



# What is a Business Strategy? Why do You Need One?

Episode #1

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## Lisa Larter (00:01):

Welcome to, She Talks Business. If you're an entrepreneur, business owner or aspiring mogul, chances are you want to learn more about marketing and mastering and monetizing your business. She Talks Business is where you'll learn all of that and more. My name is Lisa Larter and I'm an entrepreneur, high school dropout, wiener dog enthusiast and your host. Let's get started.

## Lisa Larter (00:25):

Hello, hello, hello. Welcome to the first episode of She Talks Business. Today's episode is all about strategy. What is strategy, why do you need one and what are some of the key ingredients to creating a successful strategy? So let's start by talking about what is strategy? Strategy is this thing that feels so big and all-encompassing and intimidating and challenging for so many entrepreneurs. I know I've heard probably a thousand people say to me, I need a strategy, but really strategy is just a plan. Strategy is just a plan or a roadmap that takes you from where you are to where you want to go in the shortest period of time. That's all it is. Your strategy is the difference between where your business is right now and where you want it to be. So I want you to think about strategy almost like you would think about a blueprint for building a house, alright?

## Lisa Larter (01:39)

When you work with somebody who is a strategist like me or you do this on your own, you are essentially becoming the architect for your business and you are creating a blueprint that you can follow in terms of how you build your business. But in order to do that, you need to understand what it is that you're building. Because if you don't understand what it is you're building, then you cannot have a really clearly defined plan, which is going



to make it hard for you to get the end result that you want. You do not start building a house by drawing an outline in the dirt and just randomly pouring some concrete to start a foundation. And you most definitely don't start building walls before you have a foundation. There's a process that you go through when it comes to building a house, right?

**Lisa Larter (02:37):**

You need to have that plan. You need to start with the foundation. You need to frame the house. You need to put the trusses on. You need to put the roof on. You need to make it tight and then you start doing all this stuff inside. If you were to try to build your house by putting the roof up before you did everything else, guess what? Your roof would fall down. So strategy's the same thing. It is the logical sequence of how you get from A to B in the shortest period of time, with the least heavy amount of lifting. Now, I don't mean that to sound like you don't need to do work or work hard, you do. It takes a lot of work, a lot of energy and effort to create a successful business. But if you know shortcuts, then you can actually get to where you're going faster.

**Lisa Larter (03:29):**

And so that is what strategy is supposed to help you do. It helps you to get clarity on where you're going and to identify exactly what you need to do in order to get there. Now, depending on the type of business you have, if you have a larger business, you may work with someone like me or someone else to help you create the strategy. But if your business is just you, let's say you're just starting out and it's just you, you might need to DIY your strategy. You may need to read some books about strategy. You can read my book if you want, Pilot To Profit and learn how to think about the natural progression in your business. You may need to step into that role of architect as well as the role of a general contractor and even a trades person in your own business, just like if you were building your own house.

**Lisa Larter (04:28):**

You would need to learn all of those different roles. So you really, really want to have a plan, that is all strategy is. It's the plan that guides you from where you are to where you want to go. Now, you might be wondering "Well, why do I need a strategy?". You don't need an architect blueprint in

the sense that it's got to be perfect and precise, but you do need some type of a plan. It can be a one-page plan, it can be a 20-page plan, but you need to have both a 360 degree view and a long view vision of where your business is going.

**Lisa Larter (05:11):**

When you're driving a car on the highway, let's say you leave your house and you're headed for, I don't know, Miami Beach and you live in Canada. Well, you're not going to just look directly in front of you all the time, you're going to look way ahead on the horizon. You're going to look in your blind spots. You're going to look in your rear view mirror. You're going to pay attention to your surroundings all around you. You're also going to pay attention to the gauges in your car. You want to have a 360 view as well as a long view of where you're going. It's the same thing in business, you can't be shortsighted and only focus on what's right in front of you. You've got to be able to look at both the big picture and the little picture — and the long goal vision while you are working on what needs to happen in order to achieve that vision.

**Lisa Larter (06:08):**

And just like when you set out on a journey from Canada to Miami Beach, you need gas in your car to reach your destination. Well, guess what? You need gas in your business to reach your destination. And you're going to need to refuel your business on the way, you are going to need resources. You need money and you need tools and you need a strategy. That is what is going to help you get there. I want you to think of strategy as almost like the thing that helps you to uncover the really difficult stuff in your business and helps you to uncover different levers that you can use in your business to reach your goals. I want to tell you a story about a guy named Jackie. Now years ago, my husband and I bought a cottage in Nova Scotia. And right after we bought that cottage, we bought a shed to put all of our outdoor furniture and lawn mower and things like that, so that during the winter months it would be protected.

**Lisa Larter (07:14):**

Well, the local hardware store delivered that shed and they put it on cinder blocks. And when my husband went in the shed after they left with his level, he noticed that the shed wasn't level. And so he was building a

deck in the backyard and he said to me, "We're going to have to go into town tomorrow and buy a jack because I'm going to need to jack up the shed and shimmy it before we start putting stuff inside because it's not level." Well, later that evening, Jackie, this guy who helped us with some yard maintenance dropped by and he's like, "Oh, I see you guys got a shed." And my husband told him the same thing, yeah, we did, but it's not level. I need to go to town, yada yada yada.

**Lisa Larter (07:55):**

Well, Jackie did something that I will never forget. He walked over to our fire pit, he picked up a great big rock that we had brought up from the shore on the ocean and he carried it over to the side of the shed. Then he walked over to where all the lumber was that we were using to build this deck and he grabbed this great big long two by four. And he walked over to the shed and he wedged that two by four underneath the shed and in between the rock and then he stood on the other end of the two by four and lifted the shed up. And he looked at my husband and he said, "You don't need no jack, you can shimmy it right now." That was a powerful lesson for me, because it really made me think that when you've got the right lever, when you know how to use a tool the right way, you can shorten the distance in your strategy.

**Lisa Larter (08:54):**

This is why you need a strategy. Because if you don't know how to identify what levers you need, or you don't know how to identify what you need to do to reach your goal, you will find yourself continuously stuck. And sometimes you need somebody else to help you think about things differently. Sometimes you need somebody to do some type of a pattern interrupt in terms of how you are looking at your business so that you can see a new way to move forward. Maybe they will help you reveal a lever that you didn't know you had to help you in your business. You also need to be thinking about team, when you are thinking about your business strategy and you're looking at the long-term view, then you need to start thinking about how big you want your business to be and who you need with you to help you grow that business.

### **Lisa Larter (09:58):**

Jim Collins in *Good To Great*, talks about having the right people on the bus. When you have the right people on the bus, they don't care where the bus is going, they just want to be on the bus. Well, you're going to need to put some people on your bus and you're going to need to figure out who are the right people on your bus? What are the roles and responsibilities that you need people to fulfill for you? And sometimes that means getting really really really honest with yourself. What are you great at? And what do you need to hire somebody else to do for you? I'm really great at strategy. I am not so passionate about the details. I can do detail work and I can follow up and make sure things get executed. But honestly, it just it's painful for me, it's not one of the things that I love to do, which is why I hire people on my team to help me with the things that I don't love to do so that I can do more of the things that I like to do.

### **Lisa Larter (10:56):**

I'm good at strategy and I'm also good at sales. And so it's easier for me to spend my time selling and working with clients on strategy than it is for me to do some of the things that are not as aligned with my skillset. You need to get honest about what you're good at and what you're not good at — and find people who could do the things that you're not good at, well for you. Strategy is also really, it's a big wild guess at what you predict the future will be. And when you do that, you've got to think about whether or not you are so fixed on that strategy. You're so fixed on the future that maybe you're not willing to make changes or maybe you need to bring the future a little bit closer, move the future out a little bit. You need to think about your environment, think about how your business is changing and be willing to pivot and embrace change.

### **Lisa Larter (11:57):**

Sometimes people are so resistant to change that they derail their strategy because they fail to consider one thing. And of course the example that comes to mind for me, is the founder of Blackberry. I mean, if you think about Blackberry, Blackberry was so popular up until 2006-2007. Everybody had a Blackberry, everybody loved BBM. Everybody loved their keyboard. And then all of a sudden, Steve Jobs and the team at Apple come along with these iPhones and they disrupted the industry. Well, the guy who founded the original Blackberry was so enamored with his

keyboard, that he missed the boat. He missed the opportunity to pivot and change.

**Lisa Larter (12:44):**

So it's important that you are able to constantly look at what is changing in the environment. What do you need to hang onto? What do you need to let go of while you're building this business? You also want to think about guardrails, a client that I worked with, calls them guardrails. And I love, love, love that language because really guardrails are... What are the guardrails that you put in place to prevent you from going off the road? So sometimes guardrails is working with a coach or it's working with a mentor or an accountability partner that's going to help you stay the course. You want to ensure if you are a creative, visionary entrepreneur and you are really great at big ideas and you're really not so great at follow-through, that you put some type of structure in place to guide yourself along the way and to build in some accountability so that you or someone will do what needs to be done to get to where you're going.

**Lisa Larter (13:53):**

If you don't do this, it's going to take you significantly longer to reach your desired outcome, because you're not going to be accountable to the direction that you are going. When you have a clarity in your strategy, you can really focus on doing the right things. When you don't have clarity in the strategy, there's a really good chance that you will spend a lot of unnecessary energy on things that do not work. And when you spend a lot of unnecessary energy on things that do not work, guess what? It ends up taking you significantly longer to reach your desired outcome. And in some cases you never get there because you're continuing to spend unnecessary energy on things that do not work. Remember to evaluate when something isn't working and be discerning about whether or not you continue to do it or not.

**Lisa Larter (14:57):**

The last thing that I would say is, strategy does two things that are really important. One, it gives you a sense of confidence, in terms of having a plan. And two, it allows you to measure the progress that you are making towards reaching your goal. It allows you to look at what you have done so far along the way and to be able to measure and evaluate how that is

working for you and it allows you to re-strategize what you need to do to get the rest of the distance.

**Lisa Larter (15:33):**

So let's talk now a little bit about, what are the components of a strategic framework? Because we've talked a lot about what is strategy and why you need strategy, but okay, Lisa, I need a plan but what the heck goes into that plan?

**Lisa Larter (15:46):**

I would say that there are really four things that go into that plan. One, analysis. And analysis means that you've taken the time to really think about your business and look at where you're at and really identify what is not working. It's also about considering the possibilities and distilling down priorities around how to chunk your work over the year. A lot of times what I see people do is they create a plan and they try to do everything in Q1. They don't do any analysis and because they don't do any analysis on the true way to move forward, they end up stuck in analysis paralysis.

**Lisa Larter (16:31):**

The second thing you need is vision. You need a really clear picture of what you want your life to look like in 2, 5 and 10 years from now. And let me tell you, it doesn't matter that it's 2, 5 and 10 years, that's just a gauge for you. 10 years can come in 10 months, but it's your ability to look into the future and dream about what it is you're creating and really think about how do you want to spend your time? You only get 24 hours in a day, it is a non-renewable asset. Your days are numbered just like mine, which means you need to really think about how do you want to spend your time? How many hours do you want to work in a week? And how much profit does this business you're building need to generate in order for you to have the lifestyle that you aspire to have and be able to work what you want. What is the vision that you have for your business? What is the purpose that your business is serving and how can you stay connected to this purpose? If you go to my blog and you search backstory, there's a story there about why I'm passionate about helping business owners. And I'll give you the Coles Notes version. When I was a kid, I was really sick. I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when I was 13 years old. And prior to that, I used to hemorrhage from my bowel really, really bad.

### **Lisa Larter (18:02):**

And one time I hemorrhaged so bad that I ended up in ICU for a week because I lost so much blood. And when that happened, my mom's boss was a complete ass to her. He wouldn't let her leave work early to take me to the hospital. He gave her a really hard time about taking time off work. He basically told her, "You have problems while I have problems and my problems mean I need you here." And I remember how stressful that was for my mom. And I also remember deciding that I would never be in that situation in my life where my work did not allow me to be there for the people that mattered most to me.

### **Lisa Larter (18:42):**

And so when I work with small business owners and I see them working really hard and not making enough money to support themselves or I see them working really hard and missing out on time with their family, I really want to make a difference in their lives. I want to know that I'm helping them create wealth for their future. And then I'm helping them to establish a lifestyle that supports their goals in a business that is making a difference. So that keeps me anchored in terms of what the purpose is. So when you think about your business, do you really know what the purpose is? Because money will only take you so far money. Once you have money, money actually becomes not important and so money isn't meaningful enough for you to keep going. The purpose of what you do has to matter more to you than money alone.

### **Lisa Larter (19:38):**

The third part of a strategic framework is measurable objectives. You need to have measurements of success, not only measurements of success, but measurements in general so that you know where you're at and where you're going, because one of the other things that you need to be able to do and that's going to be a completely separate episode. Episode number two, is really how strategy can expose the gap from where you are and where you want to be — but so do those measurable objectives.

Measurable objectives allow you to see where you're at and it allows you to see where you're progressing to and how far you have to go to reach your goals...and whether or not you need to reassess something on that journey. Some of the things that you want to measure are your sales goals, your sales current reality, your profit goals, your profit current reality. The

size of your team and your development goals for that team, your marketing goals, in terms of your reach, how much traffic comes to your website, how many people are on your mailing list, how large is your social reach?

**Lisa Larter (20:43):**

What else do you want to measure? Anything that essentially allows you to measure progress in your business. You're going to want to set milestones that you can celebrate on the way to reaching your goals. And you're going to have to figure out what are the most important KPIs I call them KPIs, Key Performance Indicators. Now, I just listed a whole bunch of things, for me in my business the stuff that is the absolute most important is: what are my top line sales? What are my expenses? And what are my bottom line profits? Those three things are the cornerstones of running a business. Because if my sales are not high enough to cover my expenses and generate a profit, then I'm either spending too much money or I'm not charging enough. So those to me are critical. The marketing indicators for me are traffic to my website. They're my social media reach and the engagement that I have with my marketing. So I'm not suggesting that you need to slice and dice this into something that is impossible to track, but it does matter that you're able to measure things and objectively look at how your business is performing.

**Lisa Larter (21:58):**

And then the last part is really the tactics or the plan. And this to me is where you reverse engineer the plan and figure out what is the right thing to do to meet your goals. So let me give you an example. When I first started my business, of course, I wanted to reach six figures in sales, just like anybody else who starts a business. And the tactic that I put in place to do that was I wanted to coach 10 people and I was going to charge anywhere from \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year at that time to work with those people.

**Lisa Larter (22:29):**

And for 60 days, I said, sounded like a broken record. Just say, I'm looking for 10 people who want to work with me and guess what? That one tactic allowed me to generate \$160,000 in sales, my first year of business. But I got really clear on what I needed. I wasn't trying to sell \$7 eBooks, \$47

programs, \$299 programs and group coaching and single coaching. I focused on one thing. I found my lever that was going to help me reach my objective and I went all in on that one thing. That's what the plan is really about. Now, you may have more than one thing. You may need to break your list of tactics into categories and then into action steps and then schedule them based on the quarter and based on the team members that you have to help you. It's a good idea to have a visual reminder.

**Lisa Larter (23:26):**

I like to design these one page quarterly strategy plans that help people to remember what the priorities are for that quarter, so that you can really focus on those priorities because entrepreneurs have lots of big ideas. And it's really easy to not stay the course and all of a sudden be focused on something else when really you had the right tactical plan, you just didn't stick with it long enough. So don't let yourself forget what you intended to do.

**Lisa Larter (23:59):**

Now, there are some key elements that you are going to want to consider in your strategy. And if you go to my website, [lisalarter.com/e1](http://lisalarter.com/e1), for this episode, there's a PDF download it. Don't worry you don't need to give me your email address, you can sign up for my weekly insights if you want, but this PDF is just a download that you can click and download.

**Lisa Larter (24:22):**

And these are really the key elements that I think you need to consider in your strategy in a modern day world. So one is, your business model. You need to know what your business model is, you need to know what products and services you're selling and how many buyers you need in order to reach your goals. Number two, you need to know who your buyer is. You need to understand who the right buyer is, what problems they have, how your product or service provides them with a solution and the best way to serve them. Number three is, you need to know where your leads come from. So your marketing efforts should be in support of lead generation. But if you don't know where your leads come from and where the best leads come from, then there's a really good chance your marketing tactics won't be as successful as they could be.

### **Lisa Larter (25:21):**

So I know a lot of leads come to me when I speak. I also know a lot of leads come to me from referrals. And I also know a lot of leads come to me through my marketing efforts on social media. So I don't spend any money on print ads because I don't get business that way. And I don't spend any money on radio ads because I don't get business that way. But you don't know where your leads come from unless you ask people how they found out about you. So it's really important as part of your strategy that you predict where you think your leads are going to come from, but then you inspect what you expect by asking people where they found out about you.

### **Lisa Larter (26:04):**

The fourth thing is your content. So I like to think of content as the magnet that attracts leads to your business. You want that content to show up in the places where your leads are. The content you create, elevates your visibility and makes what you do desirable to others. Which means it's important that you know what content topics resonate with your buyers and what formats work best for you. So this podcasting thing, this is a brand new format for me, but it kind of sort of isn't because I'm speaking – and I've been speaking on stages for 20 some years. So I know that I can speak in a way that resonates with people, but maybe speaking isn't comfortable for you, maybe writing is better for you. You need to figure out what format works best for you in terms of creating content that resonates with your buyers and then invest in that.

### **Lisa Larter (27:03):**

Number five is your website. I want you to think of your website as your retail store in the largest shopping center in the world, which is on the internet. Your website is what makes or breaks first impressions with your future customer. So the messaging and the impression that you make on your website really matters. Just like when we go to a mall, we do not go into every store. We walk by stores and we immediately assume that store does not have what we're looking for. People do the same thing on the internet. They search something, they end up on your website, they click back. They click back without ever looking around, they bounce because they've made a snap judgment that you do not have what they're looking

for. So never underestimate the importance of that first impression that your website makes on behalf of your business.

**Lisa Larter (27:53):**

And then number six is your social reach. So social media is like being at the largest market in the world. It's where people spend their time. It's where they seek out recommendations, they ask friends and colleagues, "Who do you know that does this?" They consume content there, they're addicted to social media on their devices. They're on there all the time, which means that you need to have a strong and effective social presence included in your strategy. And you have to be careful that you don't fall into the trap of obsessively consuming everybody else's content. That you're really clear about why you're on social media and what your intentions are around being of service to others so that it does not be a time suck, that is one of those things that distracts you from what is most important.

**Lisa Larter (28:45):**

So when you combine these six things, when you look at all six of these things, your business model, your buyer, where your leads come from, your content, your website and your social reach. When you combine that with your overarching strategy and those measurable objectives, this all becomes really instrumental in helping you to identify and develop the tactics that will help you make your strategy a reality. So when you go to my website, [lisalarter.com/e1](https://lisalarter.com/e1), to download this PDF, there is a summary of those six things. And there's also a bunch of questions that you should be able to answer. Where am I right now? Where am I going? Who is my buyer? What am I selling? What are my KPIs? How do I generate leads? How do people find out about me? How do I use social media to attract my buyer? How does my website work better for me? What are my first priorities to get closer to my destination?

**Lisa Larter (29:49):**

This is a little bit of a guide. It's a guide for you if you are DIYing your strategy. And it's a really good guide if you're already in the trenches to press pause and actually rethink your strategy, because maybe you're in the midst of a strategy that isn't working and you need to assess what you need to do differently. Strategy is not so big and all-encompassing,

strategy is really just figuring out the plan to help you get to where you want to go, but you cannot figure out a plan and figure out how to get to where you want to go if you don't take time to actually think. So, if you take one thing away from this episode, I want you to take away time to think. Time to think by yourself, time to ask yourself questions and really get clear on where you're going and what you want to accomplish in this business of yours.

**Lisa Larter (30:48):**

I walk almost every... Well I do. I walk every day, either on a treadmill or my favorite places to walk outside by myself for a good 40 to 60 minutes every day. And I love that alone time for just thinking about my business, thinking about what I want, what's working, what's not working, how to strategize, how to re-strategize, how to prioritize and re-prioritize. These are things that are really important for you to do as a business owner, to strengthen the muscle of being able to trust and rely on yourself, to figure things out. Because at the end of the day, that's all strategy is, it's the plan you're putting in place to figure things out so that you can build the business that you really want to build.

**Lisa Larter (31:35):**

And that's it my friends, I hope that was super super helpful. The next episode, we're going to talk about how to expose the gap from where you are and where you want to be — and a little bit about psychology around why that matters. Because a lot of people get tripped up in their strategy and I'm hoping that I can help you not get tripped up, but I'm hoping I can help you give your strategy a great, big, huge bear hug so that you can get really close and intimate with it and make your business do what you want it to do long-term. So if you've listened to this whole show, I want to say, thank you, thank you, thank you. It is my first one, so I hope it was valuable and helpful to you. And if it was, I'd love to hear from you, you can email me [lisa@lissalarter.com](mailto:lisa@lissalarter.com) and let me know.

**Lisa Larter (32.24):**

Obviously, if you loved it, please leave us a review on whatever podcast platform you are listening to and share it with somebody who needs help us strategy, because we're going to do a whole series around strategy. This is not just a one and done, I've got a lot to talk to you about when it comes

to strategy. We're going to talk about the foundation framing, protection and levers that you need in your strategy. We're going to talk about who your strategy serves and why that matters. We're going to talk about the anatomy of a lead gen strategy and where marketing fits into your strategy and what I call the second sales strategy and why, if you're still following last year strategy, it's likely not working because...everything changed in 2020.

**Lisa Larter (33:11):**

Alright. Thank you for being here. I am starting to ramble. I am going to stop now. Thanks again, and I hope to have you back next time.

**Lisa Larter (33:21):**

Thank you for joining me for this episode of She Talks Business. If you enjoyed the show, you know the drill, leave us a review, tell someone about it and join the conversation on social media. Thanks for listening and until next time remember, done is always better than perfect.



Lisa Larter is a Business Strategist, Digital Marketing Expert, Author and Speaker.

The Lisa Larter Group helps their clients to formulate marketing strategies that support their business goals and objectives. Lisa provides consulting & advisory services, and implementation services including: social media & content management, book marketing, and website design.