

HELPING FEMALE EXECUTIVES FIND A FOOTHOLD

Army vet Madeline Ann Lewis makes a career out of teaching others how to realize their dreams.

BY ANDREA LOVAS



Madeline Ann Lewis is on a mission to help other women succeed, both in business and in life. Through her organization, the Executive Women's Success Institute, she is particularly focused on coaching female executives and those involved in government work. Lewis, who has a doctorate of Management in Organizational Leadership, certainly has the experience to prove her expertise in this arena.

WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES

Lewis joined the Army in 1984, after enjoying the freedom of college life a bit too much caused her to lose her scholarship her freshman year.

"My mom said I had six months to figure out how to pay for college. I thought if I joined the military, I would get sent to Spain like a friend of mine," Lewis recalls, laughing. "But, of course, that didn't happen."

While Lewis didn't get to go to Spain, she ended up enjoying military life and her career so much so that she remained in the Army for more than 22 years.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

"I learned so much and I had some really great mentors," she said. "I developed discipline and patience and I learned that not everything is meant to hurt you. It can sometimes help

you. Through my time in the military, I came to understand that I needed to learn what I could from failures and setbacks, and figure out what I could actually gain from them."

Lewis started out in administration but eventually ended up in civil affairs, and she says her experiences there shaped her future career. She oversaw a unit of 80 soldiers that taught basic and advanced leadership trainings to other members of the military at various sites around the country. She provided education and support to each of the instructors and oversaw the operations of three regional training sites.

In 2007, Lewis' mother became ill, and Lewis began to feel that her ▶

► focus and attention were torn between caring for her mother and overseeing her unit, and that she was doing neither job properly. She made the decision to retire so she could focus on caring for her mother. When her mom later passed away, Lewis was a civilian working for the FBI.

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

"I was dabbling in consulting at the time because people—mostly women—were coming to me for mentoring and career advice," Lewis explained. "I was fortunate in that I had a lot of mentors in the military. In the federal government, you don't have a lot of females mentoring other females."

In 2009, she wrote her first book, designed to help women working for the government move into executive roles, titled, "Playing from the Blue Tee: Women in the Federal Government."

Soon after, Rhonda Trent, the president of Federally Employed Women, contacted Lewis and asked her to put together a training for senior executives. With that, Lewis' professional coaching career really took off, and in 2012 Lewis established the Executive Women's Success Institute. Two years later, Lewis left the FBI to focus full-time on this endeavor. Today she works with all different sorts of organizations in the both public and private sectors. She continues to provide training for government employees in order to prepare them for service as senior executives. For civilian women, Lewis also offers education on how to start a business on a part-time basis, focusing on topics such as branding, networking and time management.

"I created a coaching system called the 8 Habits of Successful Executive Women, which I've taught to a lot of federal agencies. I also have a very intensive 12-month program for women who are serious about starting their own businesses. We work with just 12 to 14 women at one time."

SUCCESS THROUGH OTHERS

Lewis said networking with others is a key component of finding potential mentors and cultivating valuable professional relationships.

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As entrepreneurs grow their businesses, Lewis said determination and the refusal to fold in the face of failure will enable them to achieve success.

"You have to remember that you are going to have setbacks; there are going to be times where things are not going the way you want them to go. But you can't give up, you have to keep looking for that light at the end of the tunnel."

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

Lewis was named one of the 2015 Enterprising Women of the Year by *Enterprising Women* magazine, "Business Woman of the Year" by Prince George's Chamber of Commerce in 2013, and one of the "50 Women of Power in Business" by Minority Enterprise Executive Council in 2012. 🌟



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Title: President/CEO

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Military Service:

U.S. Army, 1984 to 1989 (Active), 1989 to 2007 (Reserve), Sergeant Major (E-9)

MOS: Civil Affairs

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