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Visionary Ventures

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DEREK BORTHWICK
Practical Tips for
Immediate Application

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Unlocks Hidden
Opportunities

RIKA TAJIMA
Pioneering Precision Medicine

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Empowers Entrepreneurs

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Vision for Cognitive Revolution

CHRIS RYALL
Mastermind Behind Page and

BINOD BARAL
Redefines Global Cuisine

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Wisdom from a Wellness Innovator

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Pioneering Tumor Ablation

EVAN STEELE
From Frustration to Innovation

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Innovating Hope

NICOLAS WOLIKOW &
SIMON ISTOLAINEN
Mission to Transform Oncology

SHASHI RAGHUNANDAG
Advice for Agtech Entrepreneurs

DANIEL HOOFT
Offshore Engineering to
Ocean Farming

Trailblazing Entrepreneurship
An Exclusive Interview with
VICTOR GREEN
BUSINESS MAVERICK

Insights, Inspiration, and
Innovation from
a Serial Entrepreneur

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Pamela Harper Unlocks Hidden Opportunities

By Onat Oncu 1 Year Ago 0 15 Mins



Strategies for Transformative Business Growth

Pamela Harper discusses uncovering hidden opportunities, strategic growth, and guiding visionary leaders to success in an interview that highlights her exceptional career and expertise in business transformation.

Pamela S. Harper's remarkable journey as a business leader and strategic growth advisor is nothing short of inspirational. As the Founding Partner and CEO of Business Advancement Inc. (BAI), Pam has consistently demonstrated an unparalleled ability to uncover hidden opportunities and transform them into game-changing successes. Her strategic acumen has enabled visionary leaders to navigate uncertainty and achieve significant growth, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in value across top and bottom lines for companies spanning more than 30 industries.

With over three decades of experience, Pam's insights have become a beacon for CEOs, boards, and senior executives from entrepreneurial ventures to Fortune 500 corporations. Her expertise is widely recognised, and her thought leadership extends beyond her advisory roles. Pam co-hosts the acclaimed "Growth Igniters® Radio with Pam Harper and Scott Harper," a podcast series celebrated for its deep dives into business innovation and strategic leadership. The show's impact is evidenced by its accolades, including being named best Business, Marketing and Tech Podcast in the 2023 PopCon Podcast Awards and a 2024 Top 125 podcast by Thinkers360 Thought Leaders.

Pam's influence is also prominent in written media, where her insights have graced the pages of prestigious publications like Bloomberg Businessweek, Investor's Business Daily, and Chief Executive Magazine. Her authoritative voice on leadership, business growth, and strategic innovation has made her a sought-after commentator and keynote speaker on international stages, including TEDx.

Moreover, Pam's commitment to advancing the consulting profession is evident through her active leadership in various professional organisations. Her critically acclaimed book, *Preventing Strategic Gridlock®*, has served as a vital resource for business leaders and has been integrated into the curriculum of several business schools globally.

Outside of her professional endeavours, Pam is a performer, a yellow belt in Aiki Jiu-Jitsu, and a seasoned traveler with an exceptional sense of direction. Her diverse interests reflect a well-rounded personality and a dynamic approach to life and business.

In this interview, Entrepreneur Prime magazine delves into the mind of Pam Harper, exploring the experiences and philosophies that have shaped her illustrious career. Join us as we uncover the secrets behind her success and gain invaluable insights into the future of strategic business growth.

Can you share a defining moment in your career that significantly influenced your approach to strategic growth and innovation?

My defining moment came from a deeply personal journey that unfolded over the course of my career. As I led organizational development functions in successful companies of all sizes across different industries. Despite their success, these companies were disrupted by new technologies, innovative business models, and emerging competitors. The pain of witnessing this lost potential and the impact it had on so many people made me wonder: If there are so many best practices for leadership and management, why can long-term growth still be so elusive? This question was the turning point that sent me on a long search to discover what it truly takes to achieve lasting strategic growth and innovation in the changing world.

What inspired you to found Business Advancement Inc., and how has your vision for the company evolved over the years?

Initially, I founded Business Advancement Inc. based on my search for answers to the defining question from my corporate career. My vision was to enable companies across industries to unlock their full potential and accelerate momentum for game-changing growth by closing the gap between strategy and execution.

Over time, the success of my book "Preventing Strategic Gridlock" resulted in top leaders asking me to help them shape their strategies so their companies could become the "disruptor and not the disrupted."

As more leaders became focused on business innovation, my husband, D. Scott Harper, PhD, joined me as a business partner with his experience leading innovation for beloved brands in the life sciences. We shifted our vision to enable top leaders and teams of established companies to accelerate momentum to ignite game-changing innovation and growth.

Since then, as more top leadership teams focus on transformational growth, we've once again shifted our vision to enable visionary leadership teams to achieve game-changing long-term growth. We help them discover hidden opportunities to keep igniting game-changing innovation, transformation, and growth so they can continue to create a lasting legacy of good as the world keeps changing.

In your experience, what are the most common hidden opportunities that leaders tend to overlook, and how can they be better at identifying them?

We've learned that in a world focused on short-term rewards and constant pressure for results, even the most successful leaders can overlook opportunities to engage with a wide range of stakeholders about signals of emerging trends and issues. These can be either signs of potential disruption or serve as springboards for game-changing growth.

To create long-term value, leaders must embrace the complexity and uncertainty of uncharted territory without being immobilized by it. This requires thinking bigger and being opportunity-focused in the face of unexpected changes. Most of all, it requires engaging a wider range of stakeholders – including employees, customers, partners, investors and others – to join together with you to continuously share perspectives about the business environment and its strategic implications, genuinely commit to a transformative vision, and collaborate in ways that create both short-term and long-term growth.

Can you discuss a particularly challenging situation you've faced while working with a client and how you turned it into a success?

The CEO and board of a mid-market company had established aggressive growth targets despite a major downturn in their primary market. To succeed, the CEO needed four division presidents who had

been accustomed to working autonomously to agree on a new vision and strategy and transform into a high-performing C-Suite team. The presidents were fiercely resisting working together on the new vision and strategy. This standoff threatened to disrupt the company's leadership position in their industry.

Collaborating with the CEO, we focused on getting to the heart of the hidden issues underlying the paradoxical leadership dynamics these leaders were experiencing in the changing business environment. As they increased their trust in each other, they moved beyond their differences and committed to working together to transform into a high-performing C-Suite team. This enabled them to jointly make major strategic and executional decisions that created game-changing new value. The company's annual revenue increased nearly sevenfold over the next four years from \$100 million to almost \$700 million. This dramatically exceeded everyone's expectations.

Growth Igniters® Radio has received significant recognition. What do you think sets it apart from other business podcasts, and what has been your most memorable episode to date?

Now in our tenth year of podcasting, we continue to create eye-opening conversations with best-selling business authors, emerging thought leaders, and CEOs who are transforming the face of business in a constantly changing world. Each week we spark fresh insights, inspiration, and immediately useful ideas to help you and your organisation keep accelerating to new heights of innovation, transformation, and game-changing growth.

Our listeners tell us they appreciate our "broad range of leadership topics that other podcasts don't commonly address," and that we "dig beneath the surface to help listeners get the most out of each episode." We've received awards, including the 2023 PopCon award for "Best Business, Marketing, and Tech Podcast;" in 2024 we've once again been included in the list of "Top 125 Business Podcasts" by Thinkers360 Thoughtleaders."

A particularly memorable episode: "Is Your Board Fit for the Future?" with Peter R. Gleason, CEO of the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD). Based upon the NACD Blue Ribbon Commission report, Peter

Gleason shares highlights of the most impactful challenge for boards and management teams in the age of rapidly interacting “Megatrends,” and the “Recalibration” of expectations and roles between boards and management.

Your book, Preventing Strategic Gridlock® , has been used as a textbook in business schools. What key lessons do you hope readers and students take away from it?

The subtitle of the book is “Leading Over, Under & Around Organisational Jams to Achieve High Performance Results.”

A fundamental lesson of the book is that strategy and execution must be considered holistically instead of as separate activities conducted by different parts of the company. I call out the common but mistaken management assumptions underlying what I call “Strategic Gridlock” and lay out a process called “U.N.L.O.C.K®” to help leaders and teams more quickly respond and adapt to unexpected changes in the business environment.