



**WHEN YOU ESTABLISH A DESTINATION
BY DEFINING WHAT YOU WANT, THEN TAKE
PHYSICAL ACTION BY MAKING CHOICES
THAT MOVE YOU TOWARDS THAT DESTINATION,
THE POSSIBILITY FOR SUCCESS IS LIMITLESS
AND ARRIVAL AT THE DESTINATION IS INEVITABLE.**

- STEVE MARABOLI

Creating Your Strategic Plan

Congratulations! You've done a lot of work defining what really matters to you and honing in on ONE goal in each of the Key Areas of Success. Once you've identified those goals, we need to sort and filter them to get them into a plan of action for the next 12 months.

Radishes vs. Pumpkins

What might sound like a crazy video game is actually a great way to distinguish your immediate term goals from goals that will take longer to achieve.

In a garden, you can plant radish seeds and have a full-grown radish, ready to eat, in as little as 30 days. You can continue to plant them throughout the year and have a regular harvest of radishes. Pumpkins, on the other hand, take a whole growing season – as much as 3-6 months to fully ripen and be ready for pie-making. The same holds true for your Key Area goals.

Some goals have a clear end date – perhaps within the next 90 days. These would be considered “radish” goals. They don't require a lot of long-term nurturing, and you can see them to completion within a single quarter of the year. But some goals – like losing 100 pounds, may require extra maintenance, nourishment, and attention throughout the year in order to see the final outcome later in the year.

A healthy plan needs to identify which kinds of goals you're pursuing. There are no right or wrong answers here, but expecting a pumpkin goal to be ready a month or two after planting the seeds is a sure path to frustration and possibly overwhelm, if you're trying to do too much to “rush” the outcome. On the other hand, if you've got a few short-term goals that are more radish-like, you don't need to set aside time for the whole year, perhaps just 3-6 months. And once you've completed the “radish” goal, you can choose to take on another goal or give yourself some breathing room.

Take a few minutes to estimate the amount of time it will take to accomplish each goal this year (a month, a few months, half a year, the full year?). Sort your radishes from your pumpkins, and start planning your milestones for the year.

Milestones & Backward Planning

Creating milestones is the first step in a backward planning process that gives you a skeleton to build your year. Backward planning is frequently used in strategic planning, and is akin to what Stephen Covey said: “begin with the end in mind.”

If you know where you want to be at the end of the next 12 months, what are the milestones along the way that let you know you're on the right path, and moving at the proper pace to achieve your goals? Radish goals usually have a more evenly disbursed backward plan. If I want to lose 3 pounds this quarter, that breaks down fairly easily into 1 pound per month. On the other hand, if I want to lose 52 pounds this year, that's a pumpkin-sized goal that may need more incubation on the front-end before you see

results. The first quarter might not be about losing any weight, but instead researching fitness options and hiring a trainer. Those are important steps in the goal nurturing and "seed planting" process, but you won't see much in the way of measurable results toward your goal in the first quarter. Once you understand that, it becomes easier to right-size expectations around the goals you've set for yourself.

Set up all the milestones for the year using the Milestones worksheet in the program toolbox. Then you can begin brainstorming action steps.

Brainstorming: Mind Mapping vs. Brain Dumps

There may be many steps between where you are and the goal you're trying to achieve. For now, we want to focus on the next 90 days: the first quarter of the next 12 months. 90 days is plenty of time to implement and take action, without getting bogged down in too many details for the year. You can still see the big picture, and yet take concrete action toward your goals. Once you've laid out the milestones for the year, let's shift our attention to the Quarter 1 Milestones. What are the action items, steps, and other issues you need to address in the next 90 days to achieve your milestone in each Key Area of Success?

There are two ways I've found effective in identifying the action steps to take toward your milestone: mind mapping and brain dumping. If you've got a clear idea, or if thoughts are coming at you fairly quickly, brain dumping is an effective tool to help you get everything "out of your head" fast and onto paper. On the other hand, if you're not sure what the steps are, or it's a more project-based goal, mind mapping can help you visually see all the moving parts and pieces of your goal. Then you can "get granular" down to the tiniest details. Either approach works.

What if you really don't know what the next steps are? Well, then your next step is to get help and find someone who can point you in the right direction or give you the answers you seek. Chances are good that someone, somewhere has done what you're trying to do, and it's just a matter of reaching out and connecting with them. If you're still stuck, check out the tool box and register for a "next steps" coaching session to give you more clarity.

Is it Scheduled or Stressful?

If it's not scheduled, there's a good chance it's causing you undue stress. By putting your action plan on a calendar, you're reinforcing your commitment to see your goals to completion. It also gives you a more realistic look at what your calendar can actually hold. I've seen too many clients just trust the universe that things will work out, and then they find themselves overbooked and underpaid. Don't let this be you!

Get a wall calendar or pull apart a monthly calendar so that you can see the entire year at one time (or use the calendar pages in the toolbox). Schedule in all your non-negotiable personal time. From doctor appointments to family vacations, get them on the calendar. There's nothing worse than planning a launch only to discover that it's double booked with your anniversary party! One of the big reasons solopreneurs go into business for themselves is to have the freedom to create their own schedule. Make yourself a priority!

Once you've handled all the non-negotiables for the year, then hone in on the first 90 days and begin to schedule in the action steps you need to take to meet your goals. If you're running out of time in the calendar, you'll realize that you're trying to do too much too fast. It's time to "course correct" and select more reasonable D.U.M.B. Milestones.

Leave Space for DKDK

"DKDK" is a reference I picked up from business author Les McKeown, who talks about what you don't know you don't know. There are fields of knowledge that we're aware of, but we know nothing about (like rocket science, for me). But there are also things that come up on our radar that we didn't even know were available to us to know. The unexpected. The surprises of the year. Remember those surprise blessings we celebrated? We're making space for those. We're also making space to have breathing room to course correct if and when "life happens."

This is one of the catalysts of shiny object syndrome. Some shiny new project, program, or idea comes on our radar that we didn't even know existed – and we want in on it! But we're so overbooked that we can't possibly take on another thing without letting something go. Then comes resentment, frustration, and maybe even a bit of desperation as you begin to negotiate with what's already on your plate. Insert obscenities and flared nostrils here.

Instead, by giving yourself a space cushion to handle the unexpected, you'll breathe easier, your life and business will have a greater sense of flow, and chances are good you'll be able to say yes more confidently to what you really want to accomplish in the next 12 months – without guilt, shame, or fear.

It's rare that I see an entrepreneur with too much space on their calendar, but if you're just getting started, or launching a new business segment, it's possible you'll have more space than feels comfortable. If that's truly the case, a course correction to shorten the time line on your milestones can help turn up the heat on your calendar.

Recurring Action Steps

What if you've got a recurring action step – like drinking 8 glasses of water every day, or reaching out to five new contacts each week? It might seem like overkill to schedule those items every day. In that case, use the daily checklist tracking form in the toolbox to identify those recurring tasks and check them off as you do them each day. It minimizes the clutter in your planner, and keeps you on track with your goals.

Make the Commitment

Just as you committed to completing this planning process, make the commitment to yourself to stick to these goals. It's fine to course correct and re-assess your goals on a quarterly or monthly basis, just be sure it's an intentional commitment to change, not a knee-jerk reaction to overwhelming circumstances in your life or work. Stay the course for maximum success.

Prioritize & Commit

You ALWAYS have a choice. Always.

Spend a few minutes reviewing the six Key Area goals you've selected. Prioritize each of them below now, BEFORE you have conflicting demands competing for your attention later in the year. That way, you will have planned in advance what your utmost priority is for the year before you're emotionally invested in an "emergency" situation. Then, when those moments arise later in the year (and they will), you can refer to your list of priorities and make an intentional decision about how to proceed, instead of falling victim to "putting out fires" that may not even be your fires to deal with in the first place.

I, _____ am committed to:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

... and enjoying my life in the process. Each of these commitments is cause for celebration, when they are achieved, and as I work toward achieving them. I will celebrate my wins as they happen and regularly evaluate my priorities over the next 12 months.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

POST THIS COMMITMENT WHERE IT WILL INSPIRE YOU EVERY DAY.

Plan, Do, Evaluate – Revisited

Once you've plugged in your activities for the next 90 days, now it's time to start working the plan! No amount of planning will do any good if you don't take action. If this is where you get stuck, ask for help. Get an accountability partner or hire a coach to guide you.

As you implement and take action, be sure to evaluate what's happening. Are you staying on course? Did you overestimate your abilities, which has left you feeling like you're "falling behind"? Did your results turn out better than expected? Are you ahead of schedule? Every month, do a quick assessment of where you're at compared to where your milestones are. If you're on track, celebrate. If you're not where you want to be, celebrate how far you've come *then* course correct and keep moving.

Apply this method of evaluation to each month, then do a quarterly summary. If you roll through the year this way, you'll always have a vision for the next 12 months.

Celebration!

If you haven't figured it out yet, it's a good idea to keep celebrating your progress. Even the "small" wins are still wins and deserve positive reinforcement. Sometimes the only thing that will keep you going during the tough times is remembering how good it felt to complete the last milestone. Remember to celebrate often!

A Final Word

Congratulations! You've come a long way in just a few days. You've got a sense of clarity around what really matters and a series of action steps to get you moving. Just like GPS, once you start moving, don't be surprised if there are a few twists and turns. It's not a matter of *if* they'll happen, but *when* they'll happen. When you find yourself stuck, needing extra help, or just a different perspective, please reach out. Give yourself permission to get the help you need in the areas where you feel stuck, whether that's reaching out to a friend for moral support, or reaching out to me for coaching, or investing in human resources to get more leverage in your life and business. Take care of yourself, and give yourself the space you need to ignite a path to your dreams, goals and truest desires!

In blessings and peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lisa', written in a light gray color.

-Lisa