

Your Business Made You Wealthy – What Happens When You’re Ready to Walk Away?

Seven decisions worth thinking through long before an exit is on the table

For years, the goal was simple.

Start a business and scale.

And it worked.

The company became your income, a significant part of your net worth, and probably bigger part of your life than you ever imagined when you started it.

But eventually, the question changes.

What happens when you’re ready to hang up the cleats?

That could be three years from now. It could be ten. You may not have put a date on it at all.

Regardless of the timeline, it’s worth thinking about now.

Because an exit doesn’t begin when a buyer makes an offer. And some of the decisions that matter most are much easier to make while you still have time and options.

Here are seven decisions worth considering before you’re ready to step away.

1. If You Could Leave on Your Terms, What Would That Actually Look Like?

Selling isn’t the only way out.

For some owners, it’s one check and never looking back. For others, it’s keeping a piece, passing the business down, transitioning it to key employees, or staying involved without running the day-to-day.

There’s no right answer. The point is knowing what **your** answer looks like before you’re forced to make it.

Because the clearer you are on how you eventually want to step away, the more time you have to build towards it.

2. You’ve Spent Years Building It. Do You Know What It’s Actually Worth?

If you're a successful owner, you probably have a number in your head.

But what the business is worth to you and what the market says it's worth can be two very different numbers.

That matters whether you plan to sell, transition internally, or simply how you think about the business as part of your overall wealth.

You don't have to be ready to leave tomorrow to understand what you've built today.

3. Your Business Has a Number. So Does Your Life.

Knowing what your business is worth is only half the equation.

What does it need to be worth for you to walk away on your terms?

When the business stops paying your salary, what does your life cost? What do you want the next 20-30 years to look like? Travel? A second home? Helping your kids? Another business?

Whatever the case may be, the goal isn't just to build a business worth some number.

It's to know what that number actually needs to do for you.

4. The Number on the Offer Isn't the Number You Keep.

You run the numbers and discover you need \$10 million to walk away comfortably.

Then the offer comes: \$10 million.

Perfect.

Or is it?

Taxes, debt, transaction costs and the structure of the deal can create a meaningful difference between the value of the business and what ultimately ends up on your side of the table.

And if you aren't selling outright, the picture changes again. Retained ownership, family transfers or an internal transition can all leave you with very different financial outcomes.

The number attached to the business is important.

What that number becomes for you is crucial.

5. The Business Made You Wealthy. How Much Longer Should Your Future Depend on It?

Putting a lot of your time, money, and energy into one company probably helped create your wealth in the first place.

But success eventually changes the question.

It stops being only:

“How much bigger can I make this?”

And starts becoming:

“How much of what I’ve already built am I still willing to put at risk?”

There’s no magic percentage nor universal answer.

But there’s a difference between taking risk to build wealth and continuing to take that same risk once you’ve already built it.

6. One Day, The Business Won’t Be Your Financial Engine. What Replaces It?

For years, your business had a job.

It produced your income, created wealth and gave you somewhere productive to put capital.

Once you step away, your wealth gets a new job.

Now it may need to produce income. Fund your lifestyle. Support your family. Stay ahead of inflation. Accomplish estate or charitable goals.

That transition can be easy to overlook while you’re still busy running the company.

Building wealth and living from wealth are two very different jobs.

It’s worth thinking about the second before you’re finished with the first.

7. The Morning After

You finally step away.

Now what?

For years, the business probably dictated a lot of your life. Your schedule, your decisions, where your attention went and, sometimes, whether you could actually take that vacation without checking your phone 37 times.

Then one morning, that changes.

For the first time in a long time, you get to decide what gets your time.

Maybe you stay involved without running the day-to-day. Maybe you finally take the trips you've been putting off. Spend an irresponsible amount of time on the golf course. Or invest in something new.

Stepping away doesn't mean everything you've built goes out the window. If anything, it gives you the freedom to decide which parts of that life you want to keep, and which you're fine leaving behind.

The Best Exit Is the One You Get to Choose

There's no perfect way to step away from a business you spent years building.

The right answer is whatever allows you to do it on your terms.

And even if that day is three, five, or ten years away, having the conversation now can give you something that's much harder to create later: **options**

Our team spends a lot of time having these conversations with business owners well before there's an offer on the table. Not because they're ready to sell tomorrow, but because they want to understand what needs to be true when that day eventually comes.

If any of this sparked something you haven't thought through yet, that's probably a good place to start.

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