SELL-SIDE ADVISORY ONLY

FOUNDER GUIDE

Sell My Business, Not Ready to Retire

Release capital today without walking away from the business you built

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Arrange a confidential discussion with Tony Vaughan, founder.

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Sell My Business But I Am Not Ready to Retire

Confidential guidance for UK founders who want options, not ultimatums. A managed runway to succession and exit, on your terms.

Tony Vaughan | Mergers.co.uk

Sell-side advisory for UK business owners

April 2026

THE FOUNDERS' GUIDE

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Why this position is the most common one we see

If you are searching 'sell my business' but you are not ready to retire, you are in the most common position we see with founder-led UK SMEs. You want certainty, you want to reduce risk, and you want options. You simply do not want your life's work to turn into a rushed decision or a forced retirement.

Many owners think selling a business is a single event. In reality, it can be a staged plan. For founders who still have energy and ambition, the best answer is often not an immediate full exit. It is a structured path that gives you liquidity and support now, with a proper runway to a future sale on better terms.

WHAT IS A MANAGED RUNWAY

A structured plan to reduce founder dependency, strengthen management and systems, improve valuation drivers, and create a credible pathway to succession and a full exit on better terms, typically over three to five years.

Common starting positions

- You want to take cash off the table without walking away
- You are tired of carrying everything personally, but still enjoy the work
- Family or financial planning needs liquidity inside two to three years
- Succession is unresolved and you do not want a cliff-edge handover
- The business is good, but founder dependency limits its value to a buyer

How a partial sale fits

A partial sale lets you take some cash off the table while retaining a meaningful stake and continuing to lead the business with a complementary partner alongside you. The partner brings capital, capability or both. You stay in control day to day, build the team, and the second exit becomes the larger event.

What changes the value of your business

- Maintainable EBITDA after normalisation for owner-specific costs

- Repeatability and recurring revenue
- Customer concentration and contract length
- Management depth below the founder
- Cash conversion and working capital discipline
- A credible growth plan a buyer can underwrite

Building the runway

- Clarify personal objectives and timeline in writing
- Identify founder dependency and the operational constraints that limit scalability
- Strengthen the senior team and delegate decision rights
- Improve reporting, cash discipline and forecasting
- Run a confidential sell-side process when the numbers and the team are ready

CONFIDENTIALITY

A confidential sell-side process uses controlled outreach, staged information release, and NDAs to protect staff, customers and suppliers while qualifying serious buyers. Premature disclosure is the single biggest avoidable risk.

Founder questions, answered

What are my exit options if I want to keep working for a few more years?

Common options include a partial sale to a growth partner, a full sale with a defined transition period, a management buyout, or employee ownership if suitable.

How do I build succession without losing control too early?

Clarify roles, delegate decision rights, strengthen reporting, build management capability, and use governance and incentives. Control is protected through structure and reserved matters if a partner is involved.

Will a buyer push me out after I sell?

They can if the deal is structured poorly. This is why control protections, reserved matters, and a clear post-deal role must be agreed early.

How long does a staged exit usually take?

Often three to five years, though it depends on the starting position, market conditions, and how quickly management depth and repeatable performance can be built.

What should I do first?

Start with a confidential discussion. Clarify personal objectives and timeline, then identify founder dependency and the operational constraints that limit scalability.

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Get in touch

Every enquiry is reviewed directly by our founder, Tony Vaughan, and handled on a strictly confidential basis. We never act for buyers.

Confidential discussion

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Calls returned the same working day. No paperwork, no commitment.

Registered office and trading style

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