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How to Overcome the Overwhelming Parts of Planning

One of the toughest things you'll confront in your planning is focusing on the goals that matter most. You might find that the things you want to do conflict with the things you must do. For instance, you may want to use your analytical skills to increase production—something you can do at any time—during the only time that candidates for a next-level management team are available for recruiting or development. The first project is more enjoyable, but the second is more important to your future. What can you do to overcome overwhelming decisions between doing what you want and doing what you must? Consider the situation of Sybil Marino and Ronda Rowe, co-owners of a manufacturing company.

Sybil and Ronda had co-owned M&R Manufacturing for 20 years. Though they rarely spoke outside the business, they had two things in common: They were still heavily involved in the business' critical functions—from sales and delivery, to operations and internal systems—and they wanted to sell the business within five years. Neither Sybil nor Ronda had any skill or interest in training their managers to take over for them. All of the company's success flowed directly through their final decisions, and they preferred to

keep it that way. They reasoned that they could create more value through their expertise than through searching for and training others, who would never be as good.

When they told their advisor Henri this, Henri stressed that they would need a management team to take over for them if they wanted to sell the business for the money they needed. Sybil asked, “Why should we have to do that? Shouldn’t the people that we sell to be responsible for that? What if we sell to a private equity group? Don’t they just bring their own managers?” Henri explained that most private equity groups pass on most of the business presented to them, even great ones. Henri insisted that it’s a mistake to reduce the pool of potential buyers to such an uncertain group. Sybil and Ronda said that finding and training people to do what they did was too much work, and maybe not even possible. They were so used to self-made success that the idea that managers would want to build a business for someone else was a foreign concept. They quickly became overwhelmed and were tempted to give up on planning altogether.

Doing things differently than what has brought you success can be hard. In this case, Sybil and Ronda were used to doing everything themselves, and they had been doing it for 20 years apiece. How could they possibly train anyone to do what took them 40 combined years to perfect themselves, especially when they wanted to sell the business within the next five years? The idea was overwhelming, and because they thought it was impossible to tackle at once, they began to rethink their planning efforts.

Rather than giving up when confronted with a difficult challenge, we suggest using a process to overcome the overwhelming parts of planning.

Set and Evaluate Your Goals

It’s difficult to determine what will overwhelm you if you aren’t sure what you’re trying to do. Determining your goals—including how much money you’d like from your exit, when you’d like to exit, and to whom you’d like to sell—gives you a baseline for how you can act on those goals. More specifically, you can speak with advisors and other business owners who have Exit Planning experience to set realistic goals, which can minimize the likelihood of tilting at windmills.

Do What Comes Easy First

When planning a large undertaking, it’s helpful to start with what you know. This is especially true when planning a business exit. Once you’ve set and evaluated your goals, you have the freedom to address more manageable aspects of your Exit Plan. So, if you feel more comfortable working on your estate plan or personal financial plan foremost, you can start there. Then, after finishing the portions of your Exit Plan you’re most comfortable with, you can use the confidence, motivation, and momentum you’ve built up to approach bigger, more challenging tasks.

Ask for Help

This might be the most challenging aspect of planning, but it's critical. There will be times and situations in which your expertise will not help you make a valid decision. There are aspects of Exit Planning that can be incredibly complex and may require several advisors. You can always ask your most trusted advisors for help with these challenges, and we recommend that you do. But when the most overwhelming parts of planning arise—such as finding a next-level management team, creating a Deal Team, or implementing incentive plans for key employees—you may need to enlist outside help. Don't be afraid or ashamed to ask: Asking can save you a lot of future stress. High-quality advisors will work collaboratively, not competitively.

Planning a business exit can be overwhelming. If you'd like to discuss how to approach the hardest parts of planning your exit, please contact us today.

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