

Elizabeth Browning
Luminari and BeWell.com

Note: While Elizabeth Browning was CEO of Luminari at the time of her interview, she is now Chief Content Officer, BeWell.com/Good Health Media. See her bio for a full update.

Lorin: Elizabeth, you are CEO of Luminari, correct?

Elizabeth: Yes, and Luminari is the parent company of BeWell, a new social network we launched in December 2008.

Lorin: Tell us your story. How did you get to where you are? Let's dive in there.

Elizabeth: Okay. I guess if I think about where I am and how I got here, I go back to my roots. I was raised in a large family of seven kids in Southern Indiana. Everybody was very self-sufficient and self-reliant and competitive and driven, and I never thought that there was anything that I couldn't do, so my mindset has been anything is possible.

Lorin: How did you get that? Where does that come from?

Elizabeth: I think I was born with it.

Lorin: That's a good answer! But I'll bet you there is something else.

Elizabeth: I think all my life I have had to overcome a lot of adversity and I just manage to keep going. So, I think there are a couple of things. Number one, I believe things are possible and hope springs eternal. I'm just a very positive oriented person. Number two, I am a very, very hard worker. Number three is I don't give up easily. So, throughout my career when people would say, "Well, there's this

barrier.” But you know, it’s not a barrier, it’s a hurdle. You’ve just got to figure a way around it or over it. So you don’t give up the end game, you just make adaptations as you move along, because you have to. Yeah, life isn’t the I-95 corridor. You can’t get on in Florida and go straight up to Canada.

Lorin: So true!

Elizabeth: There are so many detours along the way and there are so many different options and different roads, and who knows? You just have to have the attitude that one door closes and one door opens.

Lorin: Okay, so tell me a bit about your company and how you got here. Was it your idea? What have you done in the past to get you where you are today? Can you fill me in on your journey?

Elizabeth: Bottom line of the whole journey is I went to Indiana University, majored in Journalism and English; and had a dream of being a writer. I wanted to work for a newspaper, cover foreign wars, jump over ditches, all of those exciting things. I got out of college and the pay for journalists at local newspapers was very low so I answered an ad and worked for a hospital in public relations for several years. I was fortunate enough to have a great job where you really had to do everything. They had a lot of vision and a lot of big ideas. We brought Bob Hope and Red Skelton to the hospital for benefits. We worked with national things. We held the first marathon ever in the city. We did all kinds of innovative things that nobody else would do, and it was a small team of three people. So, whatever you did, you did yourself. When I later joined a large company, I learned that large companies are so specialized that you rarely get an opportunity in a specific field to do everything. You are hired to do one specific task. I point that out because I think that’s very important for people to realize. Sometimes people have ideas, but they

don't understand how to make it work, because they've never actually done it. Having done something that you've learned is very important.

Lorin: Got it.

Elizabeth: Next, I moved to Delaware. My first job here was with a chemical company. I was hired to do an in-house magazine, and I did a fantastic job. In eight or nine months I got three issues out and then they decided to downsize the entire department and I was out the door. That was a completely new experience for me, and I didn't know what that was back then. Now, it's so common.

Lorin: Yes, there are so many people that's happening to today.

Elizabeth: Very much so. But this is going back into the early '80's and so I was embarrassed about that experience. I was ashamed. I couldn't understand they could tell me I was outstanding, how I could win awards, and then have them say, "We're letting you go." They tried to explain, saying, "It's not you, it's the position being eliminated." But I didn't understand that. I was like, "There's got to be a place for me here!" I was devastated.

So, they gave us an office across the street and said we'll help you find you new jobs. My girlfriend, who was the editor of the newspaper, and I were like, "Okay, let's see where this goes." What ended up happening was that the DuPont Company, which was right across the street, was seeking to increase its level of diversity. To this day, I believe they are largely white male, average age probably fifty to fifty-five. They wanted young people, and they wanted women. So, someone at DuPont called someone who had been at our company to ask about the people who were let go, and to find out if there was any young talent that would be interested in applying. Three of us applied, and two of us took a job there. The third one declined and went somewhere else. So, I started at the

DuPont Company at an entry level. I was hired to write press releases, which blew my mind, because at the hospital I did press releases and ten other things.

Lorin: Exactly; one thing.

Elizabeth: So, it was like, is this all you want me to do? I am thinking, “This is crazy.” But, I was determined that if I was outstanding at my last job and they could eliminate my job, now I was going to be outstanding plus. So, I just worked even harder. The ‘80’s was a competitive time for a lot of people my age, the baby boomers. Everybody wanted that next promotion and nobody wanted it as much as I did, I guess, and I just worked super hard. I was promoted probably every two years. I was on the fast track. I was labeled Category One High Promotable.

Meanwhile, I had two children along the way, and then my marriage kind of fell apart for all kinds of reasons, probably because we were both under so much pressure in our jobs. We were living in a state far from our hometowns and we had zero support. It was back in the day when most women didn’t have kids and work, at least not the ones I was around.

Lorin: You were out of your time, Elizabeth. I am hearing this in a couple areas of your life.

Elizabeth: (Chuckling) Yeah, well, I...when I told my boss that I was expecting, he said, “We’re going to be sorry to lose you.”

Lorin: Wow!

Elizabeth: And I said, “Wait a minute, I’m not going anywhere!”

Lorin: Times have certainly changed.

Elizabeth: He said, “Oh, I just...we just assumed that you’d stay home with your child.” I said, “No.” I was the first woman in my department of I don’t know how many hundred people to have a child and to return to work. It was the era of floppy bow ties and little corporate suits and close-toed shoes and bobs. People tried to be like the guys, because that was the model. There wasn’t any other model.

Lorin: I’d have to say you pioneered the new model.

Elizabeth: I was always different. A group of women took me out to lunch when I joined and told me how I needed to dress and that I needed to wear close-toed shoes and cut my hair. It was too long. They were trying to be helpful and nice. But, I was like, well, I have bunions. I can’t wear close-toed shoes, because I worked double shifts as a waitress going through college in really crappy shoes, so I am not going to be able to wear close-toed shoes. I tried to be nice and supportive, always to other women, and to help anybody I could, but I really tried not to focus on other people. I just focused on what I was supposed to do and my team and I were always coming up with innovative, creative ideas.

I was in the staff department, which doesn’t earn a profit; it’s a cost to the businesses. So, we are working for them, developing marketing communications and public affairs. You have to understand their business need and come back with a proposal that meets that need, sell it all to them, and execute it perfectly.

I worked on a lot of very exciting things. I worked on the first solar plane to cross the English Channel that involved department materials. Department materials were involved in the space shuttle. People don’t realize it, but a company like DuPont makes so many different kinds of products, that you get a chance to work in many different industries whereas, if you joined General Mills, you are just going to work in wheat, corn, and rice or something more limited.

Lorin: Yeah.

Elizabeth: But here, I worked in the wire and cable industry. I was there when the agency split into the “Baby Bells,” with the implications that had on wire and cable for all of the different buildings. I worked with architects in the architectural fabric structures – all the domes you see today that are architectural fabric structures coated with Teflon, like the one in Jedi, Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest airport, and the Denver airport. I helped them understand how they could use the material, how it could add to their design, how it was durable. I also worked a lot in health care. I was in electronics. I was in liquid chromatography.

Lorin: (Chuckling)

Elizabeth: I was in biotechnology with New England Nuclear when we acquired that – diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, clinical analyzers... So, I was worked across a lot of different divisions in my time there. I learned a lot and was exposed to a lot of different leadership styles in people. Then, I was selected by the current Chairman of the Board, Ed Woolard, to serve as his executive assistant. He had just become C.E.O. of DuPont and he was looking to change the way his offices were run and eliminate the bureaucracy. He wanted some fresh new thinking and he had decided it was going to be a woman! He recognized that sometimes you have to fast track people to help them leap frog over systems that don’t seem to work as well as they should. So, I was appointed to the job out of 100,000 people, which I was very proud of.

I also served as secretary to the committees of the Board. I worked with him on the transformation of the company for three years. It was an amazing, amazing experience to be at the top of a corporation of corporate governments and be a

part of all of these incredible decisions and see strategies unfold at the senior level.

Lorin: At this point, you have two kids and you are a single mom, am I right?

Elizabeth: Yep.

Lorin: Can you give people an insight as to what made it work? How did you do it all?

Elizabeth: Oh, man. That's such a good question. I guess what I came back to was that inner determination to not give up when my marriage fell apart. My husband was a wonderful person, still is, we are great friends, but he was very intense and very driven. He's a research scientist and very different. The stress and the arguing, I thought, was just too much for the kids and I didn't want them to grow up how I'd grown up with my mom and dad arguing all of the time. My father was an alcoholic and my mom had to work a lot because he was in and out of jobs later in his life and they had seven kids. So, that's a story in itself.

Lorin: It definitely is!

Elizabeth: I had just decided that I wanted my kids to have a different kind of a future and, as hard as it was, I would do whatever it took. I sometimes referred to myself as a "bag lady" because I'd get up early in the morning and I'd have my briefcase, my purse, their lunch boxes, and all of their daycare stuff, and I had to drop them off at daycare and then run down to the office. A lot of times back then, people still had 7:00 a.m. meetings and daycares didn't open until seven.

Lorin: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Then, my new boss got in at 6:30 a.m., and I routinely started at 7:00. So, I hired a full-time person to help me take care of the kids.

Lorin: So that's it right there. You didn't do it alone.

Elizabeth: I don't think anybody does anything alone...at all.

Lorin: I agree with that. I appreciate you saying that. That's a great line, "I don't think anybody does anything alone."

Elizabeth: Absolutely, especially in this world! You've got to have support. Going back to my days at DuPont, you might say how did you go into the DuPont Company which is science and chemical engineering, all Ph.D.'s, and here you've got a bachelor's degree from Indiana University in English and the last science course you took was probably in eighth grade?

Lorin: Wow!

Elizabeth: Then, you might ask, how did you rise up in that? My answer to that is, number one, I was different in a sea of people who were more alike. Number two, people surrounding me always wanted me to succeed. So, I think I somehow had the ability to have people serve as my champions, maybe because they saw how hard I worked or how hard I was trying, but you've got to have a network of support around you.

And, it was mostly men, because that's all there was. I would try to get close to all of the women who were there, too, and I tried to do a lot with the women's group, but at the same time, I was just so focused on my job and my kids, I had little time for anything else. Elaine, the person I hired, had worked at the daycare where the kids had gone, and daycare for me was \$900 a month, which was a ton of money

back then, and I didn't make all that much money, but I worked out something with her and she would come in the morning and see Ian off to school and take care of Brian. My kids were 18 months old and two years old when we separated.

Lorin: Whoa, lady!

Elizabeth: I would come home some nights and just lie on the bed for half an hour in the dark and the kids would be standing there at the door. I'd be thinking, I just need a minute to collect myself before I go into my next job. You know, just give me fifteen minutes to transition here. And then I'd be up at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning doing laundry.

Lorin: You found a way to do it. That's interesting that you needed that time to collect yourself. I think that we all need to do that even now, you know? We need to transition. We all go from one thing to the next to the next. That's like getting grounded with who you are, getting back on your feet.

Elizabeth: Today, we have Blackberries and cell phones and we're never "off!" When I drive my car, I don't even play the radio. I just love the sound of silence. It is so rare, and I really need it, because I need to be able to think, so I think when I drive and I think whenever I ride my bike. I am a big cyclist and when I am outdoors doing any physical activity, I can really think. You've got to have that time!

So, I survived because I *had* to survive and I had two young children and I'd taken on the job mostly of raising them. Tom was still around and he would help out and stuff, but he was angry about the divorce and it wasn't always the best situation. So, he was supportive, but I tried to do a lot. And in between there, my father was dying of cancer. In his last five years of life or so, he wasn't drinking and he was the kind of father I thought I could have had all of those years. So, that was very sad.

Then, I got cervical cancer.

Lorin: Oh my goodness, girl!

Elizabeth: I know, but I didn't really tell anybody about it, because everybody was busy with something else and I just had things I needed to focus on. So, I got it taken care of, they removed the cervix, and I didn't have to have a hysterectomy, and, I was okay. We know today that it's viral-caused, but at the time, we didn't know what it was caused from. We'll probably find out that everything is viral-caused in cancer. Anyhow, those were those years and I met my husband, the one I am married to now, during that time period when I was appointed to work for the C.E.O. He called me up and asked me if I wanted to go out for lunch or something to celebrate or what I was doing to celebrate. I said, "I'm not doing anything to celebrate. I am going home (chuckle), I've got two little kids at home and I don't have a babysitter."

But that developed into a great relationship and I credit a lot of my success since then to him, because my husband picked up my life and put it back together. He created the infrastructure that allowed me to do the things I did. He brought financial security, even though I made good money at DuPont. He also worked at DuPont, but he brought infrastructure. We got a big house down in the city that we moved into. We renovated it and we created a family together with the two boys. He's 18 years older and his kids are older and so there weren't any of the usual issues.

He played a very important role in helping me get the support I needed to be successful. After the Woolard job, which lasted three years, I was picked by the vice-president of Lycra to globalize Lycra. Lycra at the time had about thirty different identities. They wanted me to consolidate and find a brand identity, so I

did that. That involved travel all around the world, because it was in 49 countries and my boss was in Geneva.

Lorin: And, you couldn't have done that without the new person in your life.

Elizabeth: No, I couldn't have... I also had a series of live-in people who helped care for the kids. But again, another point to make is, even with support, it isn't necessarily easy, because when you have someone who is living with you, you have another person in the house. So when you come home, everybody wants to talk to you. The kids want to talk to you, the husband wants to talk to you, the au pair wants to talk to you. Everybody wants your time and all you want to do is run and hide and you're like, "Let me have five minutes!" So, it's almost like having a daughter there, too. When I think back on those days, they were so crazy even *I* don't know how I did it! It was before we had email, and we didn't have all the video conferencing and everything like we have today.

Lorin: Sure, yeah.

Elizabeth: So after literally traveling all over the world, DuPont sent me to this program at Harvard to get some of the business experience that I hadn't had academically, transitioning from communications into business. It was a big deal. They sent five people and I was one of them. It's called "Advanced Management Program" and you are gone for three months and you live on campus at Harvard. It was one of the best experiences in my life and I learned a lot!

I came back and was appointed as President of DuPont Consumer Health, which was a new division in a new area. Those were the days of the crazy Internet world and so we spent a lot of time understanding how DuPont strategy would fit with the Web, and what we were going to do to reach consumers about health. In that phase, I met my current co-founders, Dr. Suzanne Love, a famous breast cancer

surgeon and researcher, and Dr. Nancy Snyderman, who has been at ABC and is now with NBC. We came up with an idea to form a company together, and then I left DuPont and formed this company. That's a whole other story in itself.

Lorin: OK, so tell us the rest of the story!

Elizabeth: The company is called Luminari and it is an independent health media company that produces original content and programming through a network of well-known health experts. We write articles for magazines and that's the revenue model. We are paid for content, programming and consulting. More recently, we decided we need to direct a consumer channel to sell the company, and there is a need in the marketplace for expert commentary on breaking news, health policy, and issues of the day, from stem cells to Natasha Richardson, and you name it. So, we created this site, called BeWell.com, with blogs by well-known doctors with the goal of building a social network underlying it. It launched in December 2008.

Lorin: What a whirlwind! So, the whole last chapter that you just spoke about, this whole launch, this was the first time that you were launching you own thing?

Elizabeth: Yes!

Lorin: How was that transition?

Elizabeth: That was difficult, but I could write a book just about that! The transition from a corporate world to an entrepreneur is just a story in itself.

Lorin: It totally is! So, can you talk a little bit about that transition?

Elizabeth: Sure. You know, it takes you back to your roots, because in a company there is somebody to do everything, so you don't need to understand shares that the company is going to issue, because treasury does that. And, you don't need to understand preparing the taxes, because finance does that.

Lorin: That's right, exactly.

Elizabeth: And, you don't have to understand the legal verifications of hiring and firing, because H.R. deals with that and discrimination. Every single thing that you can think about, in a large company, they are set up to deal with. In a small company, you have to look at all of those things, which take time and energy and focus, plus you've got to find people and the right people. You've got to inspire them to join you, you've got to develop the business plan, you've got to develop the product, and you've got to be the lead salesperson.

Lorin: You've got to do it all!

Elizabeth: Yep.

Lorin: And how long has Luminari been around?

Elizabeth: I've been running the company for nine years. And last year, the company sought an outside investment from a major corporate communications partner to build the prototype for BeWell.

Lorin: Got it. I see. BeWell is like the newest piece.

Elizabeth: And Luminari will kind of transition into BeWell.

Elizabeth: Luminari is hard to spell with the two “l’s”, but at the time, it was a way of differentiating it from everything else out there. Plus it was hard to get and when you start a company today, the first thing you’ve got to look at is, “Can I get the dot com?”

Lorin: Exactly, that’s definitely something we have to take a look at.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lorin: So your kids are now how old?

Elizabeth: My kids are twenty-six and twenty-three and they both work for me.

Lorin: Oh, that’s great!

Elizabeth: Yeah, they are wonderful kids, and my husband works for me whenever I need support. I might say, “Paul, I need help with strategy.” He is semi-retired. He’s retired from three companies and is still going. He is amazing...seventy-two. He’s in investment banking, but he works from home, too, and does a lot of consulting, so he enjoys that, and he continues to be very supportive of this endeavor.

Lorin: Your story is so full... and it’s transitioned from the corporate into your own thing over almost a decade.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lorin: I am sure there were some huge “a-ha” moments along the way, as you were launching this business in the past nine years and more recently the past several months! I am loving that you were jet-setting all around the world, yet your kids were well taken care of and it sounds like, even now, you have such a great

relationship. If they are working for you, you must have a great relationship with them.

Elizabeth: Yes! I love them! I think we have a relationship that is built on a mutual foundation of trust and respect. I think that through their life, they saw how hard I worked and how much I struggled. They've always been very supportive of me and very proud of me. I have tried to be there for them, as well. If you could do it over again, every mother who has ever worked would wonder, "Would it have been different if I stayed home. Could I have had more time?" But, you can't spend your whole life looking in the rearview mirror.

Lorin: Would you change that?

Elizabeth: I don't know the answer to that, because I don't think I can give an objective answer at almost fifty-four. And the reason I say that is because I think I am at the age where women look back and they miss those early days, because they are empty nesters. So, I am in a period right now where my children are grown, but I don't yet have grandchildren. So, I think that when I get the grandchildren, I'll forget all about that. (Laughing) Assuming I have any grandchildren.

Lorin: You are going to keep them busy at their job now, so that will be interesting.

Elizabeth: To have them working for me does a couple of things. It helps them learn and get started. My older one graduated from University of Delaware with a degree in Business and Marketing. This isn't the best time in the economy to find a job, and, by working for me, I can teach him what I have learned, expose him to a small company, and give him experience. I'd like to see him in a larger company at some point, because I think that the experiences I got during my years at DuPont, for example, are just incomparable. There are a lot of positives that come out of a big company. My other son wants to work with animals and he's going to

a technical school locally to be a veterinary technician. In the meantime, he's working with me as my Webmaster. He's learning another set of skills so he'll have two things to rely on.

Lorin: That's great. I believe that it is totally possible, and you are living proof, that we can create a full, yet balanced life. Balance is sort of a funny word. I don't mean balance like you know I am in a Zen relaxed state 24/7. (Chuckle) I mean that we can work and have a family and still connect to the people in our lives.

Elizabeth: Yes! And, people do it every day, all around the world.

Lorin: You said at the very beginning that you never give up and you felt that anything was possible and you were not a victim of your circumstances. You struggled, but you weren't a victim. It was more that you did it because this is what you chose.

Elizabeth: Exactly. I think you are dealt the cards you are born with. One time I was talking to my sons several years back about a big scandal in Delaware where the attorney general was having an affair and he murdered the girl who was a scheduling assistant for our then governor, Tom Carper. It was a big scandal and there have been books written about it. He was attorney general, right? So, you'd think he's a really great guy, then you find out his brothers have all been in jail, and now he's in prison for the rest of his life. I felt so bad for his mom, to raise these children and then see them go in this direction. I remember talking to my kids at that time saying, "How do you think that happens?" and my older son said, "You know, I don't know Mom, but I think you taught us values, a lot of values." He said, "You know, you taught us to treat other people with respect and to do the right thing." My younger son chimed in, "Yeah, and you taught us to respect women. You wouldn't believe how many jerks there are out there!"

Lorin: (Laughing)

Elizabeth: He was probably ten at the time, you know?

Lorin: Wow!

Elizabeth: So, I think that a values-based relationship is a foundation for any success.

Lorin: Yep, that's true. I am very curious about how...and this is not something that you probably can answer, but I always think that it's very challenging for a woman to teach a man, a young boy, how to respect women, when I think that there's got to be a sense that his Dad also respects women.

Elizabeth: Yes. And Tom, my first husband, once we got through the difficulties of those first divorced years, have become very good friends. Once you can get that behind you, I think if you had a relationship before, you can have a relationship again. He and my husband get along great, too. They built a swing set for the kids together after Paul and I got married. He is at our house for every Thanksgiving, every Christmas, and he still has a key to my house. So, he's been very supportive and very positive. When he won awards, my kids would go to his award dinners. When I won awards, he'd come to mine. I was given the Trailblazer Award by the Governor of Delaware in 2006 and he was there with the boys.

Lorin: I am curious if you ever had a vision for being in your own business? Or, was that something that came along because of the right people?

Elizabeth: It was a combination of probably three things: Number one was meeting Nancy and Susan and having the opportunity to work with two extraordinarily talented women. Number two was the need that I inherently have to be creative and the ability to express that. And number three was the recognition that twenty years at DuPont was a wonderful career, but I didn't really want to stay there until I was

seventy. So if I had known how hard it was, would I still do it? I don't know. I have learned a lot from it and I have a lot of pride in what I have accomplished. It's also been extremely difficult and I have had a lot of adversity in my life, but I think like most women, you overcome it, you keep moving.

Lorin: Exactly. I love that you are here and that wasn't a part of the original vision. I think that's an important point.

Elizabeth: No, I wasn't born saying, "Someday I'm going to grow up and form my own company."

Lorin: What would you say is your way of setting and achieving goals?

Elizabeth: I envision the future. Ghandi said, "...envision the future you want to create." I think I envision things. So, number one, I am visual. Number two, I set goals. I am a constant goal setter. I'll sit down for this year and set down goals. Here are the goals for my company, three things; here are the goals for my family, three things; here are the goals for me personally, three things, and very specific things that I can achieve. Do I always achieve them? No. Like this year I am supposed to be losing ten pounds (laughing). The proverbial ten pounds have been on my list I think every year, but I am not getting serious enough about it, because I am spreading my time too thin.

Lorin: No pun intended!

Elizabeth: Yeah. (Chuckling) I did ride "my first century" last year, and that's one hundred miles on a bike in one day. And I did it in the mountains of Alaska.

Lorin: Oh, that sounds beautiful! So, that was a goal?

Elizabeth: Yeah, I have climbed a couple of mountains.

Lorin: I love the things that you could check and work towards and say, “I did it!”

Elizabeth: I am trying to get a little bit less competitive in my older years, but I can’t right now. For example, my husband and I just went skiing in Utah and I didn’t realize it until the third day, but every single day I was saying, “So, how many runs have we done?” I was tracking. I am always tracking things. “Okay, we’ve got fifteen runs in. Oh, we got sixteen runs in.” By the third day, I said, “You know what, honey? I am not even counting anymore.” (Laughing)

Lorin: (Laughing) That was good learning! So, let’s just enjoy it. Sort of like that driving in the car without the radio on.

Elizabeth: Exactly!

Lorin: Stop the counting. That’s great. So, you do keep track of things, yet you are realizing the value of not so tightly keeping track of things.

Elizabeth: Yeah, I am a lot less intensely wound these days and sometimes I ask myself, “If I was more intense like I was in the 1980’s and the 1990’s, could I be more successful more quickly?” But, I have a niece living with me part-time now. I am helping her out. I think I have helped women throughout my whole life and I am always mentoring them and supporting them. My niece and I were riding bicycles on Saturday and I just had a major contract fall through that the company was depending upon – significant cash – and it is a big, big, stumbling block to think about what do I do now and how do we go forward? She’s like, “Come on! Let’s go ride our bikes and lift our spirits.” It’s really nice having a girl around because as much as I love my sons, they are not necessarily going to do that. So, we are riding and I was pointing out houses, “Wow! Look at that one!” We were looking

at these nice homes and I said, “Wow, if I was really successful I could buy that!” She said, “Elizabeth, Aunt Elizabeth! You *are* successful!! Look at all you have achieved!”

Lorin: That’s right.

Elizabeth: I think that there is something in us that...when do you stop and take stock and say, “Hey, you know what? That’s pretty good for a girl from southern Indiana who grew up in a three-bedroom house as one of seven kids with an alcoholic father. That’s pretty good for someone who had no money!” I would be amazed when people would say, “Oh, yeah, my grandmother has given me her china for my wedding.” I’m like...we never had any china! (Laughing)

Lorin: (Laughing)

Elizabeth: I could say, “Well, my Mother’s giving me my paper plates from our picnic.”

Lorin: Exactly!

Elizabeth: So, I mean, there are a lot of people in the world who have a lot more and they start off at a different place on the track. They may be there on the inside track. Maybe they are ahead of us a little bit. But what’s wonderful about America and what Obama signifies is that anything is possible and that dream is still very much alive!

Lorin: Definitely!

Elizabeth: Not everybody’s going to succeed! I asked my older son once, “What do you think will help you be successful?” He said, “Well, the first thing is luck.” I said, “Luck?” He says, “Yeah! I was born here, to you, and in this country. I could

have been born in Southern Africa. I could have been born in an impoverished country. I could have been born in a different situation.” So he said, “I’m starting off with a pretty good place to work from, and that’s luck!” And, I think that that’s true. None of us can change our starting place. You don’t pick your parents, you don’t pick where you are.

Lorin: You said something really important about your niece and I am curious how you’d answer this question. For your success and I am loving that even at the place you are that you are saying, “Oh, yeah, I am stopping and noticing that I am successful,” and I think that so many women do that. We sort of don’t see ourselves as other people do. I remember one particular person I worked with who said, “I have arrived. I just realized, I have arrived!” When is it that we arrive? And, the answer is, it’s every day!

Elizabeth: (Laughing) And what a great mindset! I guess this is where my competitive nature comes in, which can devastate me.

Lorin: But it’s your greatest strength and our greatest weakness. It’s that double-edged sword.

Elizabeth: Yeah. That’s so true. I was having a conversation with my co-founder Dr. Love last week. I mean, Nancy, Susan, and I are all best friends. We’ve been together for so long and we share everything. Susan was helping me understand that if the company ultimately didn’t succeed, if I had to cease operations, if I had to close, if I wasn’t able to raise that next round, if I wasn’t able to sell the company, that having given it life for nine years and all the great things that we’ve been doing and educating women about health and wellness, all the people we have employed, the earnings we’ve had and everything, that that still is a success; it’s not a failure! I am working to get my arms around that. Because that’s not something I can envision. In my mind, to be successful, I’ve got to get this

company to its next level. I've got to get that next round of funding. I've got to keep that cash flow going. I've got to be able to fund growth. Or I've got to be able to sell this company so that I could say, "Hey, I did that!" in the same way I can look at Lycra. If you buy anything with Lycra in it today and see that hangtag, I can say, "I did that!" Maybe it's that desire to have something lasting or seeing something to a conclusion that you feel good about. Maybe, when I have a conclusion I feel good about, I'll say, "Okay, that's good."

Lorin: There's a vision, though. You are talking about the vision for where you want to take it.

Elizabeth: Yeah, exactly.

Lorin: So, that is really helpful.

Elizabeth: When we started the company it was 2000 and 2001, which was when 9/11 happened. Our business model was based on travel, because we were getting speaking engagements and conferences, so 2001 was horrible! Then, my little sister got ovarian cancer and then breast cancer. I have another sister with metastatic breast cancer. It just goes on and on and on. So, I was lying in bed this morning and I was thinking about the situation I am in, and I just started kind of reflecting back to my church when I was a kid. I am not a particularly religious person, but I just kind of meditated and prayed a little bit in my own way, and all of a sudden I just felt calmer. I said, "You've got a business issue to deal with, but nobody died."

Lorin: That's right.

Elizabeth: Perspective is something we all have to keep in mind, because we can be our own worst critics.

Lorin: What role would you say that your intentions and your intuitions play in your current life?

Elizabeth: My intuition has always been my strongest asset. I call it emotional intelligence.

Lorin: Talk a bit about that for us.

Elizabeth: I remember one time when I was working for the C.E.O. of DuPont and I made a comment to him, he looked at me kind of quizzically and said, “You know, I have been thinking about this. For your age and your experience, you know things that you shouldn’t necessarily know; there’s not a logical reason why you *would* know.” So, I have come to the conclusion, it has to be that I have a strong sense of intuition and observation. I remember once when I made a mistake in something working for him and he said, “Well, I just hope you learned from it.” I said, “Well, I don’t know.” He says, “You don’t know what?” I said, “I won’t know if I learned from it until I do it again and have a different outcome.” That’s the kind of observation I would make. I think that I had a good education from Indiana University, but it wasn’t an Ivy League school and I didn’t light the school on fire. I didn’t have scholarships and nobody was out recruiting me. I didn’t have money. So, what was it that I had? Drive, determination, intuition, and emotional intelligence, I think. Plus, I know this sounds really stupid to say....

Lorin: That’s OK; go ahead.

Elizabeth: ...but I think that I am genuinely a nice person.

Lorin: Yeah, I don’t think that’s a stupid thing to say.

Elizabeth: I don't cheat. I don't steal. I don't misuse company funds. When the company is not doing well, like right now, I cut my pay...I am taking no pay. I worked for two years to get it started with zero pay. I cut my salary before I cut my employees. I don't submit my expenses to be reimbursed. I try to live the golden rule. I just try to be a nice person. I think that at the end of the day, there's a place for us.

Lorin: That's great. That's great. I love that you are probably the person in our book that is pioneering what we are calling this New Age – that women can do it all and not be victims in it and be more powerful because of it. So are there any last-minute nuggets you'd like to share with us?

Elizabeth: I think women are in a better place today than I have seen them in my lifetime. That's because I believe there is a greater understanding of the multiple roles women play and husbands are not chained in by the self-perceptions that those who were fathers in the fifties had. I think men have been able to create a different vision of who *they* are, and they are not necessarily just the corporate men that our fathers were raised to be. That is freeing to men and also helps women, because men are usually our partners, though not always. There is also greater tolerance for diversity today, whether that's gay or interracial marriage, whatever. There is more tolerance today and more support. The other thing is technology has really changed things. So, if I had my children today, I could work from home anytime, or I might have the flexibility some of today's workplaces have. The Internet also makes it possible to achieve things without enormous amounts of capital. Any person can go on and start a blog or set up a website. So, I think that even though the economy seems like it's bad, I think that it's good, because women are going to find that they don't need as much materially and they can get so much more enrichment from family, from their minds, and from what they can do.

Lorin: Well said. I agree with that. You started your company in 2001, and I think we are in a very similar place today, in some ways, as it was in 2001. I, too, started my current business in 2001 and I just think it's about getting really clear on what the company's needs are. You are talking about how there are ways to do it, ways to be creative, and how these times we're living in now are just a bump!

Elizabeth: Yep, they're just a bump and you've got to keep moving. You've got to accept that some outcomes are going to be beyond your control. The world has turned upside down economically and...

Lorin: There's also a piece that you are speaking to about responsibility, that we are responsible for our own space and our own messes, and if we take care of that the world is going to be a better place. I think that's what you were speaking to when you mentioned the golden rule, am I right? I think that we are in a transition from being irresponsible. We talk about the C.E.O. of General Motors going from irresponsibility to massive and basic responsibility.

Elizabeth: Exactly!

Lorin: It's a big part of what we were talking about in this book, too. It's like we *must* take responsibility and it starts first in our households, but as leaders of our companies, responsibility has an even more important piece to play. We need to be fully responsible for every aspect of our success and our lack of it.

Elizabeth: Absolutely! And it's responsible to be transparent to your people, so they know where the company is and can make decisions for themselves. It's having responsibility to ourselves and to society. Responsibility is key! It always starts with you and you set the example.

The other thing about a leader is that you have to keep the hope alive. You have to keep the vision, because once you succumb to fear it's so easy to just give up, and you really can't do that. I don't know that I've ever really been afraid of anything.

Lorin: That's just a great, great statement.

Elizabeth: There are some things that I don't like and situations I prefer not to be in, but I don't think that there is anything that I genuinely fear.

Lorin: I can't tell you how significant that statement is. There are so many people that don't create success because of the fear, and that's a really important thing to pay attention to – to ask yourself, is that fear stopping me? Am I really afraid?

Elizabeth: And, what's the worst thing that can happen?

Lorin: Always ask that question. I love that.

Elizabeth: I don't know how much the support of my brothers and sisters, the big family, growing up in southern Indiana, and the values of my parents...how all these things have gone into the equation. I don't know, but I think they have. Life is messy sometimes, but we all come together and we figure it out.