

How to Sell My Business: Options Every Owner Should Know

Selling a business is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. How you approach it can affect your **price, timeline, and peace of mind**. Here's a look at the common options — along with the realities most owners don't see upfront.

1. List with a Business Broker

What it is: A professional markets your business, screens buyers, and manages negotiations.

What to know:

- Brokers typically charge **10–15% of the sale price**.
 - Many businesses listed never actually sell — leaving owners frustrated and uncertain.
 - Marketing often targets other business owners or investors, not individuals who value your legacy.
 - The process can take months — sometimes years — and requires ongoing attention from you.
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2. Sell It Yourself (Owner-Direct Sale)

What it is: You try to find a buyer on your own — through your network, ads, or personal contacts.

What to know:

- Customers, employees, and vendors may notice changes, creating disruption.
- Negotiating price, contracts, and financing can be complex and overwhelming.

- Legal, tax, and compliance requirements can create unexpected stress.
 - Offers may undervalue your hard work — or serious buyers may be hard to find.
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3. Strategic Buyers

What it is: Competitors or related business owners looking to acquire your company for growth or market share.

What to know:

- They often require detailed financials, forecasts, and operational information.
 - Employees and customers may feel uncertain or insecure during the transition.
 - Changes may be made to streamline operations — which can affect the culture and legacy you've built.
 - Negotiations can be long, stressful, and demanding.
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4. Financial Buyers / Investors

What it is: Investors or firms focused on returns rather than daily operations.

What to know:

- Their priority is profit, not employees, clients, or culture.
 - Due diligence can be extensive, with months of audits, reports, and evaluations.
 - They may restructure or cut costs, which can disrupt your team or business continuity.
 - Deals can fall apart if numbers aren't perfect — adding uncertainty and stress.
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5. Explore a Direct Individual Buyer

What it is: Speaking with an experienced buyer who understands your industry, operations, and priorities.

Why it can help:

- Provides a clear picture of options without the complexity or delay of brokers or investors.
- Preserves the continuity of your business, employees, and customer relationships.
- Creates an opportunity to explore a potential transition at your own pace.
- Even if you decide not to sell immediately, a conversation can offer clarity and guidance for your next steps.

Key Takeaway

Every selling option has trade-offs — some are slow, stressful, or risky. Understanding the realities up front helps you make decisions that protect both your **business value** and your **peace of mind**.
