



**DON'T LET
'Em Treat You Like™**

A GIRL

A Woman's Guide to Leadership

Success

(Tips from the Guys)

... LIZ WEBER

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By

Liz Weber

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Note to the Reader

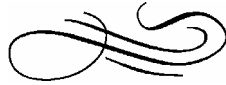
Professional opportunities for everyone, men and women, are more bountiful than ever. With constantly changing technologies, spin-off and virtual businesses, the opportunities to make your professional dreams a reality are now more possible than ever before. This book's intent is to help clue you in to the subtle, and not-so-subtle, behavioral traits needed to more effectively interact in a professional arena and to be treated like the professional you are.

Most of my observations, ideas, tips, and suggestions are gained from my years of experience working in male-dominated environments. To help clarify my thoughts for those who struggle with being viewed as a professional equal, I requested and received stories, tips, and words of wisdom from many kind contributors. Their stories and my own are included here to help spur ideas and awareness on how you can better interact professionally with those around you.

I have also included quotations from experts on behavior and leadership, as well as some of my own thoughts. The highlighted comments without attribution, are mine.

If after reading the book, and possibly sharing a copy with a friend, you've identified and experienced ways *not* to be treated like a girl, let me know. Send your comments and thoughts to me at: info@liz-weber.com Thanks and enjoy.

Liz Weber



Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents, LeRoy and Frances Weber.

To help you understand these two special people, I'll let my sister Pat's words describe them for you. Here's part of her reply to my request for words of wisdom:

Part of growing up in our family was working with Dad. He ran his own business and with so many children, we became his work force. Working with Dad was the most exhilarating and the most frightening experience in the world. I don't think he ever really realized the tremendous impact he made on shaping the work ethic of his children. Dad was a tough taskmaster. He was doing very important work with very inexperienced help. No matter what the particular job on any given day, Dad was the main man and we were the grunts. He expected everyone that worked with him, "to be one step ahead of me." Until you wised up, it could be a long time until lunch!

Dad had so much common sense that he truly didn't understand why anyone couldn't "get it." If he was laying pipe in a trench, you were expected to watch him so closely that you could anticipate his next move and have the tool ready for him before he even knew it. Working with Dad was like performing surgery – the teamwork between the doctor and the surgical staff is so critical to a successful operation. That "teamwork" we learned from watching Mom work with Dad. She respected his strengths and he respected hers. They were so busy raising thirteen kids and running their own business that I truly think they "accepted the best" about each other and "forgot the rest" on a daily basis.

Because they had a real zest for life, they both started the day on their knees, then jumped up, and hit the ground at a dead run. Dad always said he couldn't wait to get up every day. Every day was a new adventure. I rarely remember either of them being in a "bad" mood. We, as children, had the gift of being wanted and we felt it. As we became teenagers, my heart goes out to them for having lived through it.

So, I think two things have stuck so tight with me that they are a part of me. One is, "think ahead." I always try to weave my way through a project considering all possibilities. This trait leaves a trail of its own: pay attention to details; be organized, efficient, and thorough. The second is to consider each day a "new adventure." As I get older, I realize, it truly is. Each day offers so many possibilities. What we make of our day is our choice.

Thanks Mom and Dad!

I agree. Thanks Mom and Dad.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank the many contributors who graciously shared their insights: Patti Anfang, Susanne Cardella, Holli Catchpole, Jim Cathcart, Joseph Colucci, Margaret Duncan, Dan Fisher, Sam Horn, Terry McGee, Deirdre Morgan, Dr. Sheila Murray-Bethel, Christine Oxley, Robert Oxley, Ed Price, Susana Ramirez, Gina Schreck, Deb Sofield, Colleen Stanley, and Bill Weber. Your input helped this book have the real-person perspective I wanted. The readers and I are indebted to you.

Thank you also to Business Women's Network, Center for Women's Business Research, National Association for Female Executives, Society for Human Resource Management, and The Employment Policy Foundation for your support.

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And, as always, thanks Bob. Without your constant support and refocusing talks, this book would not have happened.



***Section 1 - The Background
(for those who want it)***





As long as you agree to fulfill a leadership role, accept that responsibility and that challenge. Because in the workplace, that's the role you want to be judged on – not your “woman-ness.”





Why There's ANOTHER Book on Leadership Success for Women

This book is written with the hope that it can help one woman.

A thirty-something woman stopped me after my presentation at the American Business Women's Association's National Convention in Albuquerque a few years ago. She had waited quietly, off to one side, while I talked with several attendees. As the crowd thinned, she approached me a bit hesitantly, offered me her fingertips to shake, and said timidly, "I could never do what you do. You're so confident and powerful. I'm the manager of a real estate office. I work really hard and I'd like to move up in the company, but I don't have a degree. My manager doesn't respect me. He says I need to be more professional. I guess I'm not leadership material because I care too much for people. I don't know what to do."

I was stunned. In that one interaction, she had done and said so many things that were so fundamentally "girly." First, the hesitant way she had approached me immediately told me she wasn't a confident woman. Second, she was limiting herself and her abilities by saying, "I could never do what you do." With that mindset, she was pre-determining her future. If she was going to limit herself, then she was also going to lose the right to grumble when her current situation never changed. Third, her manager wanted her to be more professional and didn't seem to respect her. I got the impression she thought it was his responsibility to help her become a "professional." Wrong. It's her responsibility – no one else's – to advance her career. And fourth, why did she think being a leader meant not caring about people? If anything, it's the complete opposite. Real leaders focus on and develop their people. They realize their employees' skills and abilities will determine how well their organizations grow. If they expect to grow organizations, they have to develop people. Caring for and developing people is crucial to leadership.

Also, as she had been talking, I had noticed her eyes darted from me to the right, left, down, back to me, then left, and back down. She couldn't hold eye contact with me. She was an attractive woman, but she accentuated her femaleness more than her professionalism. She had long blonde hair with billowing curls reminiscent of the Farrah Fawcett 1970's just-tumbled-out-of-bed hairdo. Her chest was covered – well *more* of it could have been covered – by a white blouse with big ruffles running down the front. She wore a hot-pink suit jacket and a matching hot-pink skirt – tight. She had great legs that were nicely accentuated by the matching three-inch, hot-pink, spiked heels on her feet. What you couldn't help but notice, whether you were a man or a woman, was her womanly shape. She had a great body and her clothing accentuated every curve. Needless to say, what she accentuated got noticed.

When she asked me what she could do to start earning the respect of her manager and co-workers, my first, unpolished words were, "Stop acting like a girl." As I said those words, I remembered hearing similar words of wisdom from my dad when I was 24. I had called him for advice as I had prepared to negotiate my first *new* car purchase. After I had reviewed my research on the car with him, he had said, "You know what to do. Now don't let 'em treat you like a girl." When I had heard that, I was shocked. Naively, I had never thought I would be treated differently because I'm female. But Dad's words had struck a chord with me. He had never said anything like that before, and he had a great deal more experience than I in making major purchases, so there had to be something to this.

As I had absorbed his advice, I realized this comment was his way of telling me: *Be an adult. Be smart. Be prepared. Think ahead. Stand your ground. Don't allow yourself to be ignorant of the facts. Don't go into this negotiation process unprepared like a naïve girl.* Dad wasn't speaking of sexism per-se. He

was telling me I couldn't act like a girl and expect the sales person to take care of me and to negotiate a good deal for me. If I did, the salesperson *would* take advantage of me. It wouldn't be personal; it'd be business. The salesperson's job is to sell cars at a profit for the dealership. It's my job as the customer to make an informed purchase.

Now many years later, Dad's advice was coming from my mouth. This woman hadn't acted confident; she hadn't looked terribly professional; and she hadn't presented herself as a confident professional. Therefore, she wasn't being treated as a confident professional. Even if she had dressed more conservatively, she still would have projected "girly-girl" because of her demeanor. She would still be treated like a girl. She would be treated as others viewed her.

Following that exchange, I realized that if this woman wasn't aware of her "girly" behaviors, other women were probably unaware of theirs too. That could be why so many women are unhappy with their careers and have strained relationships with their male and female colleagues. With that in mind, I contacted everyone in my data base, female and male, as well as many other people, and asked for their insights on what women do that prevents them from being viewed as professionals or as equals in the workplace. What had they done, experienced, seen, or been taught that they could share with others to help women (and some men) no longer act, and therefore, be treated like "girls"?

The responses were enlightening, humorous, confirming, and honest. To all of my contributors, thanks. Your insights could well help someone behave and be treated like the professional, like the leader, she or he wants to be.

This book does *not* provide and then elaborate on the essential qualities of a leader. Honestly, that information is available in a number of other publications. This is not an "I hate men" book nor is it a "Life isn't fair because I'm a woman" book.

Many of the ideas I share in this book apply to men as well as women. It is for women *and* men who believe they're "stuck." It is for women and men who believe they cannot reach their vision of professional success because others don't support them or others haven't provided them with opportunities to be successful.

This book's intent is to demonstrate for those of you who feel stuck that you sometimes do things yourselves that limit your professional and leadership opportunities. If you want to be viewed as a professional, or as a leader, be aware of the signals you're sending.

Our world is a world in which men and women work together – a mixed workplace. It's diversity of the first order. Men and women innately think differently, but when we work in the same business culture, we all have to abide by the cultural norms of the organization. And yes, that might well mean women have to be a bit less womanly, but men have to be a bit less manly too. The guys have to cut the macho crap, and we women have to cut the "girly" stuff. Basically, we all need to be aware of and control our behaviors that can cause disruption, confusion, or conflict in the workplace. If we all can agree to that, the workplace is a much more enjoyable and productive place to be.

Changing Times

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that by 2010, 48% of the American workforce will be composed of women. As reported by The Employment Policy Foundation in Washington, women hold nearly half of all managerial and professional positions in the U.S. workplace and will hold about 54% of these jobs

by 2030. That means more and more women will be presented with leadership opportunities. As evidence of this trend, the 2002 gubernatorial races had the highest number of women candidates ever – 21 of 36 races.

Also, the Center for Women’s Business Research data shows:

- (1) Between 1997 and 2002,
 - a. the number of women-owned firms increased by 14% nationwide – twice the rate of all firms;
 - b. the employment numbers in women-owned firms increased by 30% – one and one-half times the U.S. rate; and
 - c. the sales by women-owned firms grew by 40%.
- (2) Women-owned firms continue to diversify into all industries. Construction, transportation, agricultural services, communications, and public utilities have seen the largest recent increases in the number of women-owned firms.

What does this mean? To me it indicates that women, now more than ever, need to understand how to better “fit in,” how to “play the game,” and how to be equal players in the professional arena. Many women do this flawlessly, naturally, and without losing any of their femininity. Other women (and men) seem to struggle. It’s for them, and for the woman in Albuquerque, for those who don’t understand why they’re treated like girls, that this project took shape.

My insights and those of my contributors come from working in various environments including global organizations, small mom and pop shops, start-ups, manufacturing facilities, financial institutions, organizations that were male-dominated, organizations that were female-dominated, as well as various federal, state, and county government agencies.

Tips from the Guys

As the title of the book indicates, many of the more practical and honest bits of advice came directly or indirectly from men. More often than not, the men shared advice that was so blunt – yet so insightful – I was amazed. They very clearly articulated their observations, appreciation of, and frustrations in working with, supervising, and being managed by women.

I am by no means suggesting that the female contributors’ input was less valuable. I was simply struck with how honest and open the men’s input was. There was no anti-female angle to it. It was shared to clue women in on how to be treated like professional equals. Contrary to popular belief, the guys aren’t trying to keep women out of or down in the professional world. If anything, they’re trying to help women advance. Men know the data I shared above. They know and see the predominance of women in the workplace. Because of this, men want women to work with them in growing the organizations where they work. The more we help each other, the more we all succeed.

Contrary to popular belief, the guys aren’t trying to keep women out or down in the professional world. If anything, they’re trying to help women advance. Men know the data I shared above. They know and see the predominance of women in the workplace. Because of this, men want women to work with them in growing the organizations where they work. The more we help each other, the more we all succeed.

Also, the words of wisdom that most resonated with many of my female respondents was advice they'd received from their husbands, fathers, brothers, grandfathers, male bosses, or male colleagues. Finally, given the dominance of men in leadership positions, it's only logical to watch them, learn from them, and identify what they do that works. This is how many of my female contributors gained their insights. Now, it's up to us to adapt and apply these ideas, techniques, and insights, and to make them work for us as well.

Sometimes We Get What We Ask for

*"Sometimes people treat us the way they do not because of the way they are,
but because of the way we are."*

TONGUE FU'ISM
Sam Horn, Author and Originator of
Tongue Fu![®]

I'm walking on dangerous ground here, but I have to be blunt: Girls do a lot of dumb things (boys do too, but we're talking about girls here). Their stereotypical and self-defeating behaviors are fading. However, many girls (most prevalently teenage girls) are incredibly insecure, believe their worth and value is determined by their looks, readily belittle themselves, know they're smart but don't stand up for themselves, need to talk to one another frequently for validation, and doubt themselves constantly. Hey, I know. I lived it. I also grew up with five sisters and I've raised two daughters. It's ugly but it's the truth. Thankfully, most of us grow out of it.

As adults, however, women often default to some of these same self-defeating behaviors. When that happens, women emit silent signals to others that they're not confident women, but insecure girls. And honestly, no one likes following someone who's insecure. It's downright frightening. Because of these silent signals, women sabotage their own attempts at professional or leadership success. How? If "the boss" is considering a woman for a promotion or a lead position on a particular project, but then sees her second-guessing herself, backing away from her original position, or worrying more about her fingernail appliqués than about getting the job done, "the boss" has a right to question her leadership abilities.

So how do you resolve this? Identify what you might be doing that is sending the wrong or conflicting signals about your professional abilities. If you want to be viewed as a professional – as a leader – you need to be aware of the signals you're sending.

If "the boss" is considering a woman for a promotion or a lead position on a particular project, but then sees her second-guessing herself, backing away from her original position, or worrying more about her fingernail appliqués than about getting the job done, "the boss" has a right to question her leadership abilities.

We ARE Women – But What's Our JOB?

I think by now you get my point. I'm in no way suggesting that we should deny our womanhood and not look or act like women in the workplace. I'm suggesting that when we take our "femaleness" a bit too

far, it becomes our defining character point. It also frankly becomes a distraction. Being a woman then takes precedence over being a doctor, receptionist, CEO, or committee chair. This is no different than focusing more on being Jewish than on being a Senior Programmer. Your responsibility, while you're working as a Senior Programmer, technician, or sales associate, is to do that job. The fact that you're Jewish, or a woman, is simply that – a fact. Be proud of it. Be proud of being an African-American or whatever your race. Be proud of your age. Be proud of who you are. But then remember, in the workplace or in any other situation in which you are expected to provide guidance and leadership, your responsibility as a leader is to be a leader. The people who put you in that position and the people who support you in that position expect you to do the job, to fulfill its responsibilities, and to fulfill the role. So if you're a woman who is a 58-year-old Jewish, African-American – good for you. But as long as you agree to fulfill a leadership role, accept that responsibility and that challenge. Because in the workplace, that's the role you want to be judged on – not your “woman-ness.”

Carly Fiorina, the CEO of Hewlett-Packard, is known to demand that she be judged as a leader, not as a woman. Why? It's her job to be the CEO. She knows she's a woman. We know she's a woman. We can see that. But can she lead? That's the challenge for her because that's the responsibility she's accepted. Now it's her job to behave as a leader while she has that responsibility.

And this is exactly where many of us run into problems. Whether we aspire to lead a global company like Hewlett-Packard or to lead our local homeowners' association, there are specific professional skills and traits that are required in both arenas. It's our job to identify and exhibit them.

Oh My Gosh! I've Done That!

I have to be honest – as my contributors' survey responses started to return, there were a few moments when I caught myself saying, “Oh my gosh! I've done that!” Even though I've worked comfortably and well with men for years, I started to see how some of my well-intentioned behaviors could be viewed as “girly.”

Not any one of my or the other “girly” behaviors I'll cover in this book is terribly wrong. Yet, when combined with others, they can send some pretty self-defeating messages.

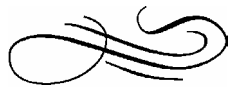
With that in mind, I hope you can find a few, “Oh my gosh! I've done that!” insights on the pages ahead. Together, let's identify our self-defeating behaviors. Then, if we choose to, we can take control of our lives and become the professionals, the leaders, and the “successes” we want to be.

If we want to be viewed as professionals – as leaders – we need to be aware of the signals we're sending.





***Section 2 – The Tips
(for those who want to
get to the point)***





Don't think that the top position is THE leadership position. It's often a bunch of problems with authority, control, politics, and power. Men have found out that it's not always as great being at the top as they thought it would be.





Tip # 1 - Figure Out What You Want

Grab onto your dream and get your vision of that dream crystal clear. When you see it as clearly as you see the piles of work on your desk, you will begin to make that dream a reality. Regardless of what other people may say to discourage you, focus on the dream. No matter how “far out” your dreams may seem, if you keep your focus clear, they will begin to move into the realm of reality.

Gina Schreck, author of *Marriage Mechanics, Inside Out Success, and 10 Steps to Become a Pessimist*

You’re probably hoping to learn the secret to leadership success in this book. That could be one of the reasons you bought this book: The subtitle says, “A Woman’s Guide to Leadership Success.”

So what is “Leadership Success”? I don’t know. I mean, I can’t tell you what it means to you, but I do know what it means to me. And what it means to me should be irrelevant to you.

To achieve “Leadership Success” you need to identify what it means to *you*. Then pursue *that*. Does it mean the top spot? Does it mean financial security, a hefty salary, an impressive title, the corner office, being the ultimate authority, being involved, being the decision-maker, being a role model for someone, or does it simply mean enjoying your job, being fulfilled by it, and then walking away at the end of the day to your *other life*?

Take a moment and jot down your answers to these statements I often ask my clients to complete:

1. *If I were a leader, I would no longer* _____
_____.
2. *I’ll know I’m a leader when* _____
_____.
3. *Being a success will allow me to* _____
_____.

You might be surprised at your answers. Your answers might reveal that your view of success is very much tied to financial rewards, titles, positions, or other people’s perceptions. Or, your answers might tell you that what you view as success has nothing to do with money, power, or titles at all. Instead your success is centered around comfortable, solid relationships and helping others. Whatever your answers indicate, there are no wrong answers. Your answers are *your* answers and they are your answers at this point in your life. Because your answers might be different than what you intellectually believe leadership success is, you might be struggling with your current level of success. What you think you want is not what you really want. Then, when you’re not satisfied with what you have, your lack of self-confidence kicks in.

I’ve seen people who believe they want the power, money, and top spot, when what they really want is the self-confidence and financial contentedness they see in those they view as successful. You don’t need to have a lot of money to be financially content and self-confident. You just have to know what amount

of financial wealth will make you content and identify why you lack self-confidence. Financial contentedness for some of you could be a few thousand dollars; for others, it could be a few hundred million. Whatever it is, it is.

Because most people have never really stopped and seriously thought about this, they don't really know what they want or what will make them feel "successful." They don't know what they're working towards. They don't know if they're making progress or spinning their wheels. They never achieve "it," so they're never really content. They just know they're not where they want to be.

A young married woman with three small children decided to become an independent Mary Kay® sales consultant. When I asked her why, she replied, "I want to have enough money so when I go to the grocery store, I can buy two loaves of bread right away instead of just one." Her comment struck me. Not only did it highlight the true state of her family's finances, but it also clearly stated what "success" would look like to her. Her "success" would be to alleviate, at a bare minimum, that one financial worry she faced each week. With that level of clarity in her mind, she had a much greater chance to reach her vision of success. She did – and she exceeded it. In just over one year, she had recruited her own team of over 20 Sales Associates and became a Director with Mary Kay®.

Identify what your vision of "Leadership Success" is. See "it" in your mind's eye. Once you know what "it" is, realize there will never be a clear, straight shot to "it." However, once you know what you want, you can minimize the really far-out tangents. As one of my contributors said, "*Be willing to compromise on the tactics in the pursuit of the prize.*" Not being flexible in how you ultimately achieve your success will only provide roadblocks and slow your progress. Remember, we learn by the little tangents we have to take every now and then. We learn by having to look for opportunities in the world around us.

You Don't Need to Be the CEO to Be a Leader

*By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be the boss
and work twelve hours a day.*

Robert Frost

There's nothing more irritating than hearing a woman say, "I'm only support staff," or "I'm just a bookkeeper." Do you know what you're saying? As support staff, you are the hub that holds your office together! As a bookkeeper, you are helping to ensure the money is coming into and going out of the company in a controlled fashion. How can you not see how crucial your work is? You don't need to be in the top spot to be a leader or a success.

A theme that came across as I interviewed and discussed this topic with some of my male contributors was: Don't think that the top position is THE leadership position. It's often a bunch of problems with authority, control, politics, and power. Men have found out that it's not always as great being at the top as they thought it would be.

A leader is someone others respect and want to work with and work for. That ability can reside in all tiers of an organization – not just the top spots.

You don't need to be in the top spot to be a leader or a success.

After I graduated college, I started my career as an intern with the U.S. Department of State. After my summer internship ended, I joined the office as a contracted “Program Analyst,” which was a jazzy term for Administrative Assistant. In that role, I experienced first-hand the power the administrative staff carries. The office I worked for was very small, but provided support to roughly 30,000 Americans living and working at the American Embassies and Consulates around the world. Looking back, I had tremendous power at a very young age. My boss came to me *to get things done*. I became the “go-to” person. As the lead person on the support staff, my work in developing briefs, correspondence, speeches, reports, etc., was crucial. I had to dig through files, gather and analyze data, present synopses, and interact with customers, staff, and other agency personnel. As my understanding of how to do the work increased, my ability to see the big picture increased. I knew why things were the way they were. I knew the history, the data, and the interconnections of the players. Because of my work, promotions followed, and my boss relied more and more on my opinions and advice. More importantly, others outside the office also came to know me as the “go-to” person. My staff and I were young, but we earned the respect of others and made things happen.

I never fully realized the reputation I had established as *the* “go-to” person, until ten years after I’d left that position. I had long since started my own business and was in Denver International Airport, when I recognized a man at an adjacent ticket counter. He had owned a prominent law firm in Washington, D.C., and had served as outside legal counsel to my office at the State Department. I had worked with him and his colleagues on a daily basis. When I re-introduced myself to him, he stared at me with that look that indicated he knew me but was having a hard time fully recalling me from his memory banks. Needless to say, I didn’t belabor the point and I went on my way. However, later as I was walking to my gate, he spotted me and pulled the young man standing next to him toward me. When they approached he said, “Liz, I apologize. Seeing you brought back so many memories. They all flashed through my mind at once. Anyway, I’d like my son to meet you.” Upon exchanging niceties, his son said to me, “It’s a pleasure meeting you. I’d heard about you for years. Dad used to talk about this young woman who managed so many responsibilities and wielded so much power in an organization dominated by gray-haired men. Not many people could have done what you did at such a young age.” I had had the power – but I never had the top spot.

Understand the Power Your Position Carries

Understanding the power your position carries is crucial. Years ago I attended a businesswomen’s dinner. As the members took turns introducing themselves to me, time and again, I’d hear a member say something such as, “I’m Karen Smith and I’m just the Produce Manager at Groceries R Us.” By saying, “I’m *just* the Produce Manager” she gave very little credibility or importance to that position or her expertise. In many grocery stores, the produce manager is the final authority in determining which produce is stocked and which isn’t to generate the greatest produce sales volume. To do that well, the produce manager requires a solid knowledge of such things as customer purchasing patterns and preferences, product quality and availability, and vendor pricing. Given her ability to determine what and when produce is marketed, purchased and stocked, the produce manager can influence the buying patterns of customers. That isn’t something that *just* anyone can do well.

Now, working with strategic planning clients, I regularly remind them: “You have the personnel positions you have for a reason. Each position has a specific set of responsibilities that it needs to fulfill to allow the organization to succeed. If those tasks and responsibilities are essential to the organization, then we need the position. If they’re not, we don’t need that position. Most organizations can’t afford to have ‘fluff’ positions or carry excess staff.”

Therefore, the position you have *is* necessary; it *is* important. Because it's important, do it to the best of your ability. If you're in the number one spot, be the best number one you can be. If you're in the newest entry-level spot, be the best entry-level employee you can be.

You have to prove yourself capable of handling and understanding the value of the responsibilities of whatever position you hold. That's what a solid professional does.

That's what others admire. That's leadership.

I've never wanted the CEO job. I don't think I have the talents for it. I'm a great No. 2 person.

Colleen Barrett, President & COO –
Southwest Airlines

