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Become the transition advisor every business owner needs

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Business owners know they'll need specialized professionals to handle the complex elements of a transition — from valuation, tax planning, deal structure and other legal matters. What they may not realize is how much they stand to gain from also having one trusted advisor serve as the central point person for the entire process. For you, that represents a powerful opportunity. By conveying the value of having a captain of the transition team — and positioning yourself in that role — you become an indispensable resource to business owners now and well into the future.

Business transfer

BEFORE

- Use valuation to start the conversation
- Assemble the right team
- Clearly define your role and convey its importance
- Own the client's integrated financial picture
- Address continuity planning
- Account for emotional complexity

AFTER

- Keep the human factors in sight
- Build thought-leadership in your market

Seven steps to establish yourself as the business transition team captain

1. Use valuation to start the conversation

Being the first person to raise the topic of transition planning to business owners demonstrates that you are thinking proactively about their financial future. Done right, this step positions you at the center of the planning process before anyone else has a seat at the table.

A natural way to start the conversation is by suggesting they obtain an objective, professional business valuation as part of the financial planning process. Framing valuation this way may make it easier to engage owners, especially those who may be reluctant to think about a future where they are no longer running the business. Professional valuations naturally surface what's driving business value and what's holding it back, leading directly into discussions about the owner's long-term vision.

ACTION ITEM: Communicate to the business owner:

Your business may be your most valuable asset, so understanding what it's worth today is essential to building the right plan.

2. Assemble the right team

Your role as leader is easiest to sustain when you can confidently recommend specialists who will work together effectively. Clients need to trust that the professionals you recommend will collaborate effectively.

- **ACTION ITEM: Establish relationships with professionals across all relevant disciplines: valuation experts, M&A Tax professionals, estate planning and tax professionals, investment bankers, and business brokers. Keep in mind that these specialist partners can be both internal and external to your organization.**
- **ACTION ITEM: Host periodic roundtables where your specialist partners can share insights and build familiarity with one another. Hearing regularly from other transition professionals can also help you build your acumen around transition planning.**

3. Clearly define your role and convey its importance

Documenting team structure is common in large institutional transactions but is rarely applied to closely held business transitions. Introducing an established, structured team signals professionalism to the business owner and helps establish shared expectations for all your specialist partners.

- **ACTION ITEM: Create a simple organizational chart showing each specialist's role. Share it with your client and the full team.**
- **ACTION ITEM: Communicate to the business owner:**

  Each specialist on this team is an expert in their area. My job is to be the one focused on what all of this means for you and your family's financial future. I make sure every decision is informed by — and supports — your broader goals.

Example: simple transition team organizational chart

4. Own the client's integrated financial picture

Your most important function in the transition planning process is also what sets you apart: You translate what happens throughout the planning process into what it means for your client's life. After each specialist provides their input, you can add value by interpreting it through the lens of the client's objectives and integrate the pieces into their overall wealth plan.

- **ACTION ITEM: As each specialist delivers their work product, schedule a brief dedicated meeting with your client to interpret the findings. Discuss, for example, what an initial valuation could mean for retirement income, how that plays into their plans for transferring wealth to heirs, and the potential tax consequences.**

5. Address continuity planning

Many business owners haven't considered what happens if they die, become incapacitated, or a key partner exits unexpectedly before a planned transition. Raising these scenarios is both a service to your client and a way to deepen your role in the planning process.

ACTION ITEM: Ask directly:

Do you have a continuity plan in place? If so, have you documented what should happen to the business if something unexpected happens to you or a key partner or employee before this transition is complete?

Use the answer to identify any planning gaps and bring in the right specialists to address them.

6. Account for emotional complexity

Addressing the emotions that business owners may experience throughout the transition process differentiates you from specialists who focus exclusively on the financial, legal and transactional aspects. This step is important both before and after the business transfer takes place.

ACTION ITEM: Ask business owners:

What gives you the most satisfaction and joy today beyond business success? How do you want to spend your time once you are no longer at the helm of your business? What would you want people to say about you in 20 years?

ACTION ITEM: Inform business owners that feelings of loss of purpose, identity, and even regret are common among those stepping away from a business they've built. And those who have prepared both financially and personally tend to discover a renewed sense of purpose on the other side.

Exploring these topics can reveal needs that you can help address and set owners up for a fulfilling next chapter. For example, you may be able to satisfy their entrepreneurial drive for risk and control by earmarking a portion of their post transaction portfolio for a new venture — even going so far as to refer to it as an "entrepreneurial allocation."

7. Build leadership in your market

Establishing a reputation as a knowledgeable business transition advisor can help you attract future clients and build your network of referral sources.

ACTION ITEM: Host an annual workshop on business transitions for a select group of clients, prospects, and centers of influence, and consider inviting professionals from within your assembled transition team to co-present. These kinds of events reinforce the team concept publicly and make your central role visible.

Seize the opportunity

For most business owners, transitioning out of a business they have built is the most complex and consequential financial event of their lives — and one they may navigate only once. That singular, high-stakes moment is your opportunity. By starting the planning conversation early, assembling and coordinating a trusted team of specialists, and staying close to both the financial and human dimensions of the process, you position yourself as an irreplaceable partner throughout the transition and for everything that follows.

Nuveen offers a range of business transition and wealth transfer education for both advisors and individuals.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact your Nuveen Advisor Consultant or call 800.221.9271.

Endnotes

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