speaking with mentors were at once “the best cure for anxiety” and the best way to excel in corporate leadership.

Lisson always watched supervisors (whether at a high school job at “Chuck E. Cheese” or as VP at FedEx Canada, after some 15 years, there) to see how she could improve matters if she was in their roles. She acknowledges that she was raised to be ambitious and to rise to challenges, advocating that her children, colleagues and readers should push themselves to the best they can be—pitching in extra time for special assignments or taking on additional projects, whenever possible.

She offers insights about leadership in particular, which are valuable to any aspiring worker, such as the importance of learning patience when working with others; the importance of not cutting people off when they speak; of the need to form caring, emotional bonds with one’s staff (as a manager) through situational leadership that does not violate boundaries.

Many of Lisson's insights, such as the importance of "the Golden Rule" are brilliant in how she has incorporated them into her leadership approach, rather than for having theoretical profundity. For instance, she uses a common sense kind of three-part "litmus test" for important decisions that I have personally found useful: (1) Does it make logical sense? (2) Does it feel emotionally right? and (3) Does my gut give me reason to hold back on this?

And I very much agree with Lisson's insistence that women need to learn how to negotiate higher salaries for themselves (without justification), when our socialization tells us that is the purview of men.

But as interesting as her insights are, the meditative (nearly lyrical) quality of the storytelling in this memoir remained with me the longest. Perhaps ghostwriter Wendy Dennis or Lisson herself remembered the 10 year passage of life that follows Mrs. Ramsay's sudden death in Virginia Woolf's elegiac novel, *To the Lighthouse*.

Lisson's achronological organization of past and present events and experiences aptly demonstrates for readers the Woolfian, repetitive, cyclical nature of loss and memory that follow tragedy. In this practice, Lisson (and Wendy Dennis) are as much artists as advocates.

At a time in history when everyone appears to be writing books, especially memoirs as extensions of their social media and blog postings, one could read Lisson's volume cynically. She has "first-world problems," I can imagine readers saying. But the insights born of her both professional and personal challenges resonated with me and made the volume worth reading. In addition to her thoughtful strategies on leadership, Lisson shares insights like these:

--"Fear is a thief. It will rob you of joy, opportunity and, if you allow it, ultimately of life itself" (156).

-- "You learn how to live around the loss [of a spouse]. And be grateful for the time you had together" (208).

--"I have learned that it's impossible to deny the pain of grief. You can outrun it for a while. . . . but eventually it will demand your full attention. The only way to get through it is day by day, month by month, year by year, by focusing on what you have to be thankful for—and not on what has been taken from you. And then one day you look up and realize that the worst is behind you" (203).

-- And finally, "Happiness is not something you get from a person, place or thing. It's a state of mind . . . that you must cultivate every single day" (209).

These all convey Lisson's resilience—her capacity "to come back stronger than ever"—to

me. Very much in agreement with Arlene Dickinson who reviewed the memoir positively, I found Lisson's story inspiring, and think you will, too. She achieves resilience and shares there is no perfect or easy journey toward it. Both women *and* men can gain from this engrossing book.

Now it's your turn. Have you read Lisson's memoir and, if not, will you? What do you think of her interpretation of personal and professional "resilience?"

Please share your thoughts on the "contact" page of my website; I'd be delighted to extend this conversation.

WORD NERD'S CORNER

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The case of "garnish and garnishee":

"Garnish" is a transitive verb. American etymologist Bryan Garner writes that in American English, the usual verb form "to garnish" means "to take property, usually a portion of someone's wages, by legal authority." (The noun corresponding to this verb is "garnishment.")

The noun "garnishee" is usually used to mean "a person or institution, such as a bank, that is indebted to another whose property has been subjected to garnishment, especially to satisfy the debt."

But Garner adds that in British English (and in a few places in North America), "garnishee" as well as "garnish" are used as verbs. The *Oxford English Dictionary* acknowledges such use of "garnishee," but advises against it:

-- (e.g. 1): "Our caller felt certain that repayment had been fully made, and that the garnisheement [read: garnishment] of his wages should end." ("The Ombudsman," *Dayton Daily News*, 5 May 1996, B5).

--(e.g. 2): "A Virginia court this year ordered the money garnisheed [read: garnished] from six months of Brawley's wages as a nurse there" (Michael Gartland, "Pay-Up Time for Brawley," *New York Post*, 4 August 2013, 6).

SHOP NEWS



Special thanks this month to friends and colleagues who have written, texted and called with their good wishes, in light of a family member's surgery. I think we are all holding our loved ones a bit closer, after last week's terrible accident involving the Humboldt Broncos.

Thank you also to Professor Anne Leis and Dr. Dee Dee Maltman for their leadership of the Neural Health Project. Its experiment, Project B, is going well and I'm happy to be onboard as their communications specialist.

Special thanks this month to bookkeeper Heather Stuart for coaching me through tax time; and to tax specialist Russ Deptuch for making meaning and order out of my invoices, forms and receipts. Both of these folk offer patient dedication and support that I greatly appreciate.

Thanks again (in no particular order) to fellow women of the Freelancers' Roundtable Group which Julie Barnes ably convenes--Ashleigh Mattern, Katherine Duncombe, Julie Barnes, Leanne Bellamy, Katee Pederson, Hilary Klaasen, Ashlyn George and one or two newcomers I've yet to meet! We share highs and lows, tips, best practices and troubleshooting in our work. The support and friendship provide much needed community to us as freelancers. Special thanks to Julie this month for sharing her reading recommendations with us!

ABOUT US

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has provided B2B marketing and communications services on the Prairies and across Canada.

I tell stories of how small- and medium-sized businesses succeed and at the same time give back to the community. Let me tell your story!

Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I have received your permission, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

I tell stories of how small- and medium-sized businesses succeed while also giving back to the community.

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