

Mike Domitrz: Welcome to The Respect Podcast. I'm your host, Mike Domitrz from mikespeaks.com, where we help organizations of all sizes, educational institutions, and the US Military create a culture of respect. And respect is exactly what we discuss on this show. So let's get started.

Mike Domitrz: And this week we have got a friend of mine, I used to be on a mastermind with this brilliant person, Liz Weber, works with boards and leadership teams on strategic planning, succession, and developing leaders enterprise wide. Liz has worked with organizations in over 20 countries. Liz, thank you so much for joining me today.

Liz Weber: Oh, Mike, I am so happy to speak with you. I'm honored to be here.

Mike Domitrz: Well, thank you. We're going to dive right in because you have such a brilliant mind, especially when it comes to strategy, strategic thinking. So I want our listeners to be able to get a better background of where you come from as we dive deeper here. Can you give a little brief explanation of what you do?

Liz Weber: Sure. You somewhat alluded to it in the introduction. So, very simply, what I do with my clients is typically three things. I facilitate their strategy retreats. So, with company boards of directors, with the ownership team, with the senior leaders, I will work with them to have conversations to decide and discuss with them where they need to take their organizations over the next two, three, four, five or more years to make sure they stay viable, relevant, and successful. So I facilitate strategic planning retreats.

Liz Weber: And then, as part of those conversations, invariably to some degree, Mike, we will talk. So given how this organization needs to change three years from now to be viable, what does that mean for the type of talent and the people and the culture that you need here? So, we talk with them then and guide projects on succession and workforce planning. And then the third thing that I do with my little team is we provide longterm leadership training and coaching to help the members of the management team or the board really develop stronger skills to lead the organization as it will be two, three, four, five or more years from now. So that's what we do, is we kind of roll up our sleeves and dig deep with clients to really help them be better and stronger in the future.

Mike Domitrz: So you're right in the ears of the upper leadership, upper management of companies, corporations, the ones creating and really setting the boundaries of the culture of the organization. How do you think respect fits into a lot of organization's thinking and actions?

Liz Weber: Well, I have to say, with my clients, it's a big deal. And it's not just talk. I am very fortunate in that the clients that I work with, they want to create a good working environment for their employees, the stakeholders, the people that interact with them, because they understand that the stronger we can make this culture where people want to be here every day, people want to help us

move this organization forward. People want to work together. They want to get better. The more they can help create that kind of a culture in an organization, they know realistically, you and I know, the more successful the overall organization's going to be, whether we're talking about a for-profit organization or a government agency that deals with conservation and ecological issues.

Liz Weber: So I am fortunate that the senior staff that I work with, they do not disregard the importance of respect, whether it's peer to peer from the frontline to the top or the top down. It's high on their list.

Mike Domitrz: And a lot of organizations are that way. They do care deeply, and yet they struggle with it. All right. So I can definitely want to be a respectful culture and not have one. So, where do you think that gap happens? Where people go from, "I want to have that culture," but they don't see what they're already doing or what they're already setting up that's causing problems for that to exist correctly.

Liz Weber: Yeah. So, it's actually interesting we're having this conversation now because we just started within the last three weeks working with a government agency that's got a new executive director. And this particular organization is doing a turnaround because prior leadership really created a hostile environment, a lack of trust, a lack of respect. And, Mike, it's a lot of obvious things, obvious things to you and me and many of your listeners, but they have such far reaching implications, basic things like lack of respect. It's like cutting off all training for employees because the budget is tight, and then cutting off any ability to purchase new equipment or repair current equipment because the budget's tight.

Liz Weber: So, something like that equates, in my world, as a lack of respect, because you're asking and somewhat demanding of your employees to work, to work hard, and to work innovatively, but yet you're not providing any training to help them learn new skills, you're not providing them any funding for basic maintenance or new equipment to stay current or even to stay productive, and you're forcing them to work in a situation that becomes ever increasing more challenging. And something as basic as that, to me, equates to a lack of respect. As a leader, I'm not respecting the challenges that I'm imposing upon my employees to do the basic good elements of their job.

Mike Domitrz: Yeah, and I think that's such an important part because a lot of times people think that it's purely language that we're talking about when it comes to respect. And yet the setup of whether I can even succeed here is a sign of whether I am being respected or not, if I'm being set to fail. I was at an event this weekend with Keith Cunningham, the author of *The Road Less Stupid*, brilliant book. But he brought up something really important, that every time we say yes, we have to say no. So I can't add something to my employee's task list without taking something off of it. Otherwise I'm overwhelming them, and

that is a clear lack respect, in my opinion, I consider that a lack of respect because you're saying I can just keep maxing you out with no respect for your capacity.

Liz Weber: Absolutely. And it's other things like just looking around our workforce, and is our workforce representative of the customers that we serve? And it gets into this thing of unintended bias, but for me it's also this issue of respect, because if we have a leadership team or ownership team or a board that's predominantly older white men who have done great work in all their years of service, but you're now looking at a much younger and much more culturally diverse demographic that you're trying to serve. To be respectful of those you're trying to serve, you need to incorporate some other voices into your leadership team or onto your board so that you are not making decisions without respecting what their wants and needs or desires are. So respectful leadership team can run a gamut of different ways, other than just speaking disrespectfully.

Mike Domitrz: Well, yeah, and you bring up a great point there, which is even in those moments, some boards will push from, "We don't need to change who we are because we've gotten to where we are." But some will be, "Okay, let's add a woman."

Liz Weber: Yeah.

Mike Domitrz: Which is, in other words, it's a token move. It's not really an investment in what are we going to need to look like in this room 20 years from now, 10 years from now, five years from now, and what's the journey to get there, versus what's the quick bandaid move? Bring in a woman, bring in a minority, get a minority woman. You know what I mean? You bring in, and suddenly they view it differently that way.

Liz Weber: Yeah, so the whole idea with leadership respect is looking for, at least with my clients, is trying to get them to look more holistically at how do we create an environment that takes away as many distractions and I call them roadblocks from our employees as we possibly can so that we are allowing them to do the jobs or asking of them and that we're paying them to do. And so, a lot of the time when I'm working with my clients, I try to remind them, your job is to create the environment, support the environment, sustain the environment, and clear the roadblocks. If you do that, your team can thrive.

Mike Domitrz: How do people respond to that? Because that's not what they think of when they think of a respectful culture, and yet it's key to it.

Liz Weber: One of the things that we also do, and it comes out with the initial strategic planning work that we do with our clients to help them understand in describable terms and verbiage, what the changed culture could look like, is we work with them in creating organizational values. And what I help them to understand is when an organization's values are created well and then used

correctly, they will do the same thing for you as do the rules of your house. So, what I mean by that, for instance, Mike, I know you've got sons, but let's say for instance one of your boys, when he was 14 years old, let's say that you are gone, your wife was gone, and he decided, because he wasn't at school that day, that he was going to have a party at your house. He posted it on the internet and went viral through all his social media platforms. And at the end of the day when you were driving home, you drove down the road towards your house and you could see your house behind all these trucks and cars and motorcycles and you saw your beautiful son in the front yard walking around with the red solo cup and kegs of beer. Might you be a little bit frustrated with him when you saw him?

Mike Domitrz: Yes.

Liz Weber: Yes. Okay. So, what I'm getting at here is my hunch is, because I know you, my hunch is that all you would have to do is walk towards your son and he would see you, that life as he knows it is over, because he has probably broken so many of your house rules. And it's because ever since he was a little guy, until at that point he would have been 14, you and your wife instilled consistent values of what would be acceptable in your house and what wasn't. And when he chose to do something outside those values, you imposed some kind of disciplinary action.

Liz Weber: Well, the same thing can happen in an organization when there are organizational values that the leadership team helps identify and create to say these are the specific behaviors that we need to see not only of ourselves, but of every employee who works here, takes a paycheck here, or who has volunteered to be a part of this organization. We need to see these values day in and day out, because these values are the house rules. And when we all do them, this becomes a really good place for us to work together because we have similar values and it's going to allow us to move this organization forward.

Liz Weber: So, some values are things like share knowledge, be respectful of others, support a positive environment, whatever the behavior is that your organization needs to sustain or create a more positive, respectful, and supportive environment, that's what you include in your values. And then the management teams, it's their job to, as I say, enforce the values to make sure that the house rules are being followed. It's no different than you as a parent want to make sure that the rules of your home are being followed.

Mike Domitrz: And they've got to be able to live those themselves. Right? There is that-

Liz Weber: Absolutely.

Mike Domitrz: Someone will have a value to say, "We're a family based company." And yet, somebody needs time off for family and well you can't be missing for that. Well I thought... When we were having this conversation recently with someone on

the show, and the discussion was don't have a value you're not living. It was Sam. You know Sam, Sam [Servistine 00:11:47]. He said, "Because then, you're just a liar." There's no other way to put it. You're a liar as a leader when you do that. And so, I think you bringing that point up is so important. You have to live it and hold people to it and really make sure you're holding yourself to it.

Liz Weber: Absolutely. In fact, I had that scenario with a client probably about eight years ago. It was a family owned business. And we had just created the value's about a month before, and they had posted them all over the organization. We're really proud of them. And then one of the sons did something. And the dad, the president of the company, called me, and he said, "Liz, what do I do?" And I said, "Well, this is where your job gets really, really easy and really, really hard all at the same time. Is it's really easy because your son is one of the leaders of the companies, he's one of the managers, and the values apply to him. So you have to enforce the values. It becomes really, really hard because he's your son. But either you enforce the values and you impose some disciplinary action. You don't have to make it public, but word will spread. Either you hold him to the same values as you would a non-family member, or you go out there and you take those values down because now you're being a hypocrite. And he said, "This is really hard and really easy all at the same time." And that's it.

Mike Domitrz: And you have had a situation where a client of yours couldn't believe that you held to a value you had when it came to an HR manager they had. So, could you share a little bit about that? Because that's a good example.

Liz Weber: Well, absolutely. So, one of the obvious requirements that I have with any executive or business owner that I'm working with to help him or her take their company forward is I want to work with you because I believe and you have said you want to be a strong, solid leader that others look to and want to emulate. So that means you need to model those kinds of behaviors. So, I was at a client, in his office one day and we were going over what was going to happen at the next day's strategy session. And all of a sudden he looked out of his office, down the hallway, and something caught his eye. And he said, "Liz, excuse me. I'll be right back." And I heard him get up, obviously, walked down the hall, and suddenly he started reaming out, "I picked up his HR manager." And I was stunned.

Liz Weber: And he came back in his office, he closed the door, and he sat down, he goes, "I'm sorry for that." And he started talking again. And I said, "Wait a minute." I said, "What just happened there?" And he basically said, "Well, she's screwed something up and I needed her to be aware of it." And I said, "You need to get up and walk down there and apologize to her for the way that you just spoke to her publicly, because what you did has set everything we have been working on with you and your leadership team back. We're now back to where we were when we started six months ago." I said, "Either you go and apologize or I'm out of here, because I can't step forward from this tomorrow with your team and acknowledge what you just did, and there's no ramification for it."

Liz Weber: And have to be honest, Mike. I opened my mouth and I spoke before I really thought about it, because he could've said, "Fine, get out of here." And I would have left. But he looked at me, and he's just like, "Ugh, you're right." And he slammed his hands on the desk and he got up and he walked down the hall and he apologized. And he came back. I just looked at him and then I started talking and we went on from there.

Liz Weber: But it was one of those situations where I was dumbfounded on how quickly he had reverted, and I was in a position to hold him accountable. Whereas, his senior managers are less likely to speak up. Because if he fires them, they lose their job. If he terminates my contract, I have other clients. It's one of those situations where when I see a manager or one of my clients behaving in a way that I believe is going to set them back within the project, I speak up, and I let them know that before I start a contract with them.

Mike Domitrz: And so that walks us right into, why do you think being respectful yet candid is difficult for so many leaders and employees in organizations?

Liz Weber: From my experience, it's one of two reasons. Either the manager is so blunt and can be so crass in the way that they provide feedback, it's demeaning and demoralizing and it damages relationships. Or, what I see more often, is they are not quick enough and clear enough and objective enough in providing feedback to help their employees, their colleagues, their board directors honestly identify when things are going well and when things are veering off track. And I have to tell you, I spend the bulk of my time working with management teams, getting them comfortable, creating a respectful culture where they are candid in telling managers when things are going off track, when a manager or an employee is performing less than acceptably, and when things are going great, and helping them to identify how do you create that balance? How do you create a situation where, Mike, you'll trust me, because when you do things great, I tell you.

Liz Weber: And at the same time when I see you doing things that are not great, I also make you aware of it so you can correct. And so, over time, you trust that I will give you balanced feedback because I want you to succeed, and I respect you and you respect me. And because we have this history of sharing positive reinforcement and kudos as well as every now and then I might pull you aside and go, "Mike, listen to me. This is getting serious." And we can sometimes have a fairly firm conversation because we have that balanced relationship.

Liz Weber: And what makes it a challenge is you've got to say the good and the bad. Because if I only tell you when you are doing things wrong, pretty soon every time you see me it's going to be like, "Now what?" But at the same time, if I only tell you when you're doing things great, pretty soon you're going to dismiss anything that I have to say because I only say positive things, and it's like, "I'm not that perfect, Liz. Tell me something different." So, it's a challenge for many

individuals to find that balance of how do I let you know I've got your back. By sharing the positive, but also making you aware of the potential negatives.

Mike Domitrz: And sometimes this is coming from the leadership of a team, the lack of respect. So what does someone do when they feel the leader is being disrespectful of them or the team?

Liz Weber: That's a challenge, depending upon how dominating and domineering the leader can be. And it's one of those situations where a manager will sometimes call me and say, "What do I do?" And all I can suggest is, "How comfortable do you feel asking your manager if you can talk to him or her in his office for 10 minutes?" And just when you have the conversation say, "I just wanted to talk to you about the situation that happened this morning during the staff meeting, or during the XYZ project debrief. Because when you said this and then interrupted me in front of the client, what it made me feel like was you just took all of my clout in front of that client, you took it away." I want them to be comfortable having a conversation with the manager and having them understand the ramifications of their actions.

Liz Weber: But if they don't have a comfortable relationship with their manager, that's hard to do. It's hard to make a manager that's in a more superior position understand and accept when he or she is veering off track if they're not open to it. So, one of the things that I tell managers more often than not is, "Look what you can do within your zone of influence." Which means how do you model leadership? How do you model respect? How do you deal with situations when you have been disrespected? Do you fly off the handle? Or do you stay calm and talk through that scenario and ask for further examples, more specifics, a better understanding of where that comment is coming from?

Liz Weber: So, it's all in do you have the ability to have a comfortable conversation one on one with your manager? Or are you better suited to basically try to stay calm in the moment and ask for more clarification, ask for more information, ask for a better guidance on how to handle it going forward?

Mike Domitrz: We're all imperfect along this journey. So can you think of a time where you didn't realize that you created a moment of disrespect that you were like, "Whoa," afterwards, "I didn't even realize it was going to go that direction or that it would be taken that way."

Liz Weber: Actually, when you're asking that question, Mike, what pops into my mind is the first time I had to terminate an employee. Honestly, even before I had the meeting with her, I needed to, I'm just going to be very blunt, I needed to step into the bathroom because I thought I was going to be ill. Because I knew in my heart and in my head that I had not given her enough warning that she was heading in a direction that was not going to be beneficial for her organization, and I was going to blindside her when I fired her. And I did.

Liz Weber: And it was a situation where I realized, because I had not been courageous enough and shown her enough respect along the way, to be very clear in my feedback to her that I was blindsiding her. I was surprising her by this. And I promised that day that I would never ever do that to another person or myself again, because it was not right. Now, granted things that she was doing it, she was going to be terminated at some point or other anyway, but it doesn't justify that I did not do my job along the way of speaking up earlier and speaking often and giving her very clear guidance and very clear choices of correction.

Liz Weber: The sad thing about it is it has been one of the strongest learning points for me that when we work with clients and in performance feedback programs or helping them establish a performance management program, I will share that story because I don't ever want a manager that goes through one of our programs to not properly provide feedback to employees so that they can make a choice of how they want to correct behavior or not.

Mike Domitrz: Yeah. We can all fall into that. Because you don't want to be mean, right? We think, "Oh, I don't want to hurt their feelings," versus you're going to hurt their feelings way more if you don't give that feed. I've definitely done that where you don't give. And people think, "Oh, Mike's always happy and positive." And that can be a failure of leadership, and just not being more upfront when things are not always that way. And being able to discuss what the benchmarks are, the standards are, that need to be followed or need to be monitored or tracked, whatever that is. So that's such an important lesson. So I appreciate you sharing that with us. And Liz, you're the leader of your own company. So what does respect mean to you?

Liz Weber: What respect means for me and what we try to do here with my little team is I want to ensure that the employees that work with me, whether they're here in the office with me virtual, that they are comfortable enough when we have our conversations during our weekly meetings or interactions, that they are comfortable and pushing back when they disagree with me, when they have a different opinion, or when they think that we are doing or I am suggesting something that is just out and out wrong.

Liz Weber: And it sounds pretty basic, but Mike, I can tell you for one of my team members, it took about eight years of her working with me before she was comfortable with that, because it was just not part of her nature before. She had never worked in an organization where she was encouraged and expected to speak up and disagree with the leader or the manager. I want them to show me the respect of sharing their true voices and their true opinions with me, because goodness knows I don't have all the ideas. And I'm hoping that by encouraging them to have a voice that I'm being respectful of them as well, because I really want everyone that works with me to continuously be learning and growing and challenging and want to do something different. And if they don't have a voice and saying what we should try or what we shouldn't try, I don't think I'm being true to that promise that I try to make to them of creating a challenging but

encouraging culture here. So, the long answer to that is respect is I really try to make them be a true active part of my team.

Mike Domitrz: Well it really sounds like you're creating a safe space. Right? That's the key to all of that, for them to be able to speak out. And you've been on a national board for professional associates, you're currently on an international board. How do you think this power that can happen when it comes to boards or respect or lack of thereof impacts boards?

Liz Weber: Well, one of the things that I see with boards when I join them or I'm working with them, is it's very similar to what we do with the leadership team. If the board is not functional, if the time that they are working together virtually or in person isn't functional, to me that's a lack of respect. It's a lack of respect for their responsibility as a board director or a trustee. It's a lack of respect for one another because they're not prepared or they're not having a fluid conversation that gets to decisive points. And so, the whole idea of respect on a board is respecting what is your role, what is your responsibility, what is the best use of your time together, whether physically or virtually when your meetings. So respect on a board has a number of different elements to it. And sometimes it's just simply making the board directors aware of a better use of their time so that when they are together they're more productive, they're more effective, and they're more respectful of one another as they interact and do their role on the board.

Mike Domitrz: Liz, this has been so insightful, full of great strategies for our listeners. So thank you. I want to make sure everybody can find you. Now your website is wbsllc.com. People might be wondering, "What's WBS?" So can you explain that?

Liz Weber: Sure. WBS stands for Weber Business Services, LLC. So it's my company name. And under that company umbrella is where we do the three different service lines.

Mike Domitrz: Awesome. And then you also have 5stagesleadership.rocks. And that's the number five, not spelled out, the actual number, 5stagesleadership.rocks. And you have books. Something Needs to Change Around Here is one of them. The Five Stages to Leveraging Your Leadership. You also have What HR Professionals Need to Stop Doing. Thank you so much, Liz.

Liz Weber: Thank you, Mike.

Mike Domitrz: Absolutely. For our listeners, you know what's next. It is question of the week. Before I answer this week's question of the week, I'd love to ask you a question. Would you please subscribe to this podcast, The Respect Podcast with Mike Domitrz? By subscribing, you can make a huge impact. Now, you might be wondering, "Mike, how does my subscribing to your podcast make a huge impact?" Well, here's how. For every person that subscribes, it raises the

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Mike Domitrz: Now, let's get in to this week's question of the week. Oh, and by the way, you can always ask your questions of the week by joining us on Facebook in our discussion group. It's called The Respect Podcast Discussion Group. Go there on Facebook and ask whatever questions you would like me to answer and/or address in this segment of the show. And then listen to each episode to find out when your question is included.

Mike Domitrz: This week's question is, "Mike, when working with organizations, what is a major challenge that many companies, organizations, associations face?" Well, there was an article on this in 2013 in Forbes. And interestingly, the first problem that they showed was integrity. Now, why that's important is because that's all about respect. When you think of integrity, that is do you respect your word? Do you respect the word of those in your organization? Are their words respected? Do you live by your core values? Do you actually respect those core values? Right? That's all about a foundation of respect.

Mike Domitrz: So, when you think about, "Oh, we have problems here and we have problems there in our organization," you might just want to stop and go, "Well, is it possible that there are places in our organization, segments of, or maybe the entire organization that lack integrity? What are we failing to respect in those segments of our organization that are causing a lack of integrity? What failure to respect is taking place?" That question can often show itself, reveal itself, problems that are solvable, but you got to be able to ask the question.

Mike Domitrz: Do you know what I would love? I would love to hear your answer to this week's question of the week. So, would you please answer what your answer would have been if you were asked that question today on the show? All you do is go to our Facebook page. We have a special group where we have these discussions called The Respect Podcast Discussion Group. So The Respect Podcast Discussion Group, and share with us, what would your answer have been to this week's question of the week? And if you take a moment, post us a new question for future episodes. What question would you like to hear me answer on an upcoming episode? That's all done on Facebook in our special group, which is The Respect Podcast Discussion Group. Can't wait to see you there.

Mike Domitrz: Thank you for joining us in this episode of The Respect Podcast, exploring work love and life. And this episode, like every episode, is brought to you by our organization, The Center for Respect, which you can find at

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centerforrespect.com. And of course you can find me, your host, Mike Domitrz at mikespeaks.com. Thank you so much for joining us.