ASCEND
PERSONAL M&A ADVISORY

BUSINESS OWNER GUIDE

THE EXIT VALUE GUIDE

15 CHANGES THAT MAKE THE BUSINESS STRONGER NOW AND MORE VALUABLE LATER

THE OWNER PARADOX

The less the business needs you, the more valuable it can become.

It sounds backwards to many owners. But all else being equal, a buyer pays more confidently for a business that can keep customers, staff, cash flow and decisions moving without the seller personally holding everything together.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE EVEN IF YOU NEVER SELL

These are internal business improvements first. Exit benefits are the by-product.

MORE FREEDOM

Fewer decisions and customer relationships depend on you personally. The business gives you more choice over how you spend your time.

MORE CONTROL

Cleaner numbers, clearer processes and stronger management make problems visible before they become expensive.

MORE OPTIONS

A transferable business can be sold, passed on, refinanced, acquired into a group - or simply held with less owner dependency.

Build a business you do not have to carry - and you create value whether somebody buys it or not.

PEOPLE

VALUE

Can the business operate without you and any one key person?

NUMBERS

VALUE

Can somebody understand the economics without a long explanation?

PLATFORM

VALUE

Could a new owner take control without rebuilding the company first?

ASCEND
PERSONAL M&A ADVISORY

PART 1 - MAKE YOURSELF LESS ESSENTIAL

Stop being the operating system.

The goal is not to disappear. It is to make the company less dependent on you. These five changes make the business easier to run today and much easier for somebody else to own tomorrow.

1 REDUCE OWNER DEPENDENCY

DO THIS Write down the decisions, relationships and approvals that only you currently handle. Delegate them deliberately and give somebody clear authority to own the outcome.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
You stop being the bottleneck and get time back for strategy.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer sees a business, not a job they must replace you in.

2 BUILD A REAL SECOND LINE

DO THIS Give named managers ownership of sales, operations, finance or delivery - with targets they are accountable for.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Problems get solved closer to where they happen.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Management continuity lowers handover risk and improves buyer confidence.

3 REMOVE KEY-PERSON SINGLE POINTS OF FAILURE

DO THIS Cross-train important roles, document critical knowledge and build a succession or retention plan around people the business cannot currently lose.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Holiday, illness or resignation becomes less disruptive.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer is less exposed to one employee walking out with the know-how.

4 REDUCE CUSTOMER CONCENTRATION

DO THIS Actively grow outside your largest accounts, formalise key relationships and track revenue concentration every month.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
One customer cannot damage the whole company overnight.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Revenue looks safer, more diversified and easier to finance.

5 STOP MAKING SALES DEPEND ON YOU

DO THIS Move contacts, pipeline, pricing logic and account ownership into the CRM and the team. Introduce customers to the people who will remain.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Sales becomes a repeatable company process rather than your personal network.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Revenue is more likely to survive your exit and protect value.

THE TEST: Could you leave for four weeks without revenue or decisions falling apart?

If not, your first value-creation project is probably reducing the number of things only you can do.

PART 2 - MAKE THE NUMBERS EASY TO BELIEVE

Make the numbers easy to believe.

Clean numbers reduce uncertainty for you now and for a buyer later. Strong financial discipline is not just for due diligence - it lets you run the business with fewer surprises every month.

6 BUILD MORE REPEATABLE REVENUE

DO THIS Track repeat purchase, retention, recurring contracts and renewal behaviour. Where appropriate, redesign offers so more revenue returns without starting from zero each month.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Forecasting, staffing and cash planning become easier.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Repeatable revenue feels more durable and therefore less risky.

7 MAKE MARGINS CONSISTENT

DO THIS Know margin by product, service, customer or job. Fix chronic underpricing, uncontrolled discounting and cost leakage.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
You see where profit is actually made and can act earlier.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Buyers trust maintainable earnings more than one unusually strong year.

8 RUN MONTHLY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

DO THIS Produce a simple monthly P&L, balance sheet, cash view and the few operating KPIs that explain performance.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
You manage from evidence rather than bank balance and instinct.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Diligence becomes faster because the financial story can be evidenced.

9 CLEAN UP ACCOUNTS AND ADD-BACKS

DO THIS Separate personal or one-off expenditure, keep payroll and expenses disciplined and document genuine exceptional items as they occur.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
You get a truer picture of what the business really earns.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Fewer arguments arise over adjusted EBITDA and quality of earnings.

10 IMPROVE CASH CONVERSION

DO THIS Manage debtor days, stock, deposits, supplier terms and working capital deliberately - not just when cash feels tight.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Profit turns into usable cash faster and funding pressure reduces.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer sees less working-capital risk and fewer funding surprises.

THE TEST: Could an outsider understand how this business makes cash in 30 minutes?

If the answer needs you explaining every adjustment, the financial story is not clean enough yet.

PART 3 - MAKE THE BUSINESS EASY TO HAND OVER

Hand over a platform - not a clean-up project.

A buyer should inherit a functioning business, not a list of overdue repairs. These final five areas reduce operational surprises today and make due diligence feel far less threatening later.

11 DOCUMENT THE CORE PROCESSES

DO THIS Capture how the business sells, prices, delivers, invoices, handles complaints and manages recurring operational tasks. Keep it practical - not a 300-page manual nobody uses.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
Training is faster and quality becomes less dependent on memory.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer can see how the business keeps running when people change.

12 REMOVE SUPPLIER DEPENDENCY

DO THIS Know which suppliers could stop you trading. Build alternatives, written terms, stock buffers or contingency plans where the risk matters.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
One supplier issue is less likely to stop delivery.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
The supply chain looks resilient instead of fragile.

13 KEEP LEGAL, HR AND COMPLIANCE HOUSEKEEPING CLEAN

DO THIS Keep contracts, licences, insurance, IP, employment documents, data protection and statutory records current and easy to find.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
You reduce day-to-day legal and people risk.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
Due diligence finds fewer reasons to delay, renegotiate or chip the price.

14 INVEST BEFORE THE BUSINESS LOOKS TIRED

DO THIS Do not defer every system, equipment, premises or technology decision because you may sell one day. Fix the obvious operational debt while you still benefit from it.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
The company runs better and staff work with fewer workarounds.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer is less tempted to deduct a future repair bill from the price.

15 BUILD A CREDIBLE GROWTH STORY

DO THIS Identify two or three realistic growth levers and collect evidence: capacity, demand, pipeline, geography, pricing, cross-sell or new channels.

RUN IT BETTER NOW
The team has a clearer direction and stronger priorities.

SELL IT BETTER LATER
A buyer can see upside they can execute - rather than heroic forecasts.

THE TEST: Would diligence confirm the story - or expose a clean-up project?

Fixing these things while you still own the business means you benefit from the improvement before any buyer does.

ASCEND
PERSONAL M&A ADVISORY

THE OWNER PARADOX - MADE SIMPLE

Transferability creates options - and value.

Making yourself less essential can increase both your freedom today and the value somebody else may place on the business tomorrow.

OWNER-CARRIED

You sell, price, solve, approve and hold the key relationships.

High dependency. Low transferability. The buyer is replacing you.

MANAGEMENT-LED

Managers own the day-to-day while you still lead important commercial and strategic decisions.

Better resilience. Easier handover. More scalable.

OWNER-LIGHT

You set direction, allocate capital and challenge performance. The business operates without needing you in every room.

Higher transferability. More buyer confidence. More personal freedom.

A SIMPLE 90-DAY INTERNAL VALUE PLAN

Do not try to fix all 15 at once. Start with the dependency that hurts you today.

MONTH 1

REMOVE ONE OWNER BOTTLENECK

Choose three recurring tasks or decisions you should no longer own. Document, delegate and make the new owner accountable.

MONTH 2

MAKE ONE NUMBER VISIBLE

Build one simple dashboard showing the cash, margin or operating KPI you currently discover too late.

MONTH 3

REMOVE ONE TRANSFER RISK

Fix one concentration, process, contract, supplier or key-person issue that already worries you.

WHY WORK DIRECTLY WITH CHARLIE TANNER?

I am not here to rush you to market.
I am here to help you build a better business first.

Through Ascend Exit Pathway, we work 1:1 on the areas that improve internal quality and eventual transferability - owner dependency, numbers, management, risk, value drivers, buyer readiness and the route to market when the timing is right.

5	38	£75m+	1:1
PERSONAL EXITS	TRANSACTIONS	ADVISED VALUE	DIRECT PARTNERSHIP

THE REAL OBJECTIVE

Build a business that is easier to own now - and easier for somebody else to buy later.

When exit becomes the right move, you want preparation behind you - not a year of value-destructive clean-up ahead of you.

EXIT PATHWAY - £1,500/MONTH - 3-MONTH INITIAL COMMITMENT

Build the value before you need the sale.

ascendbusiness.co.uk | info@ascendbusiness.co.uk