

Bobbie Sue Wolk

"With Bobbie Sue's help I was able to unearth the truth about what I am created to do and be. This was an incredibly fulfilling and helpful journey with measurable results!"

~ Jana Powell, **Entrepreneur**



Bobbie Sue Wolk, MS, PCC, CPEC is the first International Coaching Federation (ICF) certified coach in Alaska. Bobbie Sue is a certified executive coach, industrial-organizational psychologist, accountant, and business consultant, adjunct professor at the University of Alaska, published author and entrepreneur with experience in all aspects of running organizations that achieve success.

Bobbie Sue holds an advanced coaching certification from the College of Executive Coaching (Graduate of the Masterful Coach Program). She has an international client base and works throughout Alaska and the lower 48. Bobbie takes a holistic approach to her work with leaders to maximize their potential: personally, professionally, and spiritually to provide the optimal balance in life.

I: Tell us how you came to find your great work, purpose and passion.

BSW: I wish I could tell you it was by some grand design on my part, but that's not true; looking back over **50** years, I see how everything **that I** have been through and **all the decisions that** I've made have brought me to where I am now: living and working with passion and purpose. My purpose is to love, care, and assist **others** in finding their true purpose—to discover and excel in their natural strengths, talents and abilities.

I had a challenging childhood, like many of us, and it was not until age 26 that I realized that I must get my college degree and/or learn a skill to get a job to support myself. I chose to major in accounting for practical reasons—I needed to make sure I could get a job when I graduated! While people and psychology have always been my passion, accounting has served me well. I started my accounting business **over** 20 years ago and it is still going strong.

I went back to get my master's in **Industrial- Organizational Psychology** and then did post graduate work at the College of Executive Coaching and became the first International Coaching Federation (ICF) coach in Alaska! Having had **over** 20 years of business experience and the understanding of running my own business was the perfect gateway into executive coaching.

Now I'm using my left and right brain **every day:** and feel I'm living on purpose, with passion, and above all, with gratitude.

I: What are the hardest challenges you see entrepreneurs having to overcome today?

BSW: I believe the hardest challenge for entrepreneurs today is battling our own mindset. Every day we have a choice on how we are going to respond to the opportunities and challenges that present themselves. Our greatest challenge is to keep a positive attitude and keep our minds open, no matter what is occurring around us. Barbara Fredrickson's research shows that positivity "broadens and builds"

our capacity for creativity and problem solving.

I: As an expert in your field, what is the best advice you can give in our shifting economy and environment?

BSW: Stick to your own 'code of the trail'. Each person must determine their own values and standards of behavior and not detour from them. In a shifting economy we may feel that **it's** okay to cut corners; however, that will not serve you in the long run. Stay strong and steady when all else is shifting and your strength will be a magnet to others.

I: What do you feel are the key skills required for 21st Century business and life success?

BSW: The key skills for business and life success in the 21st century are soft skills, **which is also referred to as** emotional intelligence (EQ). A high IQ may **get you in the door**, but it is a high EQ that will get you **hired and** promoted. EQ will assist you to be a success in every area of your life—not just at work but also at home with your family.

I: What is the most vital element for business growth in the 21st Century?

BSW: I believe that the understanding and practice of emotional intelligence is the vital element for business growth in the 21st Century. We must **be** the change that we want to see around us.

I work with many executives who want to be better leaders but have never considered that they must first become aware of their own tendencies and triggers and first manage those. Once someone can learn to manage their own lives they are much better suited to be an excellent manager and leader of others.

Daniel Goleman tells us that the 4 basic elements to emotional intelligence are:

Self Awareness

Self Management

Social Awareness

Relationship Management

When coaching others I always begin with the process of self-awareness and self-management. These two are key in building empathy, which is considered to be the number 1 characteristic of a successful leader, **according to** the Gallup Organization.

I: How have you seen a change in this element over the last few years?

BSW: Every time I give a talk or workshop on emotional intelligence, invariably, someone in their mid-30's will come up afterward and ask why they are only now learning about EQ. And these people are highly educated.

What I am seeing is an excitement and hunger for this type of learning. I truly believe that in a few more years: everyone will know the difference between IQ and EQ, and hopefully EQ will be taught beginning in kindergarten as a necessary element of education.

I: How do you ensure your own personal and professional growth during these changing times?

BSW: Be a student as well as a teacher. I never stop learning. I love to read and listen to books on tape. I attend coaching conferences, tax seminars and ask tons of questions.

Stay curious and never be embarrassed to ask a question if you don't know something. I have always heard it said that the best way to learn something in a new way is to teach the subject, so **I recently taught** a class at the University of Alaska called, "Managing with Emotional Intelligence". **I had a blast**. It **inspired** me to dig deeper into the research and **I learned** from my students. **The class was well received**

so I get to teach it again this semester.

I believe strongly that everyone has something to teach you if you will only pay attention and stay open. And, again, ask questions!!

I: What are the 3 most important personal tips you could share with us on getting known as an expert in today's crowded market?

BSW: I am not sure I agree that we are in a crowded market. There is so much work out there for an entrepreneur. That being said, I would say that you need to create value. You do this by finding out where there is a problem and finding the solution to that problem.

Don't be in a hurry. Research shows that to be considered an expert in any field takes **approximately** 10,000 hours of practice: **from** Geoff Colvin.

Don't pretend to be something you are not. If you are not an expert, it does not mean you cannot be a success. There are many price points in business models. For example, when I first started my accounting and tax business, I was certainly no expert. However, because of this, I did not charge the prices that an **'expert'** would charge. As my experience grew and the demand for my services grew, I could then raise my price.

The point I want to bring across is that you don't have to have 10,000 hours of experience to be a successful entrepreneur and/or a powerful and motivational leader.

I: What inspires you?

BSW: My #1 inspiration is my beautiful husband, Rick. His expertise is in marketing and entrepreneurship (lucky me) and I watch him help countless others in their quest to start (and grow) their own business. He is working with many people in Alaska and its villages to encourage sustainable economic growth through entrepreneurship.

I am also inspired by business leaders here in Alaska, such as Russell Dick (CEO of Sealaska's, Haa Aani) and Hugh Short (CEO of Alaska Growth Capital) and Jason Evans (Owner of **three entrepreneurial businesses**). These guys are stellar examples of creating economic sustainability through entrepreneurship throughout Alaska.

I suppose some readers may not understand why this is so important to Alaska. Our culture and heritage is what makes Alaska a true "last frontier". If the people who choose to live in their rural villages cannot make a living, they are forced to move to bigger cities and the traditions of their native culture may get lost over time.

The power of entrepreneurship to shape and sustain whole cultures inspires me. The companies that I mentioned are promoting entrepreneurship in Alaska and providing opportunities via Business Plan Competitions and providing seed money (and training) for start-ups. I am so thankful that Rick and I get to work on these initiatives in various capacities (from marketing, coaching, tax help, accounting, etc).

I: How do you hope to inspire others?

BSW: Inspiring others is not something I think about—or at least, it is not what motivates me on a daily basis. However, if my life and journey inspires others to get moving toward their own dream, I would be delighted.

I: What is the legacy you would like to leave the world?

BSW: I have not thought that far **ahead: I am** still living day to day and hopefully the sum total will equal a legacy to be proud of. You remind me of a recent coaching experience I had where the person I was coaching said their goal in life was to be like their grandfather who left the legacy of being a "great

man”. After diving deep on that subject it was clear that the only way to leave a legacy of being a “great man” is to be great *today*.

I try to do my best each day with the opportunities and circumstances I am confronted with. My best may differ day to day, which I think is normal. At the end of each day I ask myself a couple **questions**: **1**. What am I proud of today? **And 2**. What can I do better? The future will take care of itself.

21st Century Success:

Be yourself. Don't try to be like anyone else. You are brought into this world with natural strengths, talents and abilities—make sure you know what they are and let them shine!!

Your choices and actions will determine your future, no matter what circumstance you find yourself in today. Focus on solving problems and creating value for others. Be reliable. Be true to your word.

Follow your ‘code of the trail’.

21st Century Success:

The story I would like to share with you happened **recently**, so it is fresh in my mind.

I was invited to be a speaker at the “Entrepreneurship Edge Boot Camp”, a two day seminar held in Anchorage, **Alaska** for new business owners and for people who are interested in starting their own business.

At first I said no because I had never spoken in front of such a large audience before and I was nervous. I reconsidered because I knew this was a perfect opportunity for me to grow and it was on a topic I was knowledgeable about: emotional intelligence and building your management team.

I did the talk and it was very well received—I know this because of the audience response and the speaker evaluations the organizers collected at the end of the boot camp. Many new doors are opening because of this talk.

The main takeaway is to continually push beyond your comfort level. You never know what you are capable of unless you try. **AND**, you will never do your best work the first time out....it takes practice!!

I also realized I was holding onto old data about myself; primarily, that “I am not good at public speaking.” It is time for me to upgrade to new internal software!!

I challenge you to make sure your view of yourself is correct and not some old software program that needs an upgrade.