

Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitably

Tech Talk With Lisa

Let It Go!

I have been reminded of this over and over again during the last few weeks.

Let go of the things you have zero control over. Let go of the habits that cause stress and harm. Let go of the idea that your life is bigger than it really is.

The truth is, we all live in a relatively small circle. Family. Friends. Business. Community.

Now think about your own circle and answer this question:

In my circle of family, friends, and business, who am I?

You decide that every single day. Are you helpful, kind, considerate, thoughtful, encouraging, inspiring? Or is it possible that sometimes you are not?

Shawn and I recently spent a couple of weeks in Florida watching our second oldest granddaughter graduate from high school. Spending time around my kids and grandkids

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CST Group Inc.

This monthly publication is provided courtesy of Shawn & Lisa Brown, Owners.



OUR MISSION:

CST Group Inc. is a PROACTIVE technology management firm who's mission it to SECURE, PROTECT and MANAGE technology for Small to Medium Businesses like yours.

YOUR PASSWORD IS THE KEY UNDER THE DOORMAT

Picture walking up to a house and lifting the welcome mat to find a key underneath. It's convenient, predictable and exactly where someone with bad intentions would look first.

Most businesses treat their passwords the same way.

No one starts a business thinking they'll need to manage passwords for the entire organization. But at some point, it becomes part of the job, quietly growing as you add more tools, more logins and more people.

The reuse problem

A typical breach doesn't usually start within your business. It starts somewhere else entirely: a shopping site, a food delivery app, a subscription you forgot you had.

That company gets breached, and suddenly your email and password are part of a database being sold on the dark web.

From there, attackers get efficient. They take that same login and try it everywhere: your email, your banking portal, your business applications, your cloud storage.

One breach, one reused password and it's not just one door that's open — it's the whole building.

The most common attacks aren't sophisticated; they're automated.

Software runs your stolen credentials against hundreds of sites while you're asleep. By the time you find out, the damage is already done. It's called

credential stuffing, and it works because most people reuse passwords across multiple accounts.

The illusion of 'strong enough'

A lot of business owners feel covered because their password has a capital letter, a number and a symbol.

That might have been secure in 2006, but the landscape has changed since then. Modern attacks use tools that can test billions of combinations per second.

A strong password is still a single point of failure. One phishing email or one vendor breach can undo it entirely. No matter how clever the password is, it's still just one layer standing between an attacker and everything you've built.

The fix is simpler than you think

A password manager creates and stores a unique password for every account, so your team doesn't have to remember them or fall back on reusing the same easy-to-guess password.

Multi-factor authentication adds another layer, so even if a password gets exposed, access is still blocked. Neither needs an IT degree and both can be set up in an afternoon.

Good security isn't about perfect habits. It's about systems that still work when people make honest mistakes.

Don't make it easier for hackers by leaving the key under the mat.

TRUST, SCARCITY AND SECOND CHANCES

Inside Molly Bloom's Poker Empire



Sometimes, rebuilding trust, creating exclusivity and earning a second chance comes down to a few well-timed risks. Molly Bloom, the woman behind one of the world's most exclusive poker games, knows that better than most. She recently shared her lessons with us, offering insights that leaders can apply to their own businesses.

Bloom built and ran one of the most exclusive high-stakes poker games in the world, attracting billionaires and A-list celebrities. At her peak, she was making millions, with powerful players competing for a seat at her table. Then it collapsed. Bloom lost everything. In the years that followed, she rebuilt her life, wrote a memoir and saw her story adapted into an Oscar-nominated film.

"I see a room full of entrepreneurs," she said. "People who want to make their life work, who want to take care of people they love and who want to be proud at the end of the day."

Her story offers a practical lens on how businesses differentiate, build trust and recover when things go wrong.

Trust is the starting point

When Bloom arrived in New York, she didn't begin by promoting a new game. Instead, she spent weeks speaking with players, asking about their experiences.

The answer was consistent: trust was missing. "That's when I knew that was my disruption." Bloom positioned herself as the bank to ensure fairness and transparency. Within months, her game became one of the most sought-after in the city.

For business owners, the takeaway is straightforward. Leading with services isn't enough. Understanding what clients distrust, fear or feel underserved by is what creates meaningful differentiation.

Experience shapes decisions

Bloom began focusing less on outcomes and more on experience, paying attention to how players felt in her games. That shift changed how people responded to her.

In business settings, particularly in sales conversations, this translates directly. Decisions are influenced not just by logic but by whether clients feel understood, respected and at ease.

Details create the difference

Bloom treated details as core to the experience, not as an afterthought. From venue selection to music, food and personal preferences, each element was intentional. "The details matter. They all come together to comprise the emotional imprint you leave."

For other business leaders, those details show up in everyday interactions, from proposals to service delivery. Clients aren't just evaluating outcomes. They're evaluating the experience of working with you.

Exclusivity drives demand

Bloom's games were limited by design. With only a handful of seats available, she created an environment where access felt exclusive. "I don't always have a seat," she'd say. "But hit me up."

That scarcity shifted the dynamic. Instead of persuading people to join, she created demand. When you define who you work best with and where you deliver value, the conversation changes from "why should I hire you" to "how do I get in."

Resilience creates the comeback

After losing everything, Bloom faced a decision: stop or start again. She chose to continue. "I know now, you get as many chances as you're brave enough to take."

This lesson is less about poker and more about resilience. Success doesn't come from a single opportunity. It comes from the willingness to keep moving forward, even after setbacks. Bloom's story reinforces a simple idea. Businesses that solve real problems and create meaningful experiences are the ones that endure.

YOUR AI INTERN JUST STARTED.

Who's Supervising It?



The proposal looked great. It was polished, professional and exactly the kind of document that signals control.

Then the client called. The market research in section two, the data supporting the entire recommendation, didn't exist. The AI had made it up. Not vaguely, not accidentally, but confidently and in detail.

There's a term for this: hallucination.

It happens when AI produces information that sounds plausible but isn't real. And it's becoming a familiar issue for businesses adopting these tools without clear oversight.

The intern nobody onboarded

Imagine hiring an intern and on day one handing them access to everything. Your client files. Your email drafts. Your financial summaries. Your internal documents.

"Just figure it out. Let me know if you need anything." No orientation. No guardrails. No check-ins. That's how most businesses are adopting AI right now.

Not because they're careless. In fact, it's the opposite.

AI tools are useful, easy to access and already built into the software people use every day. There's an AI button in your email, another in your document editor and one in your project management tool. It feels like help has arrived. And in many ways, it has.

AI is good at drafting, summarizing, organizing information and speeding up work that used to take hours. It reduces friction and helps teams move faster. The issue isn't the tool. It's how it's being used.

Every application seems to have AI built in now. Not every business has stopped to ask what happens when someone clicks that button.

What your unsupervised intern is really doing

When AI tools show up without a plan, three things tend to happen.

First, data gets shared in ways no one intended. Employees paste client contracts into free AI tools to get a quick summary. They drop financial data into a chatbot to format a report.

It happens more often than most businesses realize, usually without anyone flagging it. The intent isn't careless. People are just trying to get their work done faster.

...continued on page 4

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Oura Ring 4

Turn Daily Health Data Into Better Workdays

When your calendar is packed and your tasks keep growing, knowing when to push or pause becomes a competitive edge. The Oura Ring 4 tracks sleep, activity, stress and readiness, then translates that data into a daily score designed for professionals like you.

No screen clutter or wrist fatigue, just a lightweight titanium ring that works in the background, flagging recovery gaps before they become productivity problems.



PROTECT YOUR DIGITAL LEGACY

Your digital life matters more than ever. Google now deletes inactive accounts after two years, including Gmail, Google Drive, Google Photos, and more. Without a legacy contact set up, your family may not be able to access important files or memories if something happens to you.

Take five minutes today to protect what matters most:

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CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"I've changed my work environment."

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Many consumer AI tools use that input to improve their models. That means your business data may not stay private.

Second, tools nobody approved start appearing. Employees start using whatever works best for them, often without checking if it's been vetted.

IT has no visibility into what's being used, what those tools can access or what their terms say about ownership and privacy.

It's shadow IT, just with AI. Quiet, widespread and building risk in the background.

Third, output gets trusted without being verified. AI is remarkably confident in how it presents information. It doesn't pause or flag uncertainty. It produces clean, convincing content whether it's accurate or not.

The proposal with invented statistics looked just as credible as one based on real data.

A human intern might make that mistake once. AI can do it repeatedly and at scale. That's not a flaw. It's how the tool works. The risk shows up when no one reviews the output.

AI doesn't fix broken processes. It accelerates them. A disorganized business with AI just moves in the wrong direction faster.

How to supervise your intern

The answer isn't to ban AI. That's not realistic and it puts you at a disadvantage compared to businesses that are learning how to use it effectively.

The answer is to treat it like a new hire with a lot of potential and no context.

Set boundaries before people start.

Decide which tools are approved and which aren't. Keep it simple. A shared list that gets updated as things change is enough. This isn't about adding red tape. It's about knowing what's connected to your business.

Build in a review step.

AI drafts. Humans approve. Nothing should go to a client, vendor or the public without someone reading it first. It sounds obvious, but it's where things tend to slip.

Be clear about what not to share.

Client names, contract details, financial data, employee information. None of that belongs in a consumer AI tool. If people don't know where the line is, they'll cross it without realizing it.

The goal isn't perfect AI use. It's a team that knows how to use it without creating unnecessary risk.

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SPECIAL GUEST
ANDREA
Dumas

Lisa A. Brown sits down with Andrea Dumas for a candid conversation about leadership, community growth, tough decisions, and what it truly means to serve the people of the North Country. From balancing public expectations to discussing the future vision for Malone... including what's next for the former Flanagan space, this episode delivers honest insight, real conversation, and powerful perspective. You'll also hear Andrea's thoughts on women in leadership, raising a family in the North Country, and the realities of leading in today's world.

And yes... we even put the Mayor in the hot seat for a fun rapid-fire lightning round 🔥 This is more than politics, it's a conversation about resilience, responsibility, and community impact.

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Cont. FromTech Talk Page 1

highlighted something in me that I continue to work on...My obsession with trying to control things. (I can feel some of you giggling as you read this.)

I am confident not everyone can relate to this. My husband certainly handles it better than I do. But as a self-employed entrepreneur who raised two kids while building a business, I know some of you understand exactly what I mean. The amazing part is that many of these lessons came from the kids themselves. I continue to be surprised by what they teach me.

Here are a few things I am still learning.

1. Let It Go

I will be honest. The Charlotte High School Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2026 was a mess in so many ways. This newsletter is not long enough to describe everything that went wrong. As I watched it all unfold, there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. That did not stop me from pointing out every possible way they could have planned it better for both the graduates and their families.

More than once during those four long hours, I was reminded to simply LET IT GO.

As I settled into my stadium seat, I kept repeating to myself, "Let it go and enjoy the moment." Are you doing the same?

2. Give It All to God - Yes, all of it. Let go. Let God.

There is freedom in admitting that not everything is ours to carry or fix. Some things are simply outside of our control, no matter how hard we try to manage them.

The older I get, the more I realize how exhausting it is to carry things that were never meant for me to hold onto in the first place. I am a "fixer" of all things, so understanding that some things are indeed not mine to fix was a hard pill to swallow.

3. Enjoy All the Moments

Not just the big moments. The small ones matter just as much, and those are usually the ones that slip away.

At one point, I was so irritated about how

badly things were going that I almost missed the shenanigans of having my family around me, all of whom were making the best of the situation. They did not care about all the chaos happening around them.

Somewhere along the way, many of us stopped simply enjoying life. We rush from one responsibility to the next. We answer emails while eating dinner. We sit through sunsets while looking at our phones. We spend vacations worrying about what is waiting for us when we get home. Even during important moments, our minds are somewhere else.

The truth is, life keeps moving whether we slow down enough to enjoy it or not.

One of the greatest lessons I was reminded of during this trip was how differently children experience the world. They notice things we overlook. They laugh more. They are fully present in simple moments that adults often dismiss because we are too distracted, too busy, or too worried about things that ultimately do not matter.

I started realizing how much energy I waste trying to control situations, timelines, outcomes, and people instead of appreciating what is right in front of me.

The conversations. The laughter. The noise around the dinner table. The car rides. The hugs. The ordinary moments that someday will become the moments we miss the most.

We always think there will be more time. More summers. More graduations. More vacations. More opportunities to slow down later. But time does not pause while we are busy planning the next thing.

That is what hit me the hardest during this trip. My granddaughter is no longer a little girl. My grandkids are growing up quickly. Life is changing whether I am paying attention to it or not.

And honestly, I do not want to miss it because I was too busy trying to manage everything around me.

My point is this, sometimes the most productive thing we can do is stop. Sit still. Look around. Laugh a little longer. Put the phone down. Let the small frustrations go. Breathe in the moment before it becomes a memory.

Time is something you can never get back, yet we spend so much of it trying to control everything around us instead of living in the moments we have been given.

Lead every day with a happy heart, and life will become so much more enjoyable.

As you celebrate your own graduations, please heed this advice. Enjoy every moment with no regret.

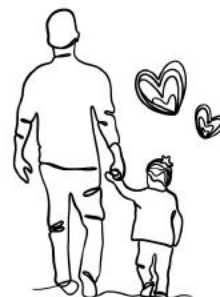
And you know I will always loop it back to a technology tip, I would be remiss if I did not point out one of the biggest distractions competing for our attention every single day. **Technology.**

Technology is an incredible tool. It helps us communicate, protect our businesses, stay informed, and remain connected. But if we are not careful, it can also quietly consume the moments that matter most. Notifications interrupt conversations. Emails follow us to dinner tables and vacations. Phones pull our attention away from the people sitting right in front of us. Somewhere along the way, many of us stopped disconnecting long enough to simply enjoy where we are and who we are with.

One of the best recommendations I can make is surprisingly simple. Create boundaries. Put the phone down occasionally. Silence the notifications during family time. Walk away from the laptop after business hours. And, please control your children's screen time, monitor their usage and talk to them about the interactions they are having on socials and games. Technology may be their entertainment, but it is not always their friend.

CST protects your data and secures your business, but only you can protect your time and your peace. Technology should support your life, not distract you from living it.

To all of the Dad's reading this - Happy Father's Day!



Lisa

Passionate NOT Pushy



<BOOK>
<OF_THE>
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What I'm Reading *12 Rules for Life* by Jordan B. Peterson

12 Rules for Life is a powerful book centered around responsibility, discipline, purpose, and personal growth. Through twelve practical principles, Peterson challenges readers to take ownership of their lives, embrace meaningful challenges, and focus on becoming stronger mentally and emotionally. One of the biggest takeaways for me was the reminder that while we cannot control everything happening around us, we can control how we respond, how we treat others, and how we lead ourselves through difficult seasons.

I also recently had the opportunity to meet Dr. Peterson at an event, and hearing him speak in person made the book even more impactful. His insight, honesty, and perspective on leadership, accountability, and human behavior were incredibly thought-provoking and left a lasting impression on me. This book is a must read!

Stop Missing Your Own Life

Reality hits hard when recognition happens. Somewhere along the way, many of us became so focused on building a life that we stopped enjoying the one we already have. That thought hit me hard recently.

As entrepreneurs, parents, leaders, and caregivers, we spend so much of our lives building. Building businesses. Building careers. Building homes. Building financial security. Building opportunities for our children and families.

And while there is absolutely nothing wrong with hard work, somewhere along the way many of us unknowingly trade presence for productivity. We become so focused on what is next that we stop appreciating what is now.

I think about this often as I get older. Life moves fast. Faster than we realize while we are buried in responsibilities, deadlines, appointments, emails, and expectations.

One minute your children are little. The next minute you are attending graduations and wondering how time disappeared so quickly. We tell ourselves we will slow down after the next project. After the next busy season. After the next promotion. After the kids are older. After things settle down.

But life does not really "settle down." It just keeps moving. That realization can be both sobering and freeing.

I recently spent time surrounded by family, kids, grandkids, laughter, noise, chaos, and unforgettable moments. What struck me most was how easily adults miss the beauty of what is happening right in front of them because we are distracted by stress, frustration, or the endless mental checklist running through our heads.

Children experience life differently. They are present. They laugh fully. They notice little things. They find joy in moments adults often rush past without a second thought.

Meanwhile, many of us are physically present but emotionally somewhere else.

We answer emails during dinner. We scroll through phones while sitting beside people we love. We spend vacations worrying about what is waiting for us back home.

Even in moments that should matter deeply, our minds are still racing toward the next obligation. And before we know it, another season of life has passed.

I am not writing this because I have mastered it. Quite honestly, I am writing this because I need the reminder myself. I have spent years believing that if I worked harder, managed better, planned more carefully, or stayed one step ahead, I could somehow control the chaos of life.

But the truth is, life was never meant to be completely controlled. It was meant to be lived. Sometimes we need to stop trying to perfect every moment and simply participate in it.

Sit on the porch a little longer. Watch the sunset. Laugh at the dinner table. Take the vacation. Put the phone down. Be fully present in conversations. Stop rushing through moments that may never come again. Because the reality is this. Success means very little if you are too exhausted, distracted, or overwhelmed to enjoy the life you worked so hard to build.

I think many people today are quietly burned out. Not because they are weak, but because they have spent years carrying responsibilities without giving themselves permission to pause.

Rest is not laziness. Slowing down is not failure. Choosing joy is not irresponsible. In fact, some of the healthiest and most successful people I know have learned something incredibly important. Life is not measured only by accomplishments, titles, revenue, or productivity. It is measured in moments. The conversations. The memories. The people we love. The time we spent truly present.

At the end of our lives, I do not believe any of us will wish we had answered one more email or attended one more meeting. But I do believe we will wish we had slowed down enough to enjoy the people and moments that mattered most.

So here is my reminder to you, and honestly to myself as well. Stop missing your own life. The people around you need your presence more than your perfection. And the life you are working so hard to build deserves to actually be lived.

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Lisa

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