

## Thinking Of Selling Your Business? Things To Consider Before A Sale

1. Find the right partner
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4. Transitioning to the after-sale reality

Your business is important to you. That's why, when you plan for its future, there's more to consider than optimizing the balance sheet and achieving a high valuation multiple. "Of course, we're focused on helping our clients get the most value from the sale of a business, but we're also committed to keeping them positioned. What I mean by 'positioned' is producing positive investment, family, tax and philanthropic results," says Whittier Trust Vice President and Certified Exit Planning Advisor Elizabeth Anderson. "Clients who have the most successful sales start thinking about the process early and focus on the personal results they want to achieve as well as the financial payout."

Helping families navigate the various facets of business decisions is in Whittier Trust's DNA. The company began in 1935 as a family office for the Whittier family, the patriarch of which was an entrepreneur who earned significant wealth that continues to support his descendants into the sixth generation. In 1979, the office managed a partial liquidation of business holdings that yielded \$500 million to the family, helping pre-plan for the sale and successfully navigating the transaction. The company, formed as Whittier Trust in 1989, now serves more than 500 families with the same customized service model.

If you're thinking of selling your business, here are some top considerations from Whittier Trust.

### Find the right partner

You should be careful about who you trust to assist with personal planning around the sale of your business. Look for someone who has years of experience in the entire business sale process, including post-sale positioning to address the unique needs of the owner's family, trust, foundation and other enterprises.

"Many of our clients are multi-generational families, like the Whittiers, who made their fortunes in a family business," Anderson explains. "We take pride in helping business owners navigate the complexity of planning for a tax-efficient exit, preparing their families for the wealth they are about to receive and avoiding common pitfalls encountered when owners transition from a business without adequately including their personal finances, estate plans, philanthropic objectives or life goals in the exit calculation." That proven track record is invaluable.

## Think about the why and the how

When Whittier Trust is tasked with helping a client with selling a business, the earliest conversations focus on understanding their goals for their wealth, family, legacy and your history as a business owner. You'll be asked things like:

- What's most important to you right now?
- What milestones are most crucial that you accomplish?
- Do you have any concerns about transitioning out of the business?
- What goals do you have for your wealth?
- Have you considered how a business sale/exit might affect your financial situation?
- Have you done any personal tax planning to prepare for the sale?
- What family dynamics could affect a successful outcome?
- Is your estate plan up to date?
- Are there problems you are trying to solve by a sale?

"Our partnership works to fulfill your family's vision, values and goals as we sustain and grow your wealth," Anderson says. "Once we understand your vision for the exit and how you want your family to carry forward after the transaction, we'll help you develop a plan and assist with executing it."

## The real work begins

Once your Whittier Trust advisor understands your needs and goals, that person builds an internal team to make it happen. That group of dedicated professionals will work on a consolidated personal

balance sheet and begin to focus on the post-transaction personal financial objectives for the client and their family.

In doing that due diligence, Whittier Trust evaluates every possible outcome to consider whether or not the net-net return from the transaction aligns with the owner's post-transaction goals. If it doesn't for any reason, the team will adjust the plan as necessary.

"We focus on minimizing risk, implementing tax-saving strategies and preparing the business owner and their family for life after the sale," Anderson says. "We believe each client is unique and requires a tailored solution. This flexible approach empowers us to help you achieve your most important objectives."

## Transitioning to the after-sale reality

"Part of Whittier Trust's 'magic' is in helping clients keep wealth from becoming a stumbling block. Instead, we help to increase clear communication within our families to maximize their understanding of how the different tools being deployed (such as investment, tax, trust and charitable vehicles) help foster family continuity from one generation to the next," Anderson explains.

Depending on a client's needs, that could mean helping prepare heirs to be good stewards of the family legacy through philanthropy, entrepreneurial investment opportunities or creating a family office to handle the day-to-day demands of wealth management. No two families are alike, so no two transition plans will be identical, but the common thread is that Whittier Trust will be there every step of the way.

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