

Strategies for Designing Your Recession-Proof Business

Guide + Workbook

AliceSeba.com 

Strategies for Creating a Recession-Proof Business

One of the biggest dreams many people have is to start a business.

But with that comes a LOT of work and a LOT of risk. Many people struggle to build something for years and years. Others build something amazing, only to have it crumble later.

And add today's challenging times, many businesses are REALLY struggling.

After 20 years of running a successful online business, I've seen a LOT. I've ridden out 2 recessions and even tougher times seem to be on the horizon, but through it all, I'm confident that I can make it through with flying colors and without interrupting the Dream Life I've been carefully crafting for myself.

Now I can't promise a fully recession-proof business for anyone...even myself. But as I said, I've been riding the waves for 20 years now and I've learned a few things.

And while the combination of all these strategies worked for me, I'm not suggesting that you have to follow up all of them. They're just potential strategies and should be viewed tips and definitely not rules.

I want to share those with you, so you can create a business that suits you and that will help you become an expert surfer too. ;)

If you have any questions about what you read or if you want to brainstorm, get feedback, make sure you [join me in the Design Your Dream Life with Alice Seba Facebook Group](#). Always happy to help!

Now, let's get started, but first some words of encouragement...

It's Not Just the Rich Who Will Get Richer

There's some old conventional wisdom that says that in tough economic times, the poor get poorer and the rich multiply their riches. I think the online world has changed all that because there are plenty of opportunities that do not require a lot of start-up cash or big budgets to maintain. You just need to be able to see those opportunities act on them.

But of course, not everyone has the knowledge and resources to make this happen for them, but because you have downloaded the report, you already know it's all possible, no matter your background or how much you have in your bank account.

With that in mind, let's run through these strategies...

Strategy 1: Focus on Digital Products

Here's the biggest blessing that I discovered when I first started my business in 2002, I had a brief foray into physical products (that fortunately, I did not have to keep an inventory for). But then I saw just how lucrative the digital world was becoming and fast forward to now, the variety of types of digital product opportunities are huge.

Most digital products are easy and inexpensive (often free) to create. They don't need storage space (other than inexpensive digital storage) and can be "mass produced" without incurring any additional production costs. The process of selling them can be largely automated and do not require shipping, so you're still satisfying customers when you're sleeping or out living life. They're also easy to update and adapt for new purposes. So one product can be reused and repurposed into a variety of different products, for different audience and at different price points.

Add to this, your customers get instant gratification by having their products immediately and can get started right away...and that is important to today's consumer. Right now, we can still beat Amazon Prime by a little and that's our advantage haha.

On the easy and free to inexpensive side, digital products can include ebooks, audio recordings, videos, graphics, fonts, photography, research, printables, courses, coaching programs, templates, calculators and spreadsheets, plans (ex. Menu, exercise, business), recipes and instructions. Online events are also a profitable product, made even more profitable when you record and transcribe those events and turn them into evergreen products you keep selling.

You can create these for sale for personal use or you can license them so businesses and individuals can publish them as well...which can be an even more lucrative side of this all. And that has been my main business model for the past 16 years. We can talk more about that in the future.

On the more investment required side, still lucrative digital products include apps, software and online platforms (also software).

All of the digital products mentioned here can all be turned into memberships or subscription-based products, so you're having your customers paying you over and over again for continuous access, giving you some potentially huge profit margins and opportunities for ongoing income.

What Types of Digital Products are You Interested in Creating?

What Things Do You Need to Learn about Creating Digital Products? (Be sure to [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Strategy 2: Limit Physical Products

After reading about the ease of profitability of digital products, you might already understand why I suggest limiting the physical products you sell.

Of course, I'm not saying you shouldn't sell physical products or even that they can't be the main or only type of product you sell. Obviously, you can see many examples of huge and even smaller companies seemingly effortlessly riding the waves of change with physical products.

But by focusing on physical products, you take on more risk in disruptions to your business. Even if you don't keep inventory, so you don't get stuck holding the bag, you can lose suppliers, they may run into supply issues, change their pricing or any number of things that can damage your business.

Luckily, there are a lot of dropshipping companies that can fulfill your physical product orders, so you can run a physical products business as a completely digital business. All you do is set up your website, add your products and the dropshipping company takes care of getting the products to your customers.

But the supplier risk I mentioned is still there. Plus, selling physical products often makes it so you can't adapt to market changes as quickly as you can with digital products and that's important...as you'll see later on this guide.

Of course, physical products can be a perfect complement a digital products business. For example, if you sell coaching programs, you might also sell books or journals that you ship to your clients and customers. Or you might sell merchandise in support of your branding or overall company message. For example, if you empower young women to become entrepreneurs, a line of t-shirts, mugs or organizational products might work perfectly.

In the end, the choice is yours...but after all these years, I would never choose the extra work and responsibility of having a physical products business.

Will physical products be a part of your business plan? How can you do this strategically?

Strategy 3: Avoid Services Unless...

Service businesses are usually a big draw to people because, like digital products, they're inexpensive to set up and run, especially if you're providing the services yourself.

But running a service business where you do the work essentially means you have set yourself up to trade your hours for dollars...which essentially means you have a job. A job where you are the employee, the employer, the marketing manager...wearing too many hats to get too far ahead.

Of course, I'm not knocking offering services as a great way to start making independent money. I started my online career as a copywriter and content writer for pay. It allowed me to generate an income to help support my family AND gave me extra to start investing into my business, so I could move away from services.

So if you're brand new and have some talents you can turn into money, I'd say go for it because it's a business you can set up quickly and easily. You just need a few clients and you've got it.

But I would encourage you to have an exit plan to more lucrative business opportunities you're learning about.

Now I know what you might be thinking. Perhaps you can expand your service business by hiring people to do the work, so you can focus on building the business. I mean, that's possible too, but labor is generally hard to profit from. There just isn't much mark up.

This model still might work if you can do any of the following...

- Outsource the work overseas, so you are able to mark it up profitably.
- Accumulate huge amounts of clients, so what you lack in mark up, you can make up in volume.
- Offer luxury services to wealthy people who are willing to pay much more.

For me, my writing business did turn into a larger ghostwriting company briefly. Because we wanted to offer quality writing services, we hired only native English speakers, so our labor costs were high. We also chose to target independent online business owners who were not interested in luxury services at a premium price. It was also difficult to generate a large clientele as this was simply a side business, so we never made it up in volume.

Of course, those are my mistakes and if you want to offer services, you can potentially surmount them. Personally, I think it's easier to manage large amounts of digital assets you can resell created with a small team than managing a large team it requires to offer services you can only sell once per client.

Will services be a part of your business plan? How can you do this strategically?

Strategy 4: Keep Expenses That Anchor You at a Minimum

The true beauty of a digital business is that you truly can run it anywhere you want and all from a single laptop or even a phone, if you really feel like it.

Now this doesn't mean you won't be investing in your business or building a team. Of course you will! But when it comes to riskier investments that can end up costing you money – like office space, equipment, materials, inventory – the less you do this, the more adaptable you and your business becomes.

In short, you CAN invest any way you want, but if you don't need to pay for certain things to be profitable...and don't need to be tied to physical assets that can potentially become liabilities, why would you? At least that's my philosophy.

What current or planned expenses could you cut from the budget?

Strategy 5: Reinvest to Become Your CEO

As noted, running a digital business can be done on an extreme shoestring budget, but if you want to grow in a way that helps you create true stability and the lifestyle freedom you've been hoping for requires strategic investment.

And one of the best things you can invest in is tools and labor that free up your time from daily business tasks, so you can focus on being the CEO of your business. Most solopreneurs function in so many roles in their business, that it's tough to find time, focus or energy to do the important higher level planning and controlling the direction of your business.

If you're doing admin work, customer service, creating products, bookkeeping, social media management, copywriting, IT support and everything else...how will you be able to ensure the business is growing and taking advantage of opportunities strategically?

The truth is, you can't...or at least not to your business' full potential.

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So always be on the lookout for tools that can automate specific tasks in your business or make them easier. For example, tools like page builders that make it easier to create and tweak sales pages that convert to better sales. Or software that helps you automate your bookkeeping, manage your mailing lists, etc. These are solid business investments when they save you time and/or help you make more money.

You should also invest in your education to learn the high level tasks that will help you grow your business. For example, you might buy a course on book on creating better sales copy or how to grow your list and profit from it.

Just beware of bright shiny objects. There are lots of products on the market targeted to online entrepreneurs that promise tons of reward with little work. Long lasting business success is never “push button”.

And sometimes bright shiny objects are solid products that can teach you a lot or help you do something well, but they are on subjects or for tasks that don't fit into what you're focusing on in your business. Stay focused and only make investments that make sense for your business...not ones that take you down the road to endless distraction.

Of course, at the beginning, you might not quite know where your focus is, but as the CEO it is your job to become clear on that. You may wander off your path sometimes, but learn from those mistakes and take note of the pleasant surprises, so you can make better decisions in the future.

In addition to tools and education, building your team is essential as a CEO. Having people who fulfill all the various roles of your business is important, so your business functions efficiently and you can provide the best experience for your customers as possible.

It may take time for your team to build as you learn exactly what you need AND you have the funds to invest wisely, but start reinvesting profits into help for your business immediately. And as your business builds, invest more because as mentioned earlier in this section, the more you can take every day business tasks off your plate, the more you can focus on being the CEO.

So where do you start by building your team? Here are a couple of approaches to take. I recommend using both:

- Start by outsourcing repetitive tasks that you don't enjoy. For example, you might want to outsource your customer service or bookkeeping because someone can come in and do those for you on an ongoing basis. You don't have to train them each time they do it. And remember, if your business is small and still growing, you CAN still afford to outsource your customer service or bookkeeping because the amount of work they'll have to do is relative to how successful your business is.
- As you start making money, you might think all is fabulous...but when you calculate your profit divided by the number of hours you work, you might be disappointed when you discover your hourly rate. So for example, if you find you're only making \$20 per hour, but your next goal is to make \$100 per hour (and trust me, you can make MUCH more than even that), start outsourcing those tasks you can get completed for about \$20 per hour. Then instead of focusing on \$20 per hour tasks, you have more time to get the \$100 per hour tasks done.

And keep building on both these strategies as you build your team, so your business can thrive, continue to grow and become a valuable asset. Because you must also remember...and we're getting to that topic later...you need to be adaptable. In your time as a digital business owner, you will evolve and will probably sell some of your websites or businesses.

But NOBODY wants to pay big bucks for a business that is solely dependent on their own labor when they purchase it. They want to buy an asset, so make your business an asset. Having a business that is an asset rewards you in so many ways, even if you never sell it.

What tools would help you with your business?

What is your outsourcing plan?

What questions do you have about smart investment and team building? (Be sure to [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Strategy 6: Differentiate Yourself in a Meaningful Way

Lots of people sell ebooks, software, courses, etc.

The ones who make it for the long haul differentiate themselves in a meaningful way.

And I don't just mean the quality of your products or the education you might provide. It has to go deeper because lots of people also sell quality ebooks, software, courses, etc.

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It's the EXPERIENCE you provide your customers and how you make them feel that makes all the difference. It creates loyalty and loyalty is everything because it brings repeat business, referrals and elevates your reputation for attracting other business opportunities.

Over the past few decades I have been blessed with a loyal audience who thinks very highly of me. I don't brag about it much on my websites, but if you look at comments in my groups or "overhear" people talking (or writing) about me in online marketing circles, you'll see they come with a lot of praise.

And while I call it a blessing, I know it's well deserved. People say they come to me for a variety of reasons including:

- **Quality products.** Okay, I said it's not important for differentiation, but it's still important. Many will say mine are the best, but others will say someone else's is the best.
- **I'm relatable.** I just talk to you as who I am and what my experience is. I don't put on airs or pretend to be someone I'm not. And I never would because it's too exhausting to keep up with fake stories. I keep it real, so I don't lose track.
- **I'm hilarious.** Okay I know I'm my biggest fan in this department, but I do give people a reason to smile and hopefully, laugh, every day.
- **I inspire.** In addition to smiles, I love to sprinkle inspiration to motivate people as I go about my day. Encouragement really goes a long way in creating a connection with your audience.
- **I have a different way of looking at things.** I have a very pragmatic way of looking at things. In political discussions, this sometimes really annoys people (oops)...but when it comes to business, people seem to appreciate it. Add to that pragmatism is accented with compassion, so you'll get real practical advice from me that still understands where you're coming from.
- **I'm a connector.** We'll talk more about this in Strategy #10, but I don't worry about competition and I connect my customers to other business owners. I also connect other business owners with one another, so they can form mutually beneficial partnerships.
- **I hire amazing people.** This is one of my favorite things to hear about...that my customers appreciate the incredible Melody in customer support or that they love the content our company creates for them. Plus, I often hire my own customers, giving them opportunities to earn extra money and learn new skills.

- **I'm approachable (BUT).** If a customer wants to connect with me, I am super protective of my time (I have to be...I'm the CEO)...but I also keep myself approachable as an independent business owner who has a lot to share. So I do not provide customer service, nor do I offer my time one on one. But I'm available to help everyone collectively if they want to connect through my Facebook Groups. There, they get to receive practical advice and get a glimpse into who I really am, so they keep coming back for more.

Of course, I'm telling you all these things about ME as an individual that differentiates my business right after I told you to build a business asset that runs without you. But capitalizing on your individual strengths will always help solidify that connection with your customers, but it also comes through in the team you create, the business connections you make and in everything you do. Differentiate yourself first and the rest will take care of yourself as you create a better and better experience for your customers.

Because it all comes down to people doing business with people they like and who match their values. Let that shine through because in tough times, your customers may not all be able to keep buying from you...but many of them will keep choosing you over other options when they have to cut the budget for the simple reason that they like you and what you stand for.

Why will your customers choose you when they have so many options or when they need to cut the budget?

Strategy 7: Be Wise about Your Target Market Strategy

There are so many people you can help and whose lives you can enrich by starting your own business.

And it's possible to make money, no matter who they are. If they are willing to pay for what you are selling, you can make money.

But not all target markets are created equal.

Many people want to start businesses to help people who need it the most, which is commendable. But sometimes in the process, that means they create a product that doesn't sell all that well or sells for a very low price...and isn't likely to survive an economic downturn.

If your customers don't have a lot of disposable income, it's going to be tough. So while you may want to help people manage their budgets and be more frugal, you might very well be shooting yourself in the foot at the same time.

BUT...BUT...BUT...

Let me give you another way to look at this...after I first tell you the complete and honest truth.

Targeting people with plenty of disposable income will help you create a more lucrative business and when the world of finance tanks, you are more likely to ride through it.

But your heart might still be set on helping those who aren't so privileged. I LOVE this and I don't think you should avoid it. The wonderful thing is that it's easy to run more than one digital business, so you can hedge your risky investment (a business targeting people without a lot of money) with a less risky one (a business targeting people with plenty of money).

In the end, it's your business, so you decide...but also look at this way. If you create a business that is recession-proof and creates a lot of money because people with a lot of money are willing to pay you...you then have plenty money to invest in / donate to other worthwhile projects that help those less fortunate, even if you don't run the project yourself.

Choose wisely. It will make a difference.

Who is your target market? What are their characteristics, how much money do they have to spend and what do they need your help with?

What Questions Do You Have about Honing in on Your Target Market? (Be sure to [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Strategy 8: Balance Low Ticket and High Ticket Items

So this naturally brings us to the next topic of whether you should sell low ticket or high ticket items because the truth is, depending on who you target and how you position yourself, you can often sell the exact same product (or with slight variations) for a very low price or a very high one.

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I love selling low ticket products because I am a softy for those with smaller budgets (as you can probably tell from the previous section), but it also means I can sell in large volume and build a large list of customers. Having a larger list of customers means, I have a big audience, just waiting to buy more stuff from me. I can email them anytime and they're going to buy a bunch of stuff.

On the other hand, selling high ticket items (several hundred or even thousands of dollars), means that I don't have to sell as many to make a lot more money and sometimes it IS easier to get 1 person to say yes at \$500, for example, than to get 50 people to say yes at \$10.

A lot of people also insist that customers who spend more money are often lower maintenance because they aren't as worried about money, so that's something to consider, but I'm not really sure that's always true. I have great customers for my low ticket products and I've had some pretty difficult high ticket customers. I think it all depends and it does come down to people only spending what they can afford. And with high ticket products, sadly people do often over-extend themselves and I think we have to take some responsibility for that in how we market to them.

In my online career, I've done both, but over the past few years have focused on lower ticket items. I believe that to be a mistake I am in the process of correcting because I think smart business owners who ride it out well will usually do both.

What are your planned price points for your products and what is your overall pricing strategy?

Strategy 9: Sell Products They Need & Create Alternatives

As I mentioned earlier in this strategy guide, I sell licenses to content that others can publish. For example, my partner, Yusef Kulan, and I sell [printables and done-for-you content packages at EkitHub](#). This is one of my new content licensing projects and I've had several over the years and I'm in the process of creating a few other projects around this in the next year or so...including helping others start similar businesses.

See I told you, I'm a connector. I'm happy to teach what I know and set people up and you'll see why in the next strategy.

But back to this strategy for now...

Content licensing a lucrative business model because:

- Business owners need content. They can't get away from it. This is why I started working as a copywriter and then made the mistake of meandering to a ghostwriting agency because it was easy to get clients.
- And it's easy to get clients, because creating content takes a lot of time, expertise and talent most business owners don't have.
- Many will hire writers and pay them a lot for it, but many cannot afford that. Add to that, when economic times get hard, those who could afford it might not be able to.
- But what is accessible to most business owners is licensing low cost content packages like the ones we sell. They buy a package as little as \$9.95 or up to \$97 and they can edit it, brand it and monetize it as we wish.
- In return, we can sell it to hundreds or thousands of business owners, allowing us to earn more for each project than if we worked with clients one on one.

So this is an example of selling a product they need...and also offering an alternative for when times to get tough.

Does that mean you should license content or sell "private label rights" content as we call it? Well not necessarily, but if you want to...I can help you with that venture later this year.

No, but you can look for opportunities like this in areas that interest you as well. What services do people offer that you could turn into a product instead, saving them a lot of

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money in the process...and making it possible for you to serve a lot of customers and make more money than helping people one-on-one?

Something to think about and apply, if you're able.

How will you create products people need that will serve as good alternatives when times get tough?

What questions do you have about implementing such a strategy? (Be sure to [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Strategy 10: Eliminate Competition (Maybe Not the Way You Think)

One thing that has made my business easier and steadier in the last couple decades is that my competition isn't really my competition.

I promote my competitors and they promote me (for mutual commissions, of course).

I chose a business where customers will keep buying this kind of product and they won't just want it from one source. So that means I can be the connector to other product sellers...and why I embrace when people set up similar type businesses.

Businesses can never have enough content. They need to fill their blog, to create products, for their social media...day after day after day, so they just keep coming back for more again and again. That's why I'm able to do this.

I don't know how that translates into other markets and I'm sure it may not always be easy to find such a perfection situation. But if you can find ways to enter a market that puts you in a position where competition doesn't matter and you can be a connector, that's a winning proposition.

Some ways to work with your competitors:

- Promote their products that won't harm your business by doing so.
- Collaborate by creating content together. Perhaps a podcast, webinar or book.
- Share their content that would be of interest to your audience.

And sometimes, when you're a connector, it means you don't have to do as much of the work or take as many risks.

Less work and less risk sounds good, right?

How can you work with your competition?

What help do you need when it comes to approaching your competition for mutual benefit? (Be sure to [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Now that brings us to our final and most important strategy that will guide you through perfecting the first 10, should you choose to use them...

Strategy 11 : ALWAYS Be Willing to Adapt and Evolve

As I've mentioned and as you can tell from the personal examples, my business has changed a lot over the years. I've had lots of projects and websites, but it's not that I'm jumping around from project to project. There is always a reason for the change that allows me to adapt better to the changes I see coming in the markets and how my own audience is evolving, so I can help them better AND create a business that better suits my interests and lifestyle...which is also always evolving.

And that's another good reason to focus on digital products. Adaptation and evolution is easier and not usually costly. And unless you're completely switching gears to something brand new, many of the content assets you've created, can be adapted in some way to your new projects. Plus, you can often bring your old audience to the new project. Leverage of what you've already got is a very powerful thing, so be sure to use it to your full advantage and your business will get better and better over time.

I can share more on this topic at a later date, but for now, keep your eyes out for the opportunities to adapt and evolve, but do it strategically and carefully so as not to overload yourself. Because YES, having a digital business means you can easily run more than one business or project and you can change to a new one just about

anytime...but it can also be a trap where you pull yourself into too many directions and just end up overwhelmed and hurting your profits.

What are you thinking about changing in your business and why? (If you need to brainstorm, [bring your questions to the Facebook Group](#))

Getting to Your Own Recession-Proof Business

I hope you found these strategies useful and found things you can implement into your existing business or a brand new business you start.

I'd love to answer your questions and stay in touch, so be sure to [sign up for the Dream Life with Alice Seba Facebook Group here](#). And of course, I'll email you when I have new resources and opportunities for you as well.

To your recession-proof business,



Alice Seba
CEO of Her Own Dream Life