



## The Role of Leadership in Your Business Strategy with Jackie Foo

Episode #12

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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 (00:24):

This is a near and dear to my heart episode because I am having a conversation with a woman by the name of Jackie who has been one of the most influential leaders in my professional career. I was privileged enough to work with Jackie Foo at Clearnet and Telus when I was working in the corporate world. And to say that she influenced my leadership and my understanding of big business would be an understatement.

### Lisa Larter (01:03):

I wanted to have a conversation with Jackie because for many small business owners, at least my experience has been over the last decade and a bit working with small business owners, leadership seems to be an afterthought. Leadership seems to be that thing that people ask about after they've checked all the other boxes. They've got top line revenue, they've got profitability, they've got a team, they've got their marketing jam going on. And now all of a sudden they're questioning what type of leader they should be. And leadership really is the driving force behind your strategy.



### **Lisa Larter (01:43):**

And so this conversation is really a conversation with an executive who understands leadership from a large organizational perspective, and yet can have a conversation with me about the role of leadership for small business. You're going to get some really great takeaways from this episode, and you're probably going to think a little bit differently about how you lead not only yourself, but your team, and your customers. So grab a notebook. You're probably going to want to take notes on this one.

### **Lisa Larter (02:21):**

And if it sounds a little bit different, it's because I recorded this with a video too, so my mic wasn't as close to me as normal. And we will be sharing this video on LinkedIn. So if you're not connected to me on LinkedIn, Lisa Larter... I'm sorry, it's not Lisa Larter. It's [LinkedIn.com/in/lisalarter](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisalarter). You can watch the video there too if you would like to.

### **Lisa Larter (02:46):**

Now, on another note, if you are one of those people who's been listening to this podcast and you've been texting me or you've been messaging me and you've been telling me how great it is, and how much you love it, and how much you learn from every episode, I have two asks for you. One, please share an episode with your community. And two, if you haven't already written a review, I would really appreciate if you would write a review. My fragile little ego is jazzed every single time I read one of those reviews. So if you would write a review for me, you will make my day. All right, let's get started on this episode. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed conversing with one of my dearest friends, oldest colleagues, and most influential leader in my career.

### **Lisa Larter (03:37):**

Hello everyone, and welcome to a super, super special edition of She Talks Business. Now, normally when I record She Talks Business I don't use the video. I just use the audio. But today is a very, very special episode. And therefore, I am sharing the video ahead of the podcast release. And for those of you who are watching this video on LinkedIn, you're going to recognize a familiar face if you know me from my previous life.

**Lisa Larter (04:12):**

So the first series on She Talks Business is all about strategy. And I thought there was no better person for me to have a conversation with about strategy and leadership than my old boss and my favorite mentor, now colleague, girlfriend, dearest friend, Jackie Foo. So Jackie, thank you for saying yes to doing this. I'm so glad you're here.

**Jackie Foo (04:42):**

My pleasure, Lisa. I couldn't think of a better way to spend my Sunday afternoon.

**Lisa Larter (04:48):**

It's going to be fun. It's funny, I have a memory of you that changed my life. And I don't know if you even know how impactful this moment was for me. But there was a time when we were both working at Clearnet before it was acquired by Telus. And I had to give somebody a, I think it was a final written warning. And you were my new boss and you were like, "I'm going to come and sit with you while you do this." And you're sitting beside me and you've got this piece of paper, and you've got a red pen. And I'm going through this final written warning with this manager on my team, and I'm feeling a little bit of pressure because my new boss is sitting right beside me. And out of the corner of my eye all I can see is red, red, red. You're writing all over this piece of paper. And in my head all I can think of is, "I am so done. I am doing such a bad job. This is going just sideways."

**Lisa Larter (05:51):**

Finish the session. The individual left, and you said, "Okay, I've got some feedback for you." And you proceeded to go through that document, this was probably almost 20 years ago Jackie, and you proceeded to go through that document and give me positive feedback on every single thing that I did right in that session. And I think there was one suggestion you had for how I could improve. That was life changing for me. And that is the best example of your leadership on a really micro level that I can think of, because it was completely unexpected. Where did you learn to do that?

**Jackie Foo (06:36):**

Well first of all let me start off by saying I don't remember that at all. And 20 years later I don't think I've used a red pen and a Post-it note. First of all I

really just think that we as leaders have responsibility to build self-esteem and to build relationships. And if I'm going to enter into a relationship with you, and I need you to become a better coach, a better leader, then I need to tell you as much about what you're doing well as what you need to change, improve, refine.

**Jackie Foo (07:08):**

So I have these really simple models that I use. And I sort of do this thing in my head. It's called the 1 to 10 rule. And I say to myself, on a scale of 1 to 10, how good was that presentation? How good was that coaching session? And if I believe, and I probably did if I only gave you one piece of feedback that was actually constructive, I probably thought you did a 9 out of 10 job on that interaction. And so I'm going to work really hard to find nine good things to repeat the next time you go in. And maybe I would raise the bar on future conversations, but for this first conversation it sounds like we were just getting to know each other at that time.

**Jackie Foo (07:51):**

I'm looking at the bigger picture objective, which is I need to build a strong relationship of trust, a strong relationship of partnership. And there's probably some legitimately good things that you did, don't forget I don't remember this, that I would want you to repeat. But don't we just want that in business in general? Don't we want our people to repeat the things that help them to be successful? And not always about the things that don't work. Because if we spend all our time there, then how are we building confidence and self-esteem in your team member?

**Lisa Larter (08:22):**

Yeah, absolutely. I remember it because you were my new boss. And any time you have a new boss, there is a certain level of apprehension because you don't know what to expect. And in that moment, I didn't know what to expect. And what I got was completely different than what I expected. And that has always stuck in my mind as an example of how you lead. Now I know that's a very, very small low level example.

**Jackie Foo (08:55):**

Right, right.

### **Lisa Larter (08:56):**

But it is an indicator of your style of bringing out the best in people. And so, I want to talk to you today about leadership. And I want to go back to a book that we read together probably two decades ago, *The Path of Least Resistance* for leaders by Robert Fritz. And one of the things that he talks about in that book is structural tension and how organizations have to set goals and look at where they're at and then either lower their standards or rise up.

### **Lisa Larter (09:23):**

And I want to talk to you about leadership from a larger organizational perspective, because I believe from my own experience working with you and working inside of corporations, that leaders inside of big organizations think about leadership differently than small business owners. And the work that I do today is very much around helping small business owners, but few of those small business owners are thinking about leadership as a lever for driving results. So I really want to speak to the highest level, and I want to speak to that highest level because I want to inspire business owners to really think about how they can move up in terms of their own leadership skills to get better results out of their business.

### **Lisa Larter (10:09):**

So, I want you to talk to me a little bit about strategy and shared vision, and the role of a leader. Because I think that sometimes for small business owners, they don't really have clarity. They're not able to crystallize exactly where it is that they want to go. So talk to me about why that's important and how it relates to leadership.

### **Jackie Foo (10:33):**

Right. Well I think so many times leaders have their strategy in their head. And I don't think that you can really bring strategy to life unless it is shared. So that would be language that I'd use, and clearly we are cut from the same cloth. And in order for there to be shared vision, and not it being sort of cliché. Shared vision to me is having a very crystal clear picture about what success looks like. And when I think about success, I don't think necessarily about a list of motherhood statements about, we want to be the best customer service organization that sells the most product. That's not to me

what shared vision is, because you could find that sort of platitude in any organization. They're all going to say the same thing.

**Jackie Foo (11:25):**

But to me, shared vision is about really seeing, what does success look like when you arrive? So I go back to when you were running your store. How do you know that your store is successful? So when I'm crystallizing a vision with a director or a team member working on a project, I want them to see, and that means all of your senses, how does it visually look? What does it sound like? How do you feel?

**Jackie Foo (11:53):**

So if we were talking about success, if we go back to when you used to run a wireless business, how do you know that that is a success? What's the picture of success? And so you might say to me, "Well, Jackie, success looks like I have lots of traffic going into my store." And I'd say, "Okay, and what do you see the customers doing?" "I see the customers interacting with my staff. I see my staff asking questions. I see them filling up their baskets and then adding on more product. I see customers that are smiling. I see them going to that register. I see them coming back in my next vision."

**Jackie Foo (12:31):**

But when I talk about shared vision, it really is bringing your picture to life. Now that's going to translate into a bunch of statements, but as you're bringing your organization along, I think strategy is iterative. It just keeps getting crystallized, and crystallized, and crystallized. And that's how you stretch your business to become better, because the picture becomes more refined every time you go back and talk about that shared vision with your team.

**Jackie Foo (12:59):**

I don't know if that answers your question, but I think everyone needs to know what does good look like? What does good feel like? What do the metrics of good, how are they articulated? And if you want your organization... Of course I say organization because I'm used to [crosstalk 00:13:18]-

**Lisa Larter (13:17):**

Yeah, for sure. It's the same. Well, this is an organization.

**Jackie Foo (13:21):**

Agreed, but I need every team member to come along. And so the only thing that's going to propel them forward to come with you is if they know exactly where they're going.

**Lisa Larter (13:32):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative), right. And so, how do you as a small business owner, how do you determine what the right vision is? So let's talk a little bit about metrics and models, because one of the things that I always say to people is, "What's your business model?" And a lot of times they don't know what their business model is. And then when I ask people what are the metrics that matter the most to you, or what are your key performance indicators, a lot of times people are focused on the wrong things. They're focused on dumb stuff, vanity likes. How many people liked my Instagram post? You can't pay your freaking mortgage, you can't hire an employee with Instagram.

**Lisa Larter (14:09):**

So can you talk to me about metrics and how to figure out what business model you're in. In a big organization where you are selling lots of different products and services, there's several models inside of the organization. So how do you get clear on what model to focus on, and what do you think are some of the most important metrics that people look at?

**Jackie Foo (14:36):**

Yeah. I think business, whether it's in a big corporation or a small business, if I really wanted to dumb it down and make it simple, it's all about revenue and growing your revenue, and then managing your expenses and making sure that when those things add up that you have more revenue than expenses. Again, the very most simplistic terms.

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

Right.

### **Jackie Foo (14:58):**

However, there are certain things that are what I call levers. And those levers drive bigger revenue. And so all of those levers are about acute focus on making sure you know what the levers of your business are. Are there five key things that drive the biggest profitability, that drive the biggest sales, that drive the biggest engagement, because engagement of your team members drives... So, you kind of need to know your levers of success.

### **Jackie Foo (15:33):**

And if you don't spend all your time ruthlessly prioritizing working on those levers, you're going to be working on things that are not going to drive... They might be work, busy things, it could be important things, but they're not the things that are going to drive the success of your organization, or the success of your department, or the success of your small business. And I think it is a lot about the discipline of staying on those levers and not trying to do everything, especially in a big organization. We have a million projects that we want to get done, a million initiatives, and it is truly about what are the priorities that drive my vision, what are the levers that drive those revenue top line growth, and what are the things that I have to watch out for that are not causing my expense line to really, really grow?

### **Lisa Larter (16:26):**

Yeah, that was a really important thing that I think I learned from George Cope, when he was still at Clearnet and he used to host those all employee meetings and he would talk about these are the three things that are the absolute most important things that we have to do as an organization. And I think in a small business, sometimes what happens is you do have a busy list instead of a priority list. And when you look at your priorities, your priorities are usually the hardest things to do. They're not the easiest things to do. And so you want to feel like you're accomplishing stuff so you start to cross off all the easy stuff, but then you're never really focusing on your priorities. So it's totally... It's really, really important as a leader inside of your organization that you know what those priorities are and that you can convey them to the people that are working with you.

### **Jackie Foo (17:21):**

Agreed.

**Lisa Larter (17:22):**  
Absolutely.

**Jackie Foo (17:22):**

I think you just sort of for me separated the difference between strategy and tactic. And I think that what happens is we often like the tactics because it makes us feel like we're getting stuff done. And there may be some quick wins, really. There's nothing wrong with working out a tactic, but the tactics have to roll up to the big picture strategy, always going back to the priorities, always going back to, am I working at the right level?

**Jackie Foo (17:52):**

You and I used to talk about high payoff activities and just for your group. The definition of a high payoff activity is something that's worth your rate of pay. And what I mean by that is if you are the business owner, or the head of a department, or a president, not all things are worth your rate of pay. It doesn't mean that you can't do the work of the person in your team, but it's not a good investment of your time and resources. So you always have to know your own value.

**Lisa Larter (18:24):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (18:24):**

And I think that's really important.

**Lisa Larter (18:27):**

Yeah, absolutely. You've worked for a lot of organizations in a lot of different roles. Can you, successfully I might add, can you give me an example of a lever that you chose intentionally to get a result and how it worked for you? Can you think of a lever that you intentionally kind of used in order to really reach a big picture initiative?

**Jackie Foo (18:59):**

That's a good one. I'm going to so many different places in my mind.

**Lisa Larter (19:06):**

Maybe go back to when we first started working together. Because I remember, Jackie Foo, "you work for the best vision... Corporate stores has the best vision in the whole company." And you were like a broken record, but guess what? We became the best performing, best place to work inside of the organization. So for me, one of the levers that you were pressing on at that very beginning was the culture formation and belief to really rally people. That's an example that I can think of. I'm not sure if you can think of another one that you intentionally used back then. Because we did some pretty amazing stuff.

**Jackie Foo (19:45):**

Yeah, we really did. I think first of all when you're building an organization, trying to go back to that time and actually contextualize for your audience. I know you told me not to do that, but I'm trying. When I think about the experience that we wanted in our stores, a lever for me, a natural place that I go, would be learning.

**Lisa Larter (20:11):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (20:12):**

And the reason that was a really important lever for our organization that we worked at, or the organization sense is that, it's not about the lesson itself. So you're going to send people to sales training, and then you're going to send people to leadership training perhaps. I don't know, in small businesses you might. But what happens is, you have to sort of decide what is the journey that you want your customer to go through? Most businesses I'm assuming have customers. And it is about a deliberate customer experience from the time that your customer enters your digital space, or your retail store, or your social media journey.

**Jackie Foo (21:03):**

And the lever for me would be getting everyone to take the training to drive that journey over, and over, and over again. And so the lever for me was creating a set of skills that allowed this journey to occur, but not in a programmed robotic kind of way. It is in fact giving people boundaries to say, "This is what we do. This is how we create an experience within our store."

So as an example, in my current world I have this vision right now which is about creating customers for life.

**Lisa Larter (21:48):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (21:50):**

And so then that is my shared vision. How do we create customers for life? Not a transaction, but an ongoing relationship where a customer comes back over, and over, and over again. And one of my levers is to train everybody on the things that drive customers for life, and then to add on the metrics that show that this is a customer for life, whether it's the size of their basket, how often they come back, how do we talk to them across that journey? And so in wireless is an example, the area that you shared, it's not just about the event of that sale, that phone. It's about how do we follow up with that individual to ensure that they're using all of the self-serve tools to manage their bills? How do we make sure that they know if they break their phone that they should be coming back to us and not going to some third-party organization? How do we make sure over that journey that we're touching that customer not just because they need a new phone, but because all the way along that two year relationship, that we've checked in with that customer.

**Lisa Larter (22:58):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (22:59):**

So back to, I'm trying to go to this was my vision, but the lever that I used to drive that vision is a set of training, metrics, score cards, and sort of events that managed that customer journey.

**Lisa Larter (23:14):**

Right, your team has to have the right skills and competencies to positively affect the journey, which ultimately impact the results.

**Jackie Foo (23:21):**

Right.

**Lisa Larter (23:21):**

But if you as a leader are not clear on the journey, then you cannot match the skills to the experience to affect the outcome.

**Jackie Foo (23:30):**

Correct.

**Lisa Larter (23:31):**

And so that to me-

**Jackie Foo (23:31):**

That is correct.

**Lisa Larter (23:32):**

...is the biggest part of the lever, is you can't actually pick a lever if you don't know what you're trying to do. It's like you get in a car. If you don't know what pedal is to step on the gas and which is the brake, well you're going to have a hard time driving if nobody's ever explained to you what you should push to get what outcome you want.

**Jackie Foo (23:52):**

Right.

**Lisa Larter (23:52):**

And it's the same thing in business. And I think that a lot of small business owners, if they're like me they reach a certain level of management inside of an organization but they were never, say, the president of that big organization. And so there is a skill that is required to develop the big picture strategy.

**Lisa Larter (24:17):**

One of the things that I talk to Cassy on my team about all the time is having to teach our team to think big picture and tactically. Because I feel like sometimes people get stuck in the tactics without understanding the correlation to the big picture. It's like they can't think spatially, they can't think about all of it as one. And perhaps that is something that I haven't articulated well as a leader to help them connect the dots. I'm not sure.

**Jackie Foo (24:48):**

Right. I think that's a very good point, and I do think that's the job of the leader, because everybody has different roles in that shared vision. And one of the things I like to do on a monthly basis is I do this thing called the All Hands Meeting. And I bring together all of my team members, and they're all doing very, very, very different work. Some people could be working on systems and process, some people could be working on incentives, some people could be working on training. They're all different. But one of the reasons why I have this all hands meeting monthly is because the job of the leader is to communicate how each of those folks contribute to the vision.

**Jackie Foo (25:31):**

And so, I know for my team they're probably just thinking I'm giving them an update because that's sort of how it's positioned. But what I'm actually doing is to talk about the contributions of those folks that are driving this shared vision. And it's this constant communication of celebrating contributions and highlighting strengths, and ultimately giving them hope that what they do actually matters.

**Lisa Larter (26:00):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (26:02):**

In this all hands meeting every month, I'm also calling out the stars of the contribution. And they could be people that were never on the radar, because in my organization it's very large. I'm sure that's not the same as a small business, but how you manifest that self in a small business is catch the little things and celebrate them. And so that people feel like, whoa, it wasn't this little tactical thing that I did. This is a brick in the wall for the entire building of the vision that I'm trying to accomplish.

**Lisa Larter (26:35):**

Right. So Jackie, you have profoundly influenced my leadership style. However, your natural tendency, your natural given talent as a leader is to find the good and inspire. I'm like a mechanic; I go in and I see everything that's broken, everything that's wrong. And so, if you're the type of person as a leader who always sees what's wrong, how do you train yourself to see what's right? How do you get better at inspiring through looking for the

success versus... It's like you can get stuck in this never ending cycle of, I've got to fix this, and this is wrong, and this is wrong, and this is wrong, and this is wrong. And because you're so focused on trying to fix what's broken, it's like you have tunnel vision. You can't see all the stuff going on around you that's good. How do you change that as a leader?

**Jackie Foo (27:35):**

Right. So first of all your strengths can also be your weaknesses. So let me start there. And so that's why you and I work well together, because I inherently see the world half glass full, and I inherently want to see the best in people. That's just who I am. And so I hire people around me because that's my gap, because I know we have to see the stuff that's broken too. So that's not a criticism, it's just a different set of skills. And together, those make a perfect symphony.

**Jackie Foo (28:11):**

So how do I then become an authentic leader, because I don't walk in and I don't see all these things that are broken? I ask the people to see... And naively, my leadership style today is very different than even the time that we worked together. I see many more things wrong today, but how it manifests itself is I believe in public praise and private change. So I'll call out those critical things that are broken, but I certainly won't do it in a forum. I will pull that person to the side and I'll try to do it in a way that protects the self-esteem, and make it about the thing that could be improved, not the person that can be improved. And I think that's really important. People will always be okay acknowledging that things could be done differently, or these are alternative ways of looking at the business problem. But I think you have to do both. I don't think you can only see the world through half glass full.

**Lisa Larter (29:07):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (29:07):**

So to your point about, how do we help all of your clients not to go to the path of what's broken all the time, they could use my 1 to 10 rule, because how broken is it really?

**Lisa Larter (29:20):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (29:20):**

If I step back and say, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how was that executed?" They're going to have to work really hard. If they're tendency is to see the stuff that's broken, their area of opportunity is to see the stuff that's right, positive. And in the same way that I hire people around me that see the stuff that's broken, they can bring in other people to say, "This is not my natural tendency. You help me see the good things." So part of it is maybe they could get someone to share in perfecting and balancing their natural tendencies.

**Jackie Foo (29:55):**

And the other thing is to go back to the metrics, because really, do the things that are wrong contribute to the success or failure of the business? Who cares? If it's something that's not exactly the way that you would do it, but it's not going to impact your bottom line, then don't sweat the small stuff.

**Lisa Larter (30:16):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (30:16):**

And I always say to my team, and anyone who reports to me understands. So I always say, when people bring me issues I go, "Okay. Is it a 10 or is it a 2." They go, "It's a 2." I go, "Okay, then don't worry about it."

**Lisa Larter (30:27):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (30:28):**

Only focus on the 10s. Don't worry about it. And if you keep praising the 10s, people repeat the things that you want. You shouldn't spend any time on the things that you don't want unless the thing that is critically broken is a 10. Then you have to have that conversation.

**Lisa Larter (30:44):**

Right. I always say, I have a client of mine who's ridiculously smart, and I always say to her, "Don't kill a mosquito with a sledgehammer."

**Jackie Foo (30:51):**

Right, exactly.

**Lisa Larter (30:52):**

So it's the same kind of idea. If it's a 1 or a 2 out of 10 you don't have to reprioritize your whole day over it. But again, you cannot do that if you don't have clarity on the metrics, and if you don't have clarity on the experience that you want your customer to have.

**Jackie Foo (31:10):**

That's right.

**Lisa Larter (31:10):**

Because what is a 2 in your business might be a 10 in another business depending on the experience that they want someone to have. So I'm going to... This is an example, but to illustrate, if I go into a retail store and the bathroom isn't pristine, I am not as bothered by it as if I go into a restaurant and the bathroom isn't pristine. Because in a restaurant, the food... I am looking at the restroom as an extension of the kitchen. And so, as a customer on that journey it feels like if that's dirty the kitchen's dirty. Whereas in a retail store, I think I probably would cut them a little bit of slack. At least I know I have in the past. I might not like it, but I don't stop shopping there. But in a restaurant I might stop eating there. So it's important that you don't prescribe the same rating to every business, because it could be different to your customer.

**Jackie Foo (32:10):**

But I think that that is key. And even in big business this is some of our areas of opportunity too. We have to see things through the eyes of the customer so often, we believe our own stories. And we write our own journey, and we write our own vision, and we don't test. And I think about the title of your book, Pilot to Profit. That word pilot is so critically important, because even when we think we get it right, we don't have it 100% right until you test it with your real customer.

**Lisa Larter (32:42):**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (32:43):**  
So even when we launch things, whether we launch a training, whether we launch a journey in the store, whether we launch a transaction that's going to change in our retail stores, really the last mile of perfection is before you harden that and plug it in to your day-to-day business, I always test amongst our region, amongst a set of stores. It depends on what the initiative, but testing with your customers is really, really, really important. And that could be testing if your customer is your employee or testing with the actual customer who's buying your product.

**Lisa Larter (33:16):**  
Yeah.

**Jackie Foo (33:17):**  
Because your example of the bathroom, that's through your lens.

**Lisa Larter (33:21):**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (33:21):**  
But maybe if you happened to be retailing, I don't know, something where hygiene is really important. Like if it's a retail store and it's a spa.

**Lisa Larter (33:32):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (33:34):**  
So the context changes.

**Lisa Larter (33:36):**  
Right.

**Jackie Foo (33:36):**  
It's always not about your example, but every business that you support is completely different. What do your customers think?

**Lisa Larter (33:42):**

Absolutely, absolutely. And in terms of launching things, at least in my world, I have coined a term that I call invitation marketing. And invitation marketing is where you... It's like proof of concept marketing actually. You go out and you test the concept, you invite people and see what their response is before you make a decision to go all in on it. And what I'm getting from the conversation that we're having right now is you could really use that same approach to what resonates and what offends your buyer in their journey as well.

**Jackie Foo (34:19):**

Sure.

**Lisa Larter (34:19):**

So the bathroom is a perfect example. You could ask your customer, "If you came into our business and the restrooms were not 100% clean. They weren't filthy, but they weren't 100% clean, on a scale of 1 to 10, how important is that to you?" And really get a sense of what your buyer thinks.

**Jackie Foo (34:38):**

Agreed.

**Lisa Larter (34:39):**

In my world, the thing that we treat like a 10, which is probably a 10 for some of our customers and it's probably a 2 for other customers, is typos. So because we are posting content for other people, there are some people that really take offense to a typo. But the truth is, we all make typos. When you are posting a high volume of information, typos are going to happen.

**Jackie Foo (35:06):**

Sure.

**Lisa Larter (35:07):**

And so it's about really understanding, I think that's really important to our customers, and I think it's part of our retention strategy, but I've never actually asked my customers that. So it's a really good point that we should inspect what we expect.

**Jackie Foo (35:21):**  
Absolutely.

**Lisa Larter (35:23):**

So talk to me a little bit about team. Because I have this... I look at team from two sides. I remember working in the corporate world, and I had a budget, and I had an FTE account, and I could move things around as long as I worked within that budget. And I was responsible for results, but I wasn't spending money out of my own bank account.

**Jackie Foo (35:47):**  
Sure.

**Lisa Larter (35:47):**

So in a small business, you're managing your own business and you... Typically, small business owners always feel like they have a resource issue. Sometimes I think we have a resource fullness issue. But can you talk to me about the role of team as a leader? And who to hire, who to fire, how to think through how to build a team that really helps you to deliver on your strategy?

**Jackie Foo (36:20):**

Right. Interestingly enough, you might think that a small business is the only group that has constraints, that I only have so much money and I can only hire so many team members. Well we have the same issue in a big corporation, too. We also... For those of you who, Lisa used the term, FTE, that's full-time equivalent. That really means employee. We are given a budget of how many team members we can hire, but there are years where we're also told that we need to cut that team. Let's be honest, big corporations have layoffs. We're in the middle of a pandemic. We had to make tough situations to close retail stores and impact people's lives. So whether or not you're a small business owner or a big business leader, we still feel the same pain that the small business has around number of people on the team and the choices that we have to make. Different scale, but similar.

**Jackie Foo (37:19):**

But I think your question was more around how do you build the right team? And what is the value of the team? And for me personally, I know what I'm really good at, and I am acutely aware of my areas of opportunity. And we just used some examples right here in this podcast. I hire for my gaps. I never hire for my strengths, because I feel like I'll do my best in those areas. But I hire... I'll give you an example. I think everything is possible in 50% of the time. I'm a big picture thinker.

**Lisa Larter (37:55):**

[crosstalk 00:37:55].

**Jackie Foo (37:56):**

If you actually look at the people who are on my direct report team, they are completely opposite to me. They are much more, I don't know, detailed. Certainly less emotive. They look for the critical gaps, they tell me and manage my expectations, because I tell them their job is to tell me no, but why not. And so I'll continue to jar with them, but I want their input. I do not want a yes team. I want a team that saves me from myself. So I'm the visionary in the organization. I'm going to create the art of the possible, but then we have to land the plane.

**Jackie Foo (38:40):**

And so when I think about building my team around me, it's the people that are going to help me land that plane, because if you have a vision that never lands, that's not a business either. And so then that would be the first thing, is hire for your gaps to create a complete team. And then, it's about keeping that team.

**Jackie Foo (38:58):**

So I talk a lot and... You talked about George Cope. He is a great inspiration to me and he always talks about when you find your A-team, keep them, work with them, groom them. They're going to go off. A-players go off and do other things. But your A-team is really important. And you always have to ask yourself, do I have an A-team? And if you don't have your A-team, you have to have the courage as a leader and especially as a business owner to make the tough call. Because I used to say, "We don't have room, or time. If

you're really worried about money, you can't afford to have a C-player on your team."

**Jackie Foo (39:36):**

So put on, as you like to say, your big girl pants or your big boy pants and make the tough call, because you've only so many slots, they better be you're A-player. That is the job of leadership, make the tough calls. Do you think that I like terminating people or letting people go? But you know what, I'm a people leader. I have to make those tough calls because I am accountable for the success of my organization and the success of my team.

**Jackie Foo (40:03):**

And the reality is, your team members also know when the member on the team is a C-player. And maybe you can stretch your B to an A, but if you think you can make your C- or a D-player an A, that's ego. And when I was young, I used to believe because I thought everything was possible, that I could convert that C- and D-player to an A-player. But that cost me money, and that cost me time, and it cost me results, and ultimately can't make it happen. You've got to hire A-players, and you have to have A-players all around in the right areas of responsibility. Because also if you have A-players but you have a gap somewhere in a core specialty or a function that you need within your group, that's not good either. So you need A-team players in all areas of your business.

**Lisa Larter (40:56):**

Yeah, absolutely. And as a leader it's hard. It's hard to let people go when you have relationships with them and you do believe that they are capable. But what I have learned, Jackie over the years, is if we go back and look at are you willing and are you able, A-players are willing and able. B players are able and they're willing sometimes. C-players tend to be willing but not able.

**Jackie Foo (41:31):**

Right.

**Lisa Larter (41:32):**

And so it's really important that you're able to make those decisions. And you're right, it's painful. And I know we both believe that empathy and caring about people is an important part of being a leader too, but sometimes

you've got to make some really tough decisions. I had to make a tough decision on my team a few weeks ago with respect to something that I considered to be a breach of trust from a very, very long term person. And it was really hard and really upsetting. But to your point, you have an entire team watching you when you don't take action on those things.

**Jackie Foo (42:08):**

Correct, absolutely. And you're accountable for the success of the whole team, not just the one individual.

**Lisa Larter (42:17):**

Yeah. I think the thing that's different when you own your own business versus you work for a corporation or you're an employee inside of that small business, is when you're the owner of the business, you're not accountable to anybody else. And so I often joke that the reason people hire me as a business coach or advisor is because they need somebody to be accountable to and I will hold them accountable. I will hold their feet to the fire, and therefore they will perform better because they don't want to let me down. And so I think that regardless of whether you own your own business or you work in an organization, it's always good to have that check and balance, that extra person that you do feel somewhat accountable to for your own performance. Because you talked about the stories we tell ourselves. Well, we can tell ourselves stories around rationalization and procrastination all day long if we want as business owners.

**Lisa Larter (43:13):**

So I want to talk about one more thing before we wrap up today. I want to talk about values or guiding principles in the role as leader. What are some of the attributes, or values, or beliefs, or characteristics that you think are most important? Because I know that my experience over the last 15 years working with small business owners is the topic of leadership does not come up very often. The topic of marketing does, the topic of lead generation does, the topic of how do I understand my numbers do? There's a whole bunch of other things that come before leadership, whereas if we were really looking at the hierarchy, leadership sits at the top. Leadership is what influences all of those other things.

**Lisa Larter (44:05):**

But a lot of small business owners don't really think of themselves as leaders. They think of themselves as entrepreneurs that are running a business and they're responsible for all these other things. So if you were to guide us on why we need to think of ourselves as leaders and what those attributes, values, whatever, characteristics are that are most important, what would you say they are and why? A big question.

**Jackie Foo (44:31):**

Yeah, it's a big question for sure. I think as a starting point, leaders need to give hope and a cause for their people to rally around. And so people will come to work every day if they know that they're going somewhere, that they're part of something great. And so I think a starting point, you kind of have to make sure that your team knows that there's something in it for them, that their contribution matters, and that it contributes to the big game.

**Jackie Foo (45:12):**

Then it goes back to then, what are the attributes and values that are required for people to align their beliefs, things that are important to them with the things that are important to your business? And I think the way that you do that is, and I'm going to steal this because I love Simon Sinek. Simon Sinek always says, "Great leaders have two important ingredients or attributes. One is perspective, and the second one is empathy. And I think that's really true that if you have perspective, you're able to see your vision and see all the ingredients that go into that vision, but then also see the perspective of your employee, or your customer, really come down and empathize and are able to walk a mile in their shoes. Then you're able to really connect those dots, because you're saying, "Here's my understanding of the situation. Here's my understanding of where we are in the marketplace. Here's my business perspective." But I empathize with the employee, and the team member, and the customer in terms of what their situation is to make that perspective come to life. Does that make sense?

**Lisa Larter (46:35):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (46:37):**

Then I'm just going to go back to my own view. And that is, I believe that an important value is trust.

**Lisa Larter (46:47):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Jackie Foo (46:48):**

Because to me, trust is everything. If your team members trust you, trust your vision, they will follow you. They won't question why are we doing what we're doing? But in order for you to have trust, you have to gain trust. You can't ask for trust. And so the way that you gain trust from your team is by ensuring that their perspectives matter, that you understand their situations, and that you are consistent, transparent, they can count on you, you say what you do, or you do what you say is what I meant to say, and that it's not an event.

**Jackie Foo (47:37):**

When I think about does my organization trust me, I believe the answer is yes. When we do these employee surveys, trust in leadership is one of the most important ingredients because trust is belief, and belief drives behavior. If you don't believe something and your boss asks you to do something, you'll do the task, but if you really believe in the vision, you really believe in what your leader is telling you, you'll take on your own set of tactics to drive that activity because the belief is stronger than the tactic itself.

**Lisa Larter (48:17):**

It's really good. Jackie, we've known each other for a long time and I always walk away from every conversation we have together whether it's over a nice dinner and a bottle of wine or a quick phone conversation on a ride into work. I always walk away feeling like I've learned something. And I think that that is also something that's really important for business owners, is to have somebody in their court that they can learn from, that can stretch their thinking, that can inspire them to play a bigger role.

**Lisa Larter (48:49):**

Because as I listen to you talk about this, I think about my own business. I left the corporate world in 2006. So this November I will have been running my

own business independently for 15 years. That's a long time. And yet, I look at my vision and the impact that I want to make, and I don't think I have been clear with my own team, because I feel like my vision is, I don't know how to describe it, it feels, I don't know, it feels odd to me. So I'm going to articulate it here, because I think you can help me frame it differently.

**Lisa Larter (49:38):**

When I was a kid growing up my mom had a job. And I was a sick kid. I had Crohn's disease. One time I was really, really sick and I was hemorrhaging from my bowel. I spent a week at ICU. And when my mom went to her boss and said that she needed to leave work early to take me to the hospital, he wouldn't let her leave. And he told her, "You've got problems, and I've got problems here, and you need to stay." And that created a change in me that I would A, never have a boss that would not let me do what I needed to do in my life. And B, I wanted to really help other business owners to understand how to run a business and make enough money that they had freedom to do what they needed to do in times like that.

**Lisa Larter (50:25):**

And so I am so passionate about helping business owners be financially successful, because I believe the impact of that financial success for small businesses is so great. When a small business is financially successful they can hire people. When they hire people, they're providing for those families. And the ripple effect is huge. But it just feels so, I don't know, it feels like not a very important thing when I say I want to help businesses make money because I want them to be able to have a better life and to be able to provide a good life for other families. It feels shallow. That's how it feels to me, because it's related to money.

**Jackie Foo (51:11):**

I'm not sure that's so shallow, because there's just a reality around money is freedom. Let's just really be honest with ourselves. If you have more money, you have more options. And I think that wealth creates wealth. And when you create wealth for others, you don't know the ripple effect that it's having. Think about every new immigrant story of success. It started off by survival.

**Lisa Larter (51:44):**

Right.

### **Jackie Foo (51:45):**

How do I survive? And then, oh okay I'm now surviving. I'm going to help other people survive. And those turned into beautiful businesses. And really if you think of the foundation of our amazing country, I certainly know that I have a lot more in my life than my parents had in theirs. And I'm sure you too. I think about all of the people that have grown. You're talking about from a small business perspective. I talk about it creating wealth within a corporation, within a company. I think about how many vice presidents, you know, that I have been lucky enough to work with that got promoted. I see them go up a level, or directors, or managers. And there's nothing more rewarding than seeing them grow and create wealth for themselves. That's okay. I don't think we should be apologetic about that. I think that wealth creates wealth, wealth creates growth. And that cliché pay it forward thing is okay.

### **Jackie Foo (52:49):**

And I think that back to my point about leadership being about perspective and empathy, one of the reasons why you are such a great champion of the small business owner is that you have both. You have perspective, you've walked a mile in those shoes. And so you use their speak, which is they need to be successful, they need to make their business successful. But you have empathy, because you know what it's like. You know what it's like to think about every dollar that I have to worry about spending, every mistake that maybe you've made in your past that you don't want your client to make. So I don't know that that's such a... You're almost sort of, and you shouldn't be, self-deprecating about that vision. In its simplicity is so much beauty.

### **Lisa Larter (53:37):**

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And as you say that I'm thinking about the building of wealth inside of a business is passed through so many other ways, and it has such a big ripple effect similar to leadership.

### **Jackie Foo (53:54):**

Right.

### **Lisa Larter (53:56):**

When I asked you to do this, you made a comment to me about, "You have all these people. You're a great leader, all these people follow you." And I'm

like, "Yeah, I know but your influence has influenced me, which has influenced others." I also know that your influence came from your dad. And there are a lot of Foo-isms that came directly from him, and a lot of Sunday dinners that I benefited from his wisdom even though I wasn't at those dinners. So I would be remiss if I didn't honor him in this relay of leadership as well.

**Jackie Foo (54:34):**

Yes, thank you Lisa. For sure biggest mentor ever. And to this day most of my management, my leadership, my care and concern for people, my genuine interest in seeing people grow and flourish comes from my father. And that's what he wanted for his family when he came to this amazing country. And because of that, I also feel the full effect of his great leadership, for sure.

**Lisa Larter (55:04):**

Yeah. All right, well Jackie Foo, any final thoughts before we wrap this up? It's been so good to do this with you?

**Jackie Foo (55:14):**

No. Listen, Lisa. I love seeing your success. And your people's, and your client's success. There's nothing that makes me happier. The greatest gift of leadership is seeing people grow and benefit. And I recently have received a ton of emails from people that I've helped in stores. There's some things going on in my life that cause this sort of ripple effect of emails. Anyways, I'll try not to go there. But what I realized is there's no paycheck, or title, or promotion, or anything that is more valuable than knowing that you made a difference in someone's life. And because of that difference, they are now in a better place than before that interaction.

**Jackie Foo (56:08):**

And isn't that the definition of leadership: helping people to achieve what they couldn't or wouldn't without your contribution or presence? That to me is the greatest thing. And hopefully we, you and I, have created and helped to grow this leadership bank wherever it is.

**Lisa Larter (56:29):**

Absolutely. As we wrap up I am reminded of something that I read yesterday. I am rereading the book called The ONE Thing. And he talks about the one



thing in the book and how it is in everything. And he talks about there is one person in your life that means the most to you. There is one person who has had the biggest impact on your growth and career. And if I were to say the one person who's impacted my leadership, it would be you. So thank you for that, Jackie.

**Jackie Foo (57:03):**

Thank you, wow. What an honor that is. And it really... It almost makes me emotional, but thank you Lisa. That's a great gift for sure.

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

You're welcome. Thank you for sharing everything you did with us today.

**Jackie Foo (57:18):**

It is absolutely my pleasure. I hope you have me back sometime. This was so fun.

**Lisa Larter (57:22):**

Yes. We will do it again for sure. Thanks, everybody. Hey, if you've worked with Jackie or I at Telus and you got all the way to the end, I want to see your comments. Make sure you leave a comment.

**Jackie Foo (57:32):**

Bye, thanks everyone.

**Lisa Larter (57:34):**

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.



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