

The background of the entire page is a stylized sunburst. It consists of numerous thin, light orange lines radiating from a semi-circular base at the bottom center. The lines extend upwards and outwards, filling the entire frame. The color is a warm, muted orange.

Strategy

A how to

By Alyssa Gammoudy

About Me



Too often, I've seen entrepreneurs working hard without the expected results. Sales that don't align with marketing, a corporate story that is too generic, and inconsistent actions across the business.

We often forget to start with building a strong foundation: the strategy. And strategy isn't a document set in stone. It's a living concept that should be reviewed regularly. That might be one of the reasons it's so often overlooked. Because it's not the easiest part.

But here's what I've learned after 15 years in business and analyzing thousands of company strategies over the last decade: a strong strategy makes the rest of your business so much easier to operate.

In this ebook, I'll share the patterns I've seen in companies that thrive versus those that struggle.

You'll learn how to build a strategic foundation that actually works—one that's clear enough to guide decisions but flexible enough to evolve with your business.

Because at the end of the day, building a business is hard either way. You can work hard with a weak foundation and constantly fight fires, or you can work hard upfront on your strategy and build something that compounds.

Choose your hard.

Alyssa Gammoudy

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1 Introduction

Why you need to care about strategy



Online entrepreneurship offers unprecedented opportunities... but also creates new challenges that many entrepreneurs underestimate. This white paper about strategy will help you make better business decisions and prevents wasted time due to misalignments.

It doesn't matter if you just started or are a seasoned entrepreneur: there will inevitably come a moment of stagnation (and that moment will likely recur over time). This white paper is designed for online entrepreneurs in mind, but is not limited to that target group.

Having basic knowledge of marketing and business administration is helpful, but

"A fireplace can only give heat, when you first put in wood"



not required. You can use this white paper when you are just getting started, or when you have been in business for a while and want to take your company to the next level or introduce a new product.

A small warning: if working through this white paper feels "vague," and you are unsure whether you are on the right path, that actually means you are doing well. A strategy is not a fixed set of actions that you can quickly fill in. It requires deep thinking and making tough decisions.

And it will require patience to see the first results. There is no quick fix. A fireplace only gives off heat when you put wood into it.

This white paper makes sure you will have a better understanding of strategy:

- What a strategy really is and how it differs from a plan;
- Which questions to ask yourself when developing a strategy;
- Which factors influence your strategy and your business;

Each chapter concludes with a number of questions. Take the time to answer them, but do not make it harder than necessary. If you get stuck, simply return to them later.

There is no right or wrong.

Assignments chapter 1

Assignment 1 – Your mission: the “Why”

Write down in three sentences why you started your business.

Set your answer aside for one week. After that, read it again and highlight which words still give you energy and which ones feel hollow or forced.

The goal of this exercise is not to create a perfect mission statement, but to identify what truly motivates you and what may no longer be relevant.

Assignment 2 – Frustration mapping

List your top five frustrations in your business.

Then categorize each one as:

- A) Solvable within 30 days
- B) Strategic issue
- C) Outside of your control

Focus on Category B. These are the issues that require strategic thinking and have the greatest impact on long-term growth.

Assignment 3 – Visualizing success

Describe in detail a day in your life two years from now, assuming you are successful.

Be specific:

- How do you start your day?
- Who do you work with?
- How do you feel?
- What do you no longer do?

Focus less on outcomes and more on behaviors, decisions, and structure. This exercise is meant to clarify direction, not define a final destination.

2 The basics

The difference between strategy, plans and tactics



There are many roads that lead to Rome. You can choose to map out a fixed route and follow it step by step. In that case, you are working with a plan. Or you can know where Rome is and roughly how to get there, while remaining open to changes along the way. In that case, you are working with a strategy. This distinction matters.

A plan is a predefined route with a fixed outcome in mind while a strategy, on the other hand, functions as a compass. It provides direction but allows for flexibility. Circumstances change, new information appears, and unexpected obstacles arise. A strategy adapts to those conditions; a plan does not.

*"A strategy
functions as your
compass"*



This is also why working with strategy can feel uncomfortable. A plan offers certainty and control. Strategy requires acceptance of uncertainty. That uncertainty is a necessary part of navigating a complex and changing environment. When you work with strategy, you are learning how to make better decisions along the way.

Strategy Versus Tactics

Strategy and tactics are often confused, but they serve different purposes. Whole strategy is the compass, tactics are the concrete actions you take to move forward.

For example, posting on social media three times a week is a tactic. The strategy lies in why you are posting, who you are trying to reach, and how this supports the broader direction of your business.

Without strategy, tactics become disconnected activities rather than purposeful steps.

The Role of Marketing

Marketing is often confused with sales, but they are not the same. Sales focuses on converting prospects into customers. Marketing focuses on understanding your customer and clearly defining the problem you solve for them.

The relationship is hierarchical:

- Strategy defines the direction of your business
- Marketing translates that direction into a message and offering
- Sales executes that message in practice

When strategy is unclear, marketing becomes inconsistent and sales lose effectiveness. A strong strategy provides the foundation that allows both marketing and sales to work cohesively.

Assignments chapter 2

Assignment 1: Compass vs. Plan Exercise

Take a current business challenge. First, write out a step-by-step plan (the “Rome route”). Then write down your compass direction: the desired end result and three different ways to get there.

Which approach feels more natural or effective?

Assignment 2 – Tactic inventory

List all the marketing activities you are currently doing. For each activity, answer the following:

- What problem does this solve for my customer? (Marketing)
- How does this contribute to my overall direction? (Strategy)
- What is the concrete action? (Tactic)

Assignment 3: The One-Sentence test

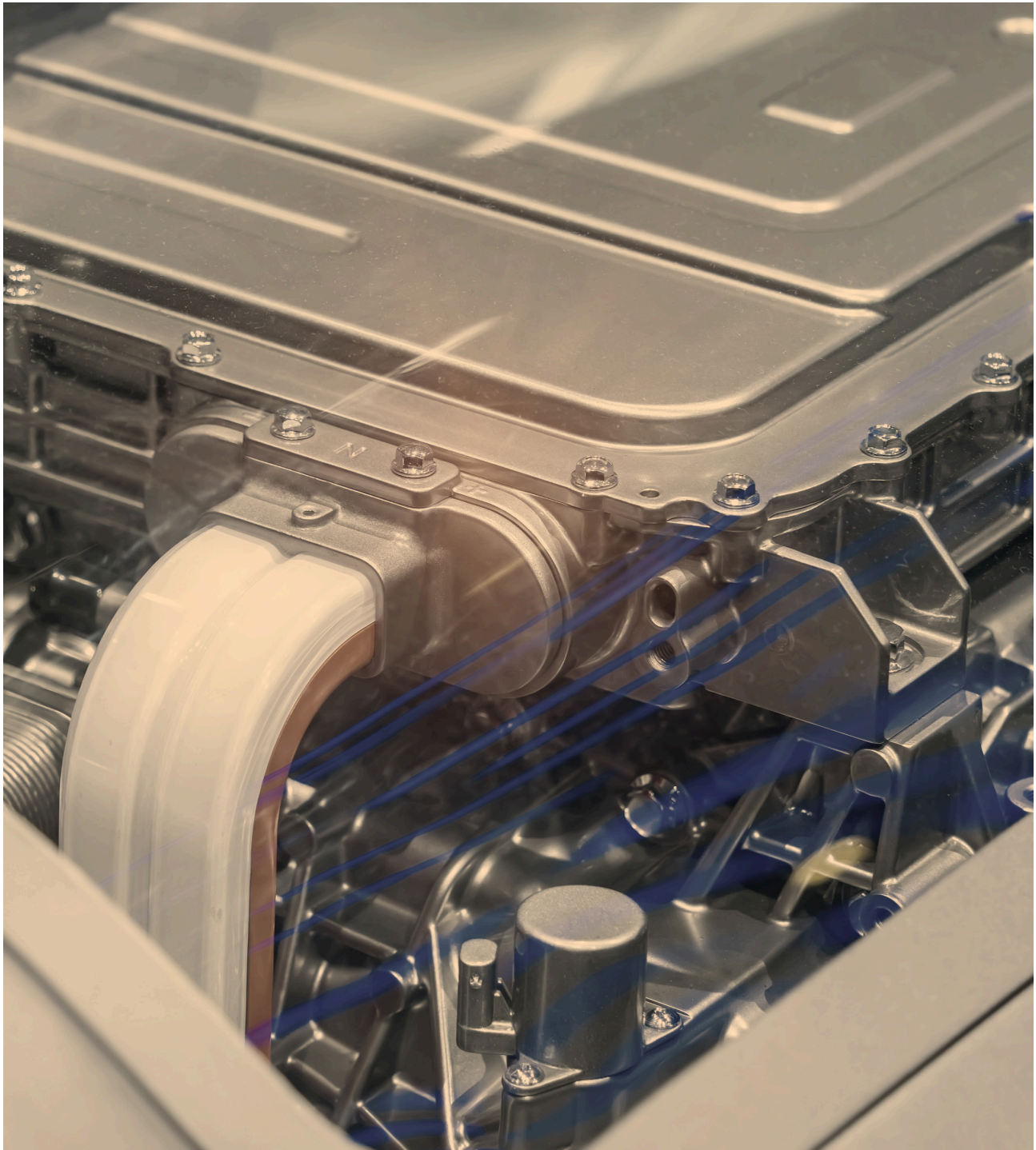
Complete the following sentence:

“My business helps [who] to [solve what problem], so that [what better future].”

If you need more than one sentence, your strategy is not yet clear enough.

3 Influences

The eco-system in which a strategy lives



Whether you like it or not: your business operates outside a vacuum. This means there are different forces at play that impact your business. Always.

Systems: The invisible architecture

Planets orbit the sun not by choice, but because of gravity: an invisible force that holds the solar system together. Your business operates the same way. You don't exist in isolation; you're held in orbit by invisible systems.

These systems include your customers, competitors, suppliers, government regulations, industry standards, platforms, and even your local community. Recognizing which systems you operate within gives you the power to

*"Your business
operates outside a
vacuum"*



work with these forces instead of fighting against them.

Time: Your strategic ally or enemy

Time is distributed equally to everyone, and misjudged by most entrepreneurs. What you plant today won't bloom tomorrow. The client you meet this week might not buy for six months. Think of your business as a garden with different crops: some are quick-growing radishes (short-term wins), others are apple trees (long-term investments). Smart entrepreneurs plant both and understand the harvest schedule for each. Time can be your greatest competitive advantage when you invest in what compounds.

Empathy: The foundation of every transaction

People don't buy because you're qualified or because your product is superior. They buy because you understand them. Empathy means deeply understanding what your customer fears, desires, and believes seeing the world through their eyes, not yours. Without this, your marketing is just noise. Most entrepreneurs focus on features when customers care about feelings. They explain why their product is better when customers need to know why it matters to their specific situation. Every business decision should pass through the empathy filter.

Game Theory: strategy as play

Entrepreneurship is a game with players making strategic moves. Game theory studies how people make decisions when their success depends on others' choices. A wrong decision doesn't make you a failure—it's just a move that didn't work. You learn and play differently next time. Understanding patterns—when to compete, when to cooperate, when to move first, when to wait—explains why the "best" product doesn't always win.

These four elements are deeply interconnected: systems define the playing field, time determines when moves pay off, empathy helps you understand other players, and game theory shows you which moves to make.

Assignments chapter 3

Assignment 1: System mapping

Draw yourself (your business) in the center of a large page. Draw lines to every "player" that influences your business: customers, competitors, platforms, suppliers, regulations, partners, community, etc.

Reflection questions:

- Which system has the most influence on your success?
- Are you fighting against a system instead of working with it?
- Which "red" connections could you remove or minimize?
- Which "yellow" connections could you turn green?
- What surprising connections did you discover?

Assignment 2: Minimal Viable Audience

Define the smallest, most specific audience you can serve exceptionally well.

Start with your current target audience. Make it 10x more specific. Instead of "women 25-45," try "working mothers in their mid-30s who are starting their own consulting business while their children are in elementary school, who feel guilty

about work-life balance"

List 5 specific problems this precise audience faces

Identify 3 real people who fit this description

Reach out and test one specific idea or question with them.

Assignment 3: Empathy Interview

Schedule a 15-20 minute conversation with a potential or current customer Explain you're doing research and won't pitch anything

Ask only about their world:

- What's your biggest challenge right now?
- What have you already tried to solve it?
- What's frustrating about existing solutions?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what would change?
- What's the cost of not solving this problem?

Listen 80%, talk 20%

Take notes on exact phrases they use

4 Strategizing

The art of making the right choices



A strategy is essential, yet often feels abstract. It's a living document that requires regular evaluation. The world changes, you change, and the business landscape shifts. This doesn't mean overhauling everything every three weeks, but you must regularly check whether you're still doing the right things to reach your goals.

Four strategic choices

Systems help your business grow and create change. When you embrace a system, it automatically contributes to transformation. There are four fundamental choices that influence which systems you allow into your business (and your life).

"A strategy is a living document"



Choose your customer

This determines who you approach and what that entails. Who do you reward with your time and attention? If you spend hours appeasing complaining customers at any cost, those are the customers you'll end up with. This choice determines your pricing level, the degree of support and service you provide, exclusivity, sustainability, and timelessness.

Choose your competition

Which race are you running? You can choose to compete on price in a race to the bottom, or compete on quality alongside others who share that focus. There's no right or wrong answer, but you must make a choice. That choice influences the systems that follow and how you spend your time. Speed? Volume? Quality?

Choose your validation standard

Whose approval matters to you? Where do you seek status? Whose review do you want? This determines how you create your product. If your client expects cinema-quality video that requires professional equipment, you need to deliver that. McDonald's doesn't expect Michelin stars because fine diners aren't their target audience. McDonald's seeks validation from consumers who want a quick, affordable meal.

Choose your distribution channels

Distribution is sometimes determined by your other three choices. Does your client want to meet in person or is everything digital? Are you willing to travel to your client? What quality level do you deliver? Does your product's look and feel match your customer's expectations? A candle from a discount store differs fundamentally from a candle from a premium brand in quality, presentation, and price.

An entrepreneur without sufficient awareness of systems will eventually stagnate. Systems exist whether you acknowledge them or not. That's precisely why it's important to make systems work for you instead of against you.

Assignments chapter 4

Assignment 1: The strategic choices matrix

Create a table with four rows, one for each strategic choice:

- Customer
- Competition
- Validation Standard
- Distribution Channels

Identify which choice creates the biggest strategic challenge for you right now

Assignment 2: Competition mapping

List 5-7 businesses you consider competitors For each competitor, identify what they're competing on:

- Price (cheapest option)
- Speed (fastest delivery/service)
- Quality (best craftsmanship/results)
- Convenience (easiest to use)
- Status (most prestigious)
- Innovation (most cutting-edge)

Plot them on a simple chart where one axis represents their primary competitive dimension

Now plot yourself on the same chart Draw a circle around your position showing where you want to be in 12 months