



The Business Owner's Retirement Playbook

How to Prepare Your Company (And Yourself) For A Future Sale

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Why Don't Business Sales Happen as Easily as People Expect?

Many business owners imagine a clean timeline: decide to retire, find a buyer, agree on terms, and transition out. In reality, business sales slow down or stall for a few predictable reasons.

Buyers, lenders, and advisors each move at their own pace, and that pace doesn't always match your plans. A buyer might ask for another year of financials. Their lender may request additional documentation. Or questions that come up during the review process can take time to resolve.

Sales can also get held up when the buyer and seller have very different ideas about valuation. Owners tend to think in terms of what they've built. Buyers think in terms of what they can operate. Those two views don't always land in the same place.

And finally, many businesses rely heavily on the owner's knowledge, relationships, and instincts. If too much of the operation lives in your head, buyers see risk, and that can slow the process down.

Business sales can still be very successful. They just take more preparation and time than most owners expect.

Planning Step: Look at your desired retirement year. If a buyer needed more time, would it change your plans? If yes, consider building more flexibility into your timeline.

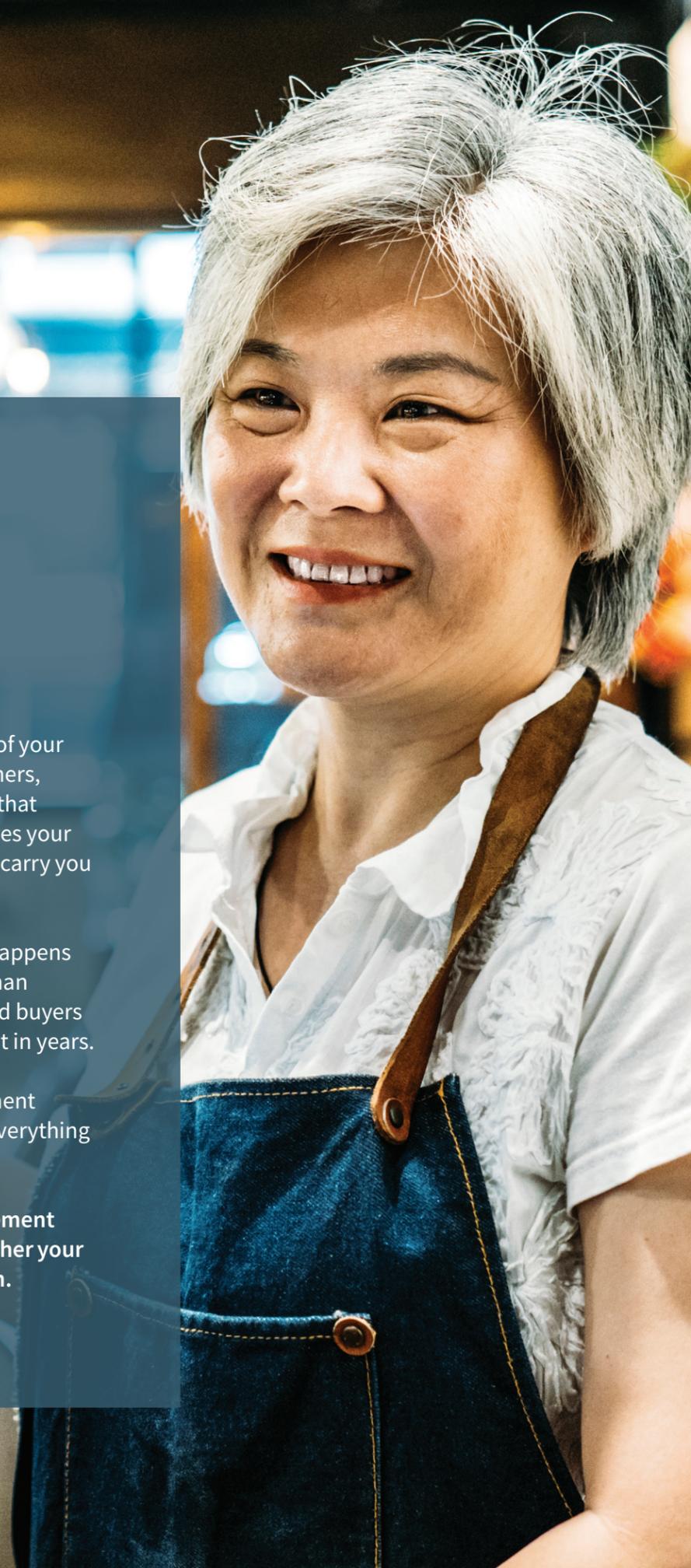
Start by Understanding the Realities of Selling a Business

If you're a business owner, there's a good chance the sale of your business is part of your retirement plan. And for many owners, that makes sense. You've spent years building something that supports your family, provides jobs to your team, and serves your community. It's natural to think the value you created will carry you into the next chapter.

But selling a business isn't like flipping a switch. It rarely happens on the exact timeline an owner wants. Deals take longer than expected, valuations don't always match expectations, and buyers often look for things owners haven't needed to think about in years.

None of this means a sale won't be part of a strong retirement plan — it simply means the strongest plans don't rely on everything lining up perfectly at once.

The goal of this guide is simple: To help you build a retirement plan that gives you options, flexibility, and control, whether your business sells exactly as planned or takes a different path.



Is Your Business Transferable Without You Running Every Detail?

A transferable business is one a buyer can step into with confidence. And while every business looks different, buyers tend to look for the same core things.

They look for clear processes. If the work is documented and easy to follow, a buyer can picture themselves running it.

They look at the team. When everything flows through the owner, buyers worry about what happens when you step out. When the team knows their responsibilities and carries them well, the business feels sturdier and less dependent on any one person.

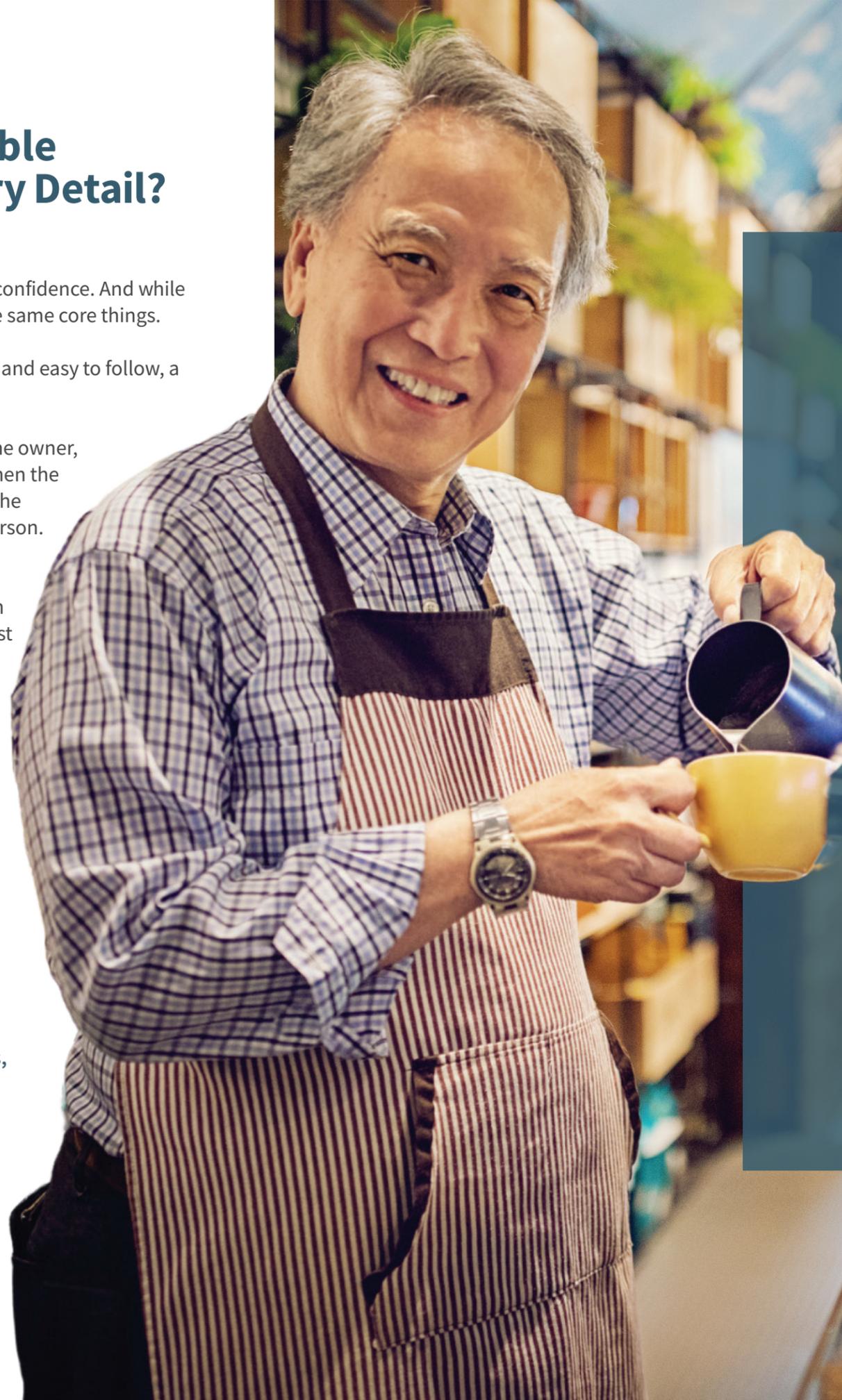
They look at relationships. If customers only work with you, that can create uncertainty during a transition. When clients are connected to the business as a whole — not just the owner — it's easier for a buyer to imagine stepping in.

And they look at the financials. They don't have to be perfect. They simply need to be clean, organized, and understandable to someone who hasn't been with the business for decades.

A realistic, third-party valuation often pulls these pieces together. Buyers trust objective numbers, and owners often find it clarifies their own expectations as well.

Transferability isn't about perfection. It's about showing the buyer the business can stand on its own two feet.

Planning Step: Choose one area — processes, financials, client relationships, or team structure — and make one improvement this month.



Are You Starting Early Enough to Prepare for a Sale?

A strong sale doesn't happen in the final year of ownership. It happens because of decisions made three to five years ahead of time.

That preparation creates space to strengthen operations, develop key employees, organize your financials, improve transferability, address valuation questions, and build savings outside the business. It also gives you time to decide which exit strategy fits your life instead of grabbing the first option that appears.

You don't need to do everything at once. You just need to start early enough that you're not trying to solve everything while you're already tired or ready to step back.

Planning Step: Think ahead three years. If you wanted the option to sell at that point, what would need to be true? Identify three items and start working on them.



Are You Relying Too Heavily on the Business to Fund Your Retirement?

It's extremely common for business owners to have the majority of their net worth tied up in their company. After all, that's where you've invested your time and money. But it also means your retirement depends on a single event: a successful sale at the right time.

You can avoid rushing into a deal. And you can choose an exit strategy that fits your life instead of forcing one that doesn't feel right. **Separate savings don't replace the business sale. They give you room to breathe.**

When your retirement plan has strength outside the business, everything gets easier. You can retire even if the sale takes longer. You can walk away from a low offer.

Planning Step: Review your personal savings. If most of your retirement depends on selling the business, it's time to diversify.

How Can Business Owners Build Retirement Security Outside the Business?

Business owners have access to retirement plans that allow for higher contributions than most workplace accounts. SEP IRAs and Solo 401(k)s are two examples, but each has different rules depending on your payroll and business structure.

You don't need to choose a plan today. You just need to understand what's available and begin contributing consistently. The more you build outside the business, the less pressure you feel to accept the first offer — or the wrong offer — when you're ready to retire.

Planning Step: Talk with your advisor or tax professional about retirement plan options available to business owners. Even small, consistent contributions build meaningful security.



What If the Business Doesn't Sell Right When You Want It To?

A full sale is only one way to exit the business. Many owners take different paths.

Some sell only part of the business now and the rest later. Some bring in a manager, reduce their hours, and slowly shift out of the day-to-day. Some keep the real estate and lease it back to the new owner. Others move into a consulting role, staying involved without carrying the full weight of operations. And in some families, passing the business on to the next generation makes sense.

These options all work best when your retirement plan doesn't rely on a single lump-sum sale. Flexibility comes from having savings outside the business.

Planning Step: Consider which transition path best matches your personality and lifestyle. The right exit becomes clearer when you picture life after ownership.

Ready to Align Your Business With the Retirement You Want?

You've built a business that supports others. Now it's time to build a retirement plan that supports you. When you prepare the business and your personal finances together, you give yourself something every owner wants: options.

If you want help choosing a transition strategy or strengthening your retirement plan, I'd be glad to walk you through your next steps.

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**Real Wealth Starts with Real Life.
Don't just plan the numbers. Plan the life.**



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