

Book Journeys Author Interview - Elizabeth McCormick - Mar 5, 2015

Dr. Angela Lauria with Elizabeth McCormick, author of *The P.I.L.O.T. Method: 5 Elemental Truths to Leading Yourself in Life*

There are some times in your life, to get it done, you gotta do what you have to do to get it done.
~Elizabeth McCormick

Angela:

Well, hey everybody! It is another week inside the Author Incubator's Book Journeys Radio. This is the show where we find out what made the difference between all of the people out there that wanna write a book and that small but growing percentage of people who cross that finish line. What was the difference for them? And so we will talk about that this week. One quick little, ah, uhm, just technical housekeeping note: we have finally gotten all of our shows up on to iTunes. So, for those of you who are listening to us because you're subscribed on iTunes, thank you so much. If not, go ahead and subscribe to the podcast so it automatically downloads for you. And when you are making those movements towards getting your book done, you can listen to some of these interviews and really connect with some of the missing pieces that are going to help you get across the finish line with your book. In those missing pieces, you will find words of wisdom from today's guest, Elizabeth McCormick. Elizabeth is the author of *The P.I.L.O.T. Method: 5 Elemental Truths to Leading Yourself in Life*. I'm super excited to talk to Elizabeth today. She is a Black Hawk pilot. She is an international motivational speaker. Hopefully she's gonna motivate all of us. We're gonna talk to her in a second. If you want to follow along and learn more about her as we're talking, go to www.pilotspeaker.com and you can see some pictures of Elizabeth and learn more about her book. But right now, to get us started, Elizabeth, thank you so much for being with us today.

Elizabeth:

Well, thank you for having me on the call!

Angela:

Awesome. So, tell us about The PILOT Method. I actually have it in my hot little hand right now. We have been planning on speaking for quite some time, so but I wanted our listeners to hear from you. What is this book about and who's it for?

Elizabeth:

Well, it's really about leading yourself in life. And so I relate it to the pilot. So, PILOT is an acronym, "P" is Potential. We all have potential. It's a matter of believing in our potential of what we can do, what we can bring to this world. And so, that's what the "P" talks about. But then the "I" goes into Implementation because it doesn't do any good to believe in your potential if you don't do anything with it. So, "I" talks about overwhelm and how to combat overwhelm, and how to, you know, really how to make decisions when you're really muddy and things and prioritizing. And then, "L" is for Leadership and I have 3 principles of leadership underneath "L" and that's Communicate, and so I talk about communication; Aviate, which is taking action; and Navigate, knowing what your vision, your focus and your goals are going to be to move towards and I

relate all that together. And then, "O" is Optimizing. To be your best, you must be your best. So, and really taking care of yourself and how that needs to be a priority and a focus in everyone's life. So I talk about attitude and being, you know, taking care of yourself and optimizing is the "O" to optimize your life. And then, "T", "T" is the sticky, gritty, get-to-it, get-it-done Tenacity. Don't stop, don't quit. Are there gonna be people who don't believe what you believe? Absolutely. Welcome to the world of different opinions. But don't quit when you believe in something in yourself. That's it!

Angela:

Well, Elizabeth, I don't think it will surprise you to find out not many of our listeners are Black Hawk Helicopter pilots. That's a pretty amazing distinction for anyone but I have to assume there aren't a ton of women that have that particular distinction. Isn't it easy for people to think maybe there's something special about you? You walked us through those 5 steps and I get it. But hey, you're a Black Hawk Helicopter pilot and like, you are obviously someone who is extraordinary. How do we know if this applies to us?

Elizabeth:

Well, because I wrote it with my 19-year-old college student in mind who's not a helicopter pilot, who's struggled in her life and I really sat down and thought, you know, not just what I want her to know but what I want her to know as an adult, what I want her to know as a person, as a, you know, I didn't write it in a male or female version. I wrote it for a human version and I wrote it to, because as a pilot, we have to take complex systems and break them down into checklists and systems. So, that's what I did.

Angela:

Mmm.

Elizabeth:

You know, it's the process down. I made it really easy to implement. It's easy to read, it's a short read. I have people, "Oh my gosh, I read it on an airplane home," you know. I'm like, "Yey, that's what I wanted!" I wanted something that you could get through but yet learn through.

Angela:

Yeah, I love that. And it is very practical and it's very easy to follow. So, let's talk about, a little bit about the process of writing this book. So, just going back to the beginning, how did you get the idea to write this book in the first place?

Elizabeth:

Well, it actually came from my speech. So, I kinda did it backwards, I was speaking first and I knew that I needed a book in the back of the room to sell. So, I sat down and like looked at my speech and looked at my processes and I'm visual, so, I put the big white paper on the wall on the hallway. So, I pass by it everyday, every, multiple times a day, I'm passing by that paper with titles and topics I want to talk about. And anytime I thought of something new, I would add it to it and find this really busy white paper with different colored markers and just, and certain

words kept popping out at me - Potential popped out at me, you know. And then I started thinking, *Oh, I could do the PILOT*. And so then, it was, oh so I changed it to Purpose. No, Purpose has been done way too much. No, I need it to be, you know, and so I just, once I decided that PILOT was gonna be it, then it was, *Oh, it should be The PILOT philosophy*. No, *should it be The PILOT*, you know and I just, and I would literally walk by it, walk by it, walk by it, until it just looks like, *Oh, it's a method! It's a method of doing something*. And then, it was like, as soon as I had it, I had it, like the whole rest of the paper was like, I don't need that anymore, you know. So but, I, you know, wish I kept that, kinda now looking back but...

Angela:

Aha. Like a little memento of the journey.

Elizabeth:

Yeah! But, ah, you know, I mean just, go, it's a process. It wasn't, *I'm going write a book today*. It was, ah, it was a process. I mean literally I know a lot of authors compare, especially women, compare writing a book to giving birth. I mean it really, it doesn't happen overnight. There is definitely a gestational period to it. So, you know, that's what I really focused on.

Angela:

So this was, was this your first book, The PILOT Method, or did you have some other books first?

Elizabeth:

I had other books first but this was my first "me book." So, I, I will tell you and some people probably have done this, I did it all wrong. (Laughs) Can I just say, okay, I did it all...

Angela:

Awesome. So we are totally in the right place because we wanna make sure that the people listening know what not to do.

Elizabeth:

I did it all wrong. Oh my gosh. So I totally got snookered, that's a nice word, snookered by someone who preyed on pledging speakers and entrepreneurs at the beginning. Oh, spent way too much money to have a way tiny, teeny, tiny chapter and a way lot-not-important book.

Angela:

Aaah.

Elizabeth:

You know, and so I did a collaborative book and realized after the fact and everything that wow, that totally was not worth it, you know. But it did give me something to sell while I was speaking and as I was, you know, and I learned from the process. So, my thing is if I screw up, which I do a lot, so when I screw up, you know, what can I do different? What did I learn from it? What can

I do to prevent this from happening again? And then, because I'm not very smart sometimes, I did three co-author books. Now...

Angela:

Mhmm.

I'll admit the third one, I was one of the headliners. So, at least I didn't have to pay to be in that one. But the first two, I did but at least they were different genres. So, one was for business and that's when I first, the first one I did, it was for entrepreneurs and business. And then, I realized that really wasn't what my main topic was gonna be so it didn't serve my audience. So, I think what it helped me do doing the 3 co-author books, the second one I did was motivational, which is really more my line now. And the third one I did was Christian, which then I realized although I am a Christian and I can speak it, it's not what I wanna do for my business. So, what it really did was help me get super clear that a book needs to be written for an audience.

Angela:

Mhmm. Oh yey! I'm so glad you're saying this! This is the conversation I have all day long. So wait, you have this PILOT message, you have this experience as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. It doesn't matter, whatever your book is about. And so, many authors approach it as "Here's what I'm gonna tell you." And they're not even thinking about what their wants or needs to hear.

Elizabeth:

Right. Now I did, with PILOT, I purposely, uhm, so I'll tell you, I had a literary agent who was crawling in my door, you know, "Please, you know, Black Hawk pilot, sexy brand. Come on, please sign with me." And we had a couple of phone calls and, although I'll tell you I did not sign with her. There were reasons for that. But what she did clarify for me that might help, so I have a really big vision. I already have seven books planned more, like full books not co-author, I don't count those. But I have, and then I had a little, little business success books that I write for my audiences! Hello!

Angela:

Mhmm.

Elizabeth:

So, I have these tip books that are written specifically for industries that I'm already booked to speak with. As long as it's far enough out I can research it and adapt content for them. I do that as well, so I have a lot of books. PILOT is my book, it's my big book, it is, you know, it's me and I have seven more planned. And when I went through with this literary agent this whole strategy and plan that I had, she totally turned it around on me and made me think of it as a pyramid. Not a pyramid scheme, but she said, "You know, really think of it as a pyramid and your first book needs to be the one at the broadest base of the pyramid. So she had me, you know, had me, that was PILOT Method. It's a personal development book. It's gonna have the broadest audience, the most appeal, because your second book, so for me, my second book that I'm already working on is Leading in Business. And it's a business book. So that one is gonna have

a narrower audience but everyone who buys Book 2 and hasn't bought Book 1 can now buy Book 1 because Book 1 relates to them as well.

Angela:

Love it. Love it. That's terrific.

Elizabeth:

And then Book 3 will be Women in Business. So again, they can still buy Women in B-, that book, but yet they can still buy the business leadership book 'cause that applies to them and still buy the personal development book that applies to them. So, if you keep fine-tuning it and refining book over book in a pyramid method until like, for me, the pinnacle book, the one up at the top is the memoir to the movie deal.

Angela:

Mmm. Mhmm. Awesome so what, so...

Elizabeth:

And then, when they buy that, they also buy all the way down.

Angela:

I love it. I love it. So, for you, I know that you said, you did it all wrong (laughs), you were already speaking, you got involved in a compilation book and you've done some other ... compilation books and how ... Good money maker for the person organizing them, but not really what you want to grow your brand. I've seen more and more of those these days. What are some of the other things that, you know, obviously you've learned from, but if you were advising somebody, what are some of the things that you would say, "Don't do this or here's the order to do that." What's some of the advice that you would give people that, to learn from your mistakes?

Elizabeth:

Hmm to learn from the... Well, one of the things I did that worked really well for me, can I say, tell you something that worked well first? (laughs)

Angela:

Sure. Even better!

Elizabeth:

One of the things that worked really well for me was I designed the cover first. I know I tweak a little bit but I designed a really good, like, I loved it. This was my cover and I knew it was gonna work 'cause I'd already outlined the content and was working on developing an ad in that content. And so, with designing the cover first, it gets me as a speaker first. I was able to have that blown up as a poster size at my speaking engagement and say, "Pre-order. Be the first to receive Elizabeth's upcoming book."

Angela:
Hmm. Very nice.

Elizabeth:
And I had over 500 pre-orders before the book was finished writing.

Angela:
Fantastic.

Elizabeth:
At \$20 a book. So, you know, helped pay in that, because I ended up choosing not to go through the literary agent and not to go with a traditional publisher, even though that, because I wanted to help faster. I was concerned on the timeframe. I didn't wanna wait a year and a half, two years. I wanted something I could have in my hands to sell to these audiences and opportunities that I had now. So I chose to do, uhm, I didn't wanna do self-publish because I also wanted a little bit of a backing and, not necessarily backing financially, but a brand or a name of a publishing company behind me. So, I chose the author finance road where I paid the publisher to take my book on and distribute it. So, but I also control my processes.

Angela:
And so, let's talk a little bit about that. So you have, so...

Elizabeth:
Sure.

Angela:
'Cause not everybody really understands how this works. So you have a literary agent that's willing to, interested and excited about working with you and an agent doesn't take money from you up front. So how do you decide that to work with the agent, what would have been different for you working with an agent and going with a traditional publisher versus working with an author-funded publisher? Let's talk about some of those pros and cons and how you made that decision.

Elizabeth:
Absolutely! And I find too, that a lot of people don't understand this difference. So, working with a literary agent, first off, she would take 15% of everything. Period.

Angela:
Now, the cool thing is it's on the back end, so you're not putting any money up front.

Elizabeth:
It's on the back end, not up front. True, true.

Angela:
Right.

Elizabeth:
But profitability of business, you know.

Angela:
But the less cool thing is she's gonna take 15%. And we haven't even gotten into how much everybody else is gonna take.

Elizabeth:
Exactly, exactly. Now she's gonna, you know, the literary agent, they mark-, they help you get into the door. Basically, the big traditional, I think we're down to like 4 or 5 big traditional publishing companies now with all those that merged and everything. You really can't get in the door with a literary agent. Very difficult. You can get their attention by selling a lot online or having a good platform or presence. You can get their attention but for you to send the proposal ... to them, a literary agent is really the way to go to do that. However, I looked into it and to me, to me it's a business. I'm a business woman above and beyond everything else, whether I'm writing or I'm speaking, no matter what I do, I am a business owner and I'm running a business, and a business makes profit. So I started looking into profit margins of traditionally published books and from talking to some of my friends who had gone through Random House, or Wiley, or Simon and Schuster, they said that they average return, the literary agent, the publisher, every, all the pieces, the distribution, everything that got a piece of their book, they only got \$2 from a \$20 dollar book.

Angela:
Yeah.

Elizabeth:
And so, and then even the books that they bought to sell at their events, the cost was, you know, they, everybody got their cut of the ... as well. It wasn't, you know, yeah it was a better price but it wasn't, it was way more than if I had got going the other route, the other way. So...

Angela:
So the percentage that people are taking, they're taking a percentage of your book but they're also taking a percentage of other residual profits? Is that what you were saying?

Elizabeth:
Well, not that, at first it was just about the book. But then like, you know, there's uhm, of course there's the physical book, the audiobook, the ebook, the...

Angela:
Right.

Elizabeth:

You know, there's all the other pieces that go with that. And then, you know, for me it's, you know, Book 2, it's Book 3, it's, but it, to me it really bottled down. I think it really, and the other thing I think with it that surprised me was when I found out that, about the whole PR/publicity fund. So I still had to pay for that.

Angela:

Yeah, that's interesting, right?

Elizabeth:

I'm like, how am I gonna get paid for all the publicity, the PR? If I gotta, I gotta, you know, if they'll book me on The Today's Show, yehey! But then I have to pay for my airfare to get there and my hotel the night before. And I'm paying for all that? I'm like, *Wait a second*. You know, so I'm like, if I'm gonna pay for that, I might as well pay for that and control the process. The other thing I found out is that they could change the title. They could go in and change the name. They can have somebody else write a foreword if I want it, well I don't have a foreword in mind, but if I want, you know. They could go in and pretty much bump you off in your creative process and do what they think is gonna be marketed back to create more book sales. Which is not all a bad thing. I'm like, like me, it's tied to my feet. And so then...

Angela:

Right. And there's another element you talked about which is the timing. So what do you think the timing would be with going that traditional route through the agent versus the way you went? How long did it take you to publish this book and how do you think, how long do you think it might have taken?

Elizabeth:

Well, I was told that it would take 18 to 22, 18 to 24 months, so six, uhm, you know, a year and a half to two years for the book to come out. Yeah, if it's like, you know, a hot topic they could fast track it and not put you in the catalogues for distribution and bla, bla, bla. But I mean, it's in, what is, what they explained to me is, you know, everything runs, you know, six months in advance of when it's gonna be in the stores 'cause the stores have to order and we have to dadada, and it all just kinda trickles and back from there. And that was just not gonna work for me timing-wise. So, with going with an author finance, it was up to me. I had the cover designed, I had all the pieces done, uhm, and it was my choice. I could go through the publisher and buy their package or I brought my own resources to the table. And I, so I had my own cover designer, I had my own formatting on the inside of the book, I had all, you know, everything done, I had my own, hired my own ghost-writing service not to ghost-write, but I used them as an editor and utilized them to polish it and make the content better. So I wrote it but they made it shine in a way. I write like I speak. I am blunt and to the point, sometimes too much. But I get right to it and that doesn't really work in a book. So you need to be a little more flowery and a little more ... so I brought them in to help me with that piece of it, to make it, and in the transition, I mean gosh, just to think when you're writing your own book, you don't realize how important those, like the flow, and the transition, and you might think you didn't say something

and you just said it again, and to have another set of eyes as a hired editor for me, is huge. In the end and I had them keep me accountable too on the timeline to make sure things got done 'cause I had book orders. I had pre-sold you know, hundreds of quantities of books for an event. It was in November and we we're trying, we had to have it done. And like literally they came in like the morning before the table for the event. So...

Angela:

So from when you finished writing until when it was actually, you know, published and you were holding the book in your hand, how long did that take?

Elizabeth:

I finished writing the book in September and I had the book in my hand like November 2nd.

Angela:

Wow, that's pretty amazing turnaround.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, it is, it is. So...

Angela:

And I love how you kept yourself accountable by the pre-sales being not only just a way to help generate revenue and pay for some of those services but also by, you know, helping you stay accountable and really want to finish in time to fulfill on a promise.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, well we ended up, the plan was not to do print-on-demand where they print, you know, and to cost more. The plan was not to do that but that's what we ended up having to do to make sure that we got it in the first batch in that timeline, that timeframe. So we just kinda, okay here we go.

Angela:

And, and I think I saw in your book who you used, nextcenturypublishing.com?

Elizabeth:

I did, I did. They, uhm, they were, they did an awesome job.

Angela:

Would you recommend? Awesome, with that quick turnaround so...

Elizabeth:

With that quick turnaround. And you know what? The other thing that they did is they brokered a corporate sale of that book and pulled 7,000 copies for me.

Angela:

Wow! We'll give them an A for that. That's pretty awesome.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, so I mean they've done a, they've really done a good job, you know. And, you know, they have marketing packages and other packages and things. I'm big on using my own resources and my own team 'cause I already had it in place. If I didn't already have it in place, they have it. But I already had the designer, I already had all the people I needed to get this done when I picked them up. But yeah, they got it done fast for me, which was great. Their printing prices were very good. So I was very happy with, working with them, so...

Angela:

And in terms of distribution, are you distribu-, do they do the print-on-demand for online distribution as well or do you have this to sell with Amazon yourself?

Elizabeth:

Uhm, they have distribution. It's up to me whether I do print-on-demand. I did not because my book, my book has embossed cover and I bought 10,000 copies. So I have, I was able to get a better price so I put that just gave them the books on consignment to fulfill from so it gives me a better profit margin.

Angela:

I love it. And I do love the raised typing on the book too.

Elizabeth:

Isn't that nice? And they get a matte finish versus the gloss so it doesn't show fingerprints. And they did a great...

Angela:

Yeah.

Elizabeth:

They did a great, they actually took my cover that I designed and pieced it up with this cover with the embossing and the matte finish, and it's fabulous.

Angela:

Fantastic. Well, in our final couple of minutes, is there any advice that you would wanna give to somebody who has had a personal experience that they want to translate into lessons for other people like you have but they haven't quite been able to get their message down to finish it, to get it published in the way you have. What advice would you have for them?

Elizabeth:

Gosh, don't do what I did. (laughs) I mean I literally didn't journal at all. I mean I don't con-, I wouldn't have considered myself a writer. And so I didn't journal at all. I've lost so much detail,

so many memories of things, and things that I went through. I wish, as I was a pilot, I just like kept a ... of my own logbook and chronicled my experiences. But it was really hard for me to bring that back to life in such a way. It really took a lot more time and effort to do that as in reflection versus as we went. So the other thing is I was super busy. I was working and I had this deadline and I'm speaking. I'm out doing it, I'm working it, right? And so, I literally from, I'm a night person, so from 10pm to 2am, 5 days a week for 3 months, I went sleep-deprived pretty much and just to get it done and to be able to, you know, have that quiet space without my kids yelling and, you know, and here's the thing. It was a crunch, I don't recommend it, it does not fit my "Optimize Your Life" message. I'll take it here yourself, it's not what I preach. But you know what, there are some times in your life, to get it done, you gotta do what you have to do to get it done.

Angela:

Yeah. Yup, that is the takeaway, people. You gotta do what you gotta do to get it done and when you make that commitment, you will have those all-nighters. And it won't be forever but for a couple of weeks if that's what it takes. I love the vision. I love the clarity. Author Elizabeth McCormick, she is the author of *The P.I.L.O.T. Method: 5 Elemental Truths to Leading Yourself in Life*. Ah she, it's an amazing story. She draws from her experiences as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot and a Chief Warrant Officer in the army to really relate true-to-life stories with powerful and actionable lessons. You can find her book on Amazon then you can also find more about her and more about the book at pilotspeaker.com. Elizabeth, thanks so much for being with us.

Elizabeth:

My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Angela:

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