

# Ep.44 - Lisa Lunsford

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Lisa Lunsford

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### A Announcer 00:01

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.

### E Ed Clemente 00:28

Hello, I'm Ed Clemente, your host today. And we're fortunate to have someone with a lot of energy. We'll find out why she has so much energy here in a minute. But Lisa Lunsford, she's CEO of GS3 Global, thanks for being on the show, Lisa.

### L Lisa Lunsford 00:42

Thank you, thanks for having me.

### E Ed Clemente 00:44

Oh, it's my pleasure. Why don't you tell people what, first of all, what GS3 is, it has an actual acronym for something, right?

### L Lisa Lunsford 00:52

Yes, yes, is Global Strategic Supply Solution. So that's kind of a mouthful, right? So after awhile, you know, I just got to a point saying GS3 because, you know, we're automotive, we all like

you know, I just got to a point saying GS3, because, you know, we're automotive, we all like acronyms. But GS3 actually started in 2010, you know, we kind of rose out of the ashes of the great recession. And we started as a value-added warehouser, you know, doing kitting, being a tier two, to a group that provided, what is now known as the Stallantis, and then we grew into a manufacturer. So we now pride ourselves in the fact that we have pivoted, in which we are more solutions-based, metal form company. And we engineer, we fabricate, we bend metal, primarily for the automotive industry, but we're also moving into the construction industry. So that's kind of exciting right now. So, construction for automotive only, or everything? No, for everything. We're looking at the energy, you know, looking at the energy infrastructure and saying, okay, what is it that we have to put in place where, where is the market going as we're looking to introduce alternative propulsion systems. And so when, in that, you know, we decided that we would actually partner with a construction infrastructure group, and work on a project in the western part of the state in which we are looking at, not only for the charging stations and the hydrogen fueling stations, we are also looking at alternative ways to power facilities, you know, reuse the land, you know, whether it's solar field development, whether it's using grey water to produce green hydrogen, you know, bringing all the players together in that space. So it's an exciting time for GS3, because I get to get get back into my chemistry. I haven't used my chemistry, oh, gosh, I'm gonna date myself, I think since 1986.

E

Ed Clemente 02:59

Well, you are an engineer, then by degree?

L

Lisa Lunsford 03:04

I am a chemist by degree. [Oh, wow.] Yeah, and engineer by training. Ford Motor Company hired me in 1996 from North Carolina, and I agreed to come up and which you know, every day, well, when the winter hits, or when the first cold air hits my ankles, that's when I realized that I made a promise that I was supposed to move back home and never did.

E

Ed Clemente 03:35

Beautiful state, North Carolina. You went to college there too, right?

L

Lisa Lunsford 03:39

Yeah, I went to an all girls school, went to a Bennett College. I was raised in a house full of four boys and my father said well, somebody's going to an all girls school, so I guess it's me. And Bennett College was like right in our backyard. My father always admired Bennett Belles, as we're called. Well, you know what I find interesting with all these interviews, you know we do, is some of the more interesting people are not like originated in Michigan, right? We have, Michigan, I think maybe because of the automotive industry and the manufacturing base, but we have a lot of transplants here, who like maybe roll their eyes about the cold, maybe a little bit when they get here, but then they like to stay. And that's kind of funny, but go ahead. What were you gonna say? No, no, Ed ya know, you're absolutely right. I remember when I hired and there were 11 of us. 11 transplants and all started in Plastics Division, and I think I'm one of two that actually stayed but, stayed in the state everybody, you know, kind of moved, moved all

around the country. They didn't necessarily go back south, you know, so they're, you know, a couple they went to New York, there's one in Wisconsin, and but it's amazing when you get here its, I don't know is something about that chaotic hum. Its something you know what I think it is, I think when you cross The Michigan border, Ohio border, all of a sudden you take off like a rocket. And that's that's really nice, you know? That's probably a bad things to say...

E

Ed Clemente 05:13

No, no, no, I mean, I would think I, I presumed you met all the new manufacturing and all the sudden you're into a quick business industry. And that's what I meant. I don't know, no state police listen to this call. The other thing too is that, you know, you're kind of it's interesting, but what is your definition? Because first of all, we got hooked up through Glenn Stevens and Chris Moyer, from the Detroit Regional Chamber. And you, why don't you explain your relationship with both of them.

L

Lisa Lunsford 05:51

Okay, well, we're GS3 is a MichAuto member and I am the first the inaugural Chair of MichAuto, they've been in the MichAuto's been in business since about I think it was 2012. And so this is the first time they decided to have a Chair and so I was so honored that they approached me about it and, and I in the work it, MichAuto, is because, I love all things automotive and, and working with MichAuto being a part of that team, the dynamics of all the different companies and member investors that are part of that is is amazing, because, you know, you get to hear everything about mobility, right? You get to talk about how do we protect the industry, right? What are we doing to protect the industry? Are we doing the right things to protect the industry? Are we doing the right thing to get new talent to the industry? What is it that we need to showcase and say, and, you know, how do we sustain the industry, you know, and we seem to move like a collective, a swarm, we get so much done, you know, and I think that's the best part about being a part of MichAuto, you just feel like you're part of something that, you know, really drives America, right, and really sustains what America is all about, which is about that freedom. You know, I think automotives give us that freedom. And so to me, just being part of that is just exciting.

E

Ed Clemente 07:23

Well, you're an example of it. You came from a different state and you went to Ford, I think you said originally. But look, you know, you've had many evolutions in your life already. And that opportunity is, your right, that's what kind of no pun intended drives America, eespecially for your field. Except that the border with Ohio. So the other thing too, I thought is you're also on the Board for the Detroit Chamber too right?

L

Lisa Lunsford 07:53

Yeah, I'm, I'm a board member there. And and, and again, working as a collective on the on the region, right, on what makes Detroit tick makes the region tick. Right. And so it's is again, working together to make that region, to protect what we have here in Michigan to you know,

continue to sound the board because as we as Michigan, as the Detroit region moves, you know, we have all these other states coming after our signature, right? And sometimes you forget how important that industry is, or how you know, you, you have this habit of saying, oh, yeah, the Eiffel Tower. Yeah, we know its there, we know, we know. But how many people would love to have that Eiffel Tower? Right? How many people would love to have the automotive industry and be able to say that I am part of what makes America move? I am that heartbeat. And I think sometimes we forget that. So we working together with Detroit Regional Chamber, with MichAuto, with the state with the other, the other counties that you know, have these great R&D centers or, and other businesses that are part of this region is again, it's electric. I love the hum, I love that chaos of it.

**E** Ed Clemente 09:19

Well, you're also doing, to tie into that, you're doing some things, is it onshoring or insourcing? I didn't know what the exact term...

**L** Lisa Lunsford 09:26

Its onshoring were, you know, manufacturing is coming back, which is an exciting time to really be in manufacturing because now we are we are truly understanding our work.

**E** Ed Clemente 09:36

So, also, so with all these challenges we're having, and we're going to get to your supply chain angle too in a minute. But you how do you see companies maybe coming back to the United States. What is part of your perspective on that?

**L** Lisa Lunsford 09:52

Well, I think this is a great time to be onshoring. Here we are, you know where we are building back what really built America. And you know, bring it back to innovation, you know, being a part of that innovation, and being where we build what is necessary here to sustain not only America, but I believe the world, because I do believe that innovation, we should be collaborative, of course, across borders across waters, but at the same time, I think that we should look at how we can build here to sustain the industry here.

**E** Ed Clemente 10:31

And you actually have a very active ability to do that with youth, I guess, or people going to school? Because you're on the Illitch Business School Global Supply Chain Advisory Board, right?

**L** Lisa Lunsford 10:44

Yeah. Yeah. That that, oh, my gosh, you know, meeting a meeting the kids that aor the young folk or the young. I like to call them youngins, because I think they call me Old Head you know, I got that grey going and everything. So I guess I'm the OG now.

E

Ed Clemente 11:00

No gangsters here.

L

Lisa Lunsford 11:03

And, you know, sitting there and listening to them, and listening to their ideas is just great. Because I enjoy mentoring I enjoy, you know, bringing up that next generation, because I need somebody to pay for the Social Security, because I want to be sure I put it in good hands. But it's an exciting time for them to see how all of this works together, how we are all collaborative, globally, but how also can we be collaborative nationally, and regionally. And what that looks like, I had the pleasure of mentoring a young student whose parents owned a restaurant. And she at first, she didn't catch that some of the things that she was going through with the supply chain, not getting paper plates, not getting the, the not even getting the utensils, and, and the food and all this was really part of this larger scope or scale of the supply chain. And once we talked about it and stuff, she actually saw that she had experience in supply chain management, and that she could go off and actually work in that world of supply. You know, not just from a procurement standpoint, she was also looking at it as a customer. And she could also look at it as from the supplier base. So it's really great being a part of that.

E

Ed Clemente 12:23

Yeah. And I know, you might be familiar too, with the MEDC's Mobility with Trevor Pawl and some of those guys as well.

L

Lisa Lunsford 12:31

Yeah. Yeah, that is, I mean, you know, to know that the state sees mobility, you know, sees where the automotive industry is really the cause for the mobility space, right? I mean, everything we do, we do while we're in motion, okay. And so to know that they thought enough about the industry and the importance of the industry to establish an office like that. And so some of the things that are coming out of that are are great, like the High Tech Development Initiative. And we stayed, you know, Mitch Otto is working collaboratively with, with that office to, you know, set a plan set a strategy in which, you know, we can retain talent that we are growing up here in Michigan, right here to use, in the industry and within the state. Because when we're talking about high tech, we're not just talking about automotive, right, we're talking about it all, we're talking about medical devices, we're talking about food, we're talking about farming, we're talking about everything that happens within the state, the the software coding, you know, we have Epic Games that's here. You know, they're their founder's here. And some of this just see some of the stuff that he's working on make Zoom so interactive that Ed, we could have a Zoom meeting with your app, the two avatars and we could go walking. I mean, it's just amazing to me.

A

Announcer 13:56

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E

Ed Clemente 14:11

What sort of trends or disruptors to, do you see, I think you've already hinted at quite a few of them, but anything specifically you think you haven't mentioned yet?

L

Lisa Lunsford 14:22

Well, you know, I look at you know, this the electric vehicle which is which is great, but everybody always says that I don't like electric vehicles right? They know me I love the ICE. I love the rumble of the engine. I love the smell of exhaust, I mean all the toxic stuff, right? But I do like electric vehicles because off the line, they are a lot faster than my ICE (internal combustion engine,) so I love their internal combustion engine. So so you know, I'm a speed demon too. And, but, you know, as as we're going and we're developing, I always think that we should be looking further. Is that, is the electric vehicle it? Or is that just a stepping stone to something else? You know? How, what is it that there is on the horizon? Is it hydrogen, it could be another, it could be an internal combustion engine that is designed to be more environmentally friendly, you know. So when I, when I see hydrogen or the fuel cell electric vehicle coming down the pike and looking at that, and watching that development, I'm wondering if the EVs did not set that platform for that to even take place? And as that's taking place, now, what do we have to do to actually support that? What, you know, collectively with the, with the energy groups? What are we looking at, you know, how do we make this thing a go? Because and how do we get the software right? And, you know, what, what is it going to take to keep the cyber bullies at bay, you know, the cyber, I should say, the cyber stalkers, a cyber threat to where we do have full control of our vehicles. You know, just the try to put it out together and work with everybody on it is, is great, because everybody comes from a different perspective from the software developers, they come in from the electric power companies, and you know, what, what do we have to do there? And from the fossil fuel community, what does it look like, you know, to them, you know, how do we all go down this path together? And in a more balanced, I think, more balanced path, then, you know, just racing down getting there. And, you know, now like, now we're here now what? But I do see where hydrogen might be the disrupter.

E

Ed Clemente 16:49

Yeah, and I think you also point out to youth, because you are mentoring them, they might want very different things than the Gen X or other generations might want. And, you know, a lot of them don't even like driving sometimes. And so I mean, that's gonna affect whether they just want point A to point B, or whatever, you know, in the future.

L

Lisa Lunsford 17:11

Yeah. I think my daughter and her little buddies, they're all 15. You know, they're high schoolers. And my daughter just went and got a driver's permit yesterday. Totally disappointed, because she couldn't take on the hard card. Right? She got the piece of paper. And she was like, oh, when am I going to get my when am I going to get my permit? Yeah. So, so I was totally excited that this kid wanted to drive. So now I could stop. Um, and in talking to them, you know, its funny its maybe about, I could say, 50/50, 50% want to drive the other 50% want the others to come and pick them up. And they kinda you know, they like the idea of ubering, you know, they so its, it's an interesting time, because it's like, we really don't know, right? We we don't know. And I think but as we're thinking this through, I think it's great that we're thinking about both. We're thinking about the ones who want to drive the ones who can't drive and the ones who do wish to drive. And as we're thinking about how do we put this whole mobility together, you know, I think it's, it's just a, it's just an exciting time to see how all of this unfolds. Because it's, you know, I don't have a crystal ball, but I'm looking at it and saying I don't think a nameplate is going to be as important, you know, or the styling is going to be as important as the point A to point B. Its one of those things that is almost scary to me, because it's like a brave new world. And I'm coming through, I've been driving since forever. And now to know that that might be taken away from me before I'm ready, you know? Well, who knows? I know that sort of just touched on the next question, which is, if you could go back maybe and talk to your high school self, what would you tell yourself to do for career-wise? Oh my guess I would say, be open. Don't be so rigid. Don't get stuck on time. Don't get stuck on time. I would just say be very fluid, be a generalist. Continue to learn, stay open. Its just beautiful, what can happen when you are open. It's just a lot. You know, you don't have to be stuck in one industry or one mindset that that's the only way things can get done. And I think when you have an opportunity to explore, you're so much more creative. And I would tell my, my younger self that because I was very rigid. I was very definite about things and it only, it was only after I had my child that I realized that I, you know, needed to be more fluid, that, you know, she made me a better person in that. So...

E

Ed Clemente 20:12

Well, you know, I know you've met our new CEO Quenton Messer. And I also think that that's the kind of advice you want to give him to when you because, you know, we're looking how to keep talent in the state. And that's the sort of advice and you know, people who are actually hiring people, that's, they need to hear that and anticipating what the next gen is going to want and how they're going to grow into these jobs. So that's why your work at Illitch School is important to you know, keep that in the forefront too. Because you're, you're you're on a good path, and logically, I think. The last question is, because you're a transplant and I know you come from racecar driving atmosphere of North Carolina, but what do you like best about living in Michigan now?

L

Lisa Lunsford 21:00

Yeah, I love the I love the organized chaos. You know, I love the hum of Michigan. Its something about it, you get here, I don't think it's the four seasons or anything. Because, you know, again, when that first cold winds hits I always, you know, reminisce about going home. But it's really about the people, you know, and I also believe this is truly the land of opportunity. If you have an idea here in Michigan, nine times out of 10, you can find somebody there to help you work it

out, you know, all these engineers that are around here, you can bounce an idea for somebody and by the time you've left, let's say a table of 20 people, you have come up with a new new invention. I think it's wonderful here with that.

E

Ed Clemente 21:49

You're gonna have some opportunities, I think, in the future to work with the Innovation Center that will be opening not too far from the Illitch School.

L

Lisa Lunsford 21:55

That's right, and I'm looking forward to that. I have some crazy ideas. I'm ready to go with.

E

Ed Clemente 22:02

Well, anyway, once again, I want to thank you today I'm going to our guest, again was Lisa Lunsford. She's the CEO of GS3 Global and you've been a pleasure to talk to and a lot of fun. I appreciate your answers and thanks again for doing the show today.

L

Lisa Lunsford 22:17

Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity. Have a great day.

E

Ed Clemente 22:20

Make sure you tune in next week with Charlie Tyson. He will be in Vegas for the Consumer Electronics Show. He'll be giving us an update and all the technology and mobility opportunities that helped Michigan out at the show.

A

Announcer 22:35

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