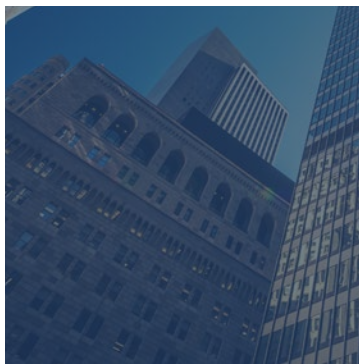
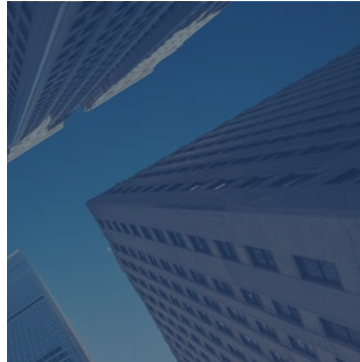
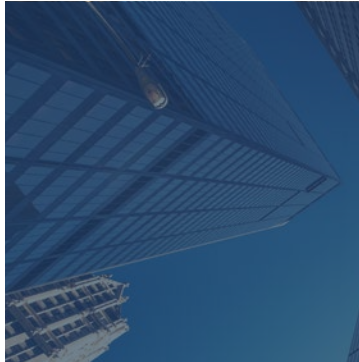
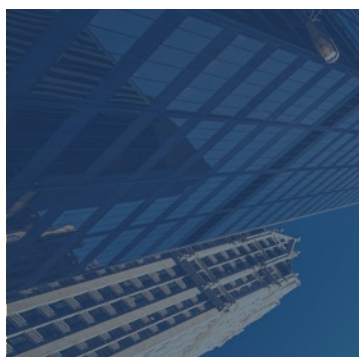




A LOOK INSIDE THE UNIQUE WORLD OF



VALUE CREATION



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Exit planning is undoubtedly a growing profession sparking the interest of many advisors, business owners, and leadership teams across the United States and the world. Today we can look across all generations inside the workforce and see how the concepts of exit planning apply. A Baby Boomer business owner might be looking for a change of pace, the harvest of a large asset, or to do something different in their life. A Generation Xer believes in a work life balance, values their time, and tries to work smarter not harder. Millennials, likely in their early stages of entrepreneurship, are a very ambitious group and earn to spend because they value experiences. In all these generations, we can see how the exit planning ecosystem of advisors comes into play.

What the marketplace needs today is a harmonious relationship between the educators and those doing the work. Some advisors bring a holistic approach to educate the business owners. These advisors share how to accelerate the value of the business owner's companies and align their personal and financial goals. Another advisor type is those who are brought in to drive that significant value into the owner's company.

We set out to better understand the latter. These unique advisors exist inside the Exit Planning Institute (EPI) Community and are brought into solve a variety of issues. These issues include bringing leadership teams together, driving efficiencies, building great cultures, and creating a diverse and entangled customer base. In other words, rapidly accelerate the value of a business owner's company. At EPI, these are the Value Advisors.

In the marketplace "Value Advisors" are referred to by many names. These include value growth or creation advisor, consultant, strategic advisor, strategic growth advisor, implementer, management consultant, or business coach. They primarily focus on the business, but as a Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA), they can organize an exit planning advisory team as well. A team gets more engaged with the owner and in the overall process. Therefore, Value Advisors incorporate personal planning and personal financial planning into the strategy.

EPI interviewed 13 Value Advisors within the EPI Community to learn about the Value Creation process. We were interested to know their opinions on Value Creation and how they feel value is created. We learned more about their individual processes and what owners can expect in the value creation engagement. We also discussed how other advisors can stay involved in the Value Creation process.

Our findings pave the path towards better engagement and relationships with business owners. Most business owners would agree that there is some pain point they would like solved or a desire they would like achieved within their company. Perhaps they want more time back in their personal lives or less risk in their business. Ideally, they likely want a company that can run without them. To help the owner achieve these goals we bring in the advisors who are ready to do the work to drive value.



- Scott Snider
Vice President, Exit Planning Institute

GROW, EXIT, OR BOTH?

“Owners reach out to me with a desire to create a better business than the one they have today. I’ve never met a 100% satisfied business owner”

Sean Hutchinson
Partner, Ready For Next Advisory Group

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR COMPANY'S TRANSITION PLAN?



Business owners approach Value Advisors for a variety of reasons. Some owners are looking for ways to increase profitability, others want to have more free time away from their business, and some are interested in building value for a business exit. In speaking with successful Value Advisors, we learned that while some business owners might have an idea of how they would like to exit their business in the future, they are not focused on building value in the present.

According to Value Advisor Sean Hutchinson, Partner at Ready For Next Advisory Group, owners can be

classified as Explorers, Pivoters, or Triggerers. Explorers are those owners who are not actively seeking to exit their business and have no plan to begin growing value in their business. Business owners that come to value advisors with the idea that they need more assets to bridge the Wealth Gap are referred to as Pivoters. Pivoters are not actively looking to transition their business, but to grow value in their business before a future exit. Triggerers are business owners who are interested in an ownership transition. These owners are open to tactical level discussions about business value and exit options that can be executed on a more immediate basis.

Overall, Sean says, “Predominantly, owners come out of a desire to create a better business than the one they have today. I’ve never met a 100% satisfied business owner”. For that reason, Sean states that he only works with growth minded business owners, because if they are not open to growth, they are not open to necessary changes to the business. According to our 2019 Nebraska State Of Owner Readiness Report, while 95% of business owners affirm that “transition strategy is important”, only 9.63% of owners stated that they have a written plan and their staff was aware of the plan. In contrast, 47.59% had no plan for transition at all.

We spoke with Linda Ruffenach of

Execuity Value Advisors, about the needs of her business owner clients. Linda says that the best way for an owner to understand the need for building value in their business is to ask themselves “What do I need to do in the beginning to be better prepared down the road?” How can your business improve today for you to be successful later? Value Advisors help spot pain points in businesses that owners may not have noticed or known how to resolve. Martha Sullivan, President at Provenance Hill Consulting, says that value advisors help highlight the value in businesses again so business owners can regain value in their world – both professionally and personally.

Kent McKown, Founder of McKown Company, wants business owners to know that there is a difference between owning and running a business. Kent knows that some owners do not want to sell their business, but also are tired of the day-to-day operations and would like more time away from the work. Value Advisors help owners grow value in their business as well as their personal lives. A Value Advisor with the Certified Exit Planning Advisor credential highlights all three legs of the stool: Business, Financial, and Personal. An owner may come to a value advisor with issues in any or all these areas.

All the Value Advisors we interviewed mentioned that some owners come to them stating that they want to exit their

business because of operational issues that make them unhappy. However, after working with the Value Advisors on building value in their company, the owners ultimately decide to stay in the business either in their same role or in a more supervisory capacity until they are ready to harvest the value in their business during an exit.

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO POST-TRANSITION?

- 47% plan to retire
- 23% plan to focus on philanthropy
- 21% plan to be a consultant
- 10% plan to start a business
- 14% plan to invest in business
- 27% have no plan

* 2019 Nebraska State of Owner Readiness Survey

WHAT DO OWNERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VALUE CREATION?

“Best in class owners have best
in class businesses”

Lee Jones
CEO, Empyrean Associates, Inc.

What is Value Creation?

As an owner, what do you need to know about building and protecting value in your business and how do you go about starting this process? The top Value Advisors in the Exit Planning Institute Community shared their insights in the Value Creation process. According to Kent McKown, “Value Creation is an art rather than a science. You need a deep understanding of human nature” to build value in a business.

Simplifying the Complex

While each business is unique in their individual offerings, all businesses, no matter how complex, can be simplified to three categories. Marcus Lemonis, CEO of Camping World and one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the United States, refers to this as, “people, process, and product”, a concept mentioned by many of the value advisors we interviewed. EPI President, Chris Snider refers to this as the Four Intangible Capitals, or the 4 C’s. The 4 C’s are: Human, Customer, Structural, and Social Capital. Value Creation is not a transactional method, it is a transformational one. Value Advisors transform businesses in each of these three areas to build sustainable value. According to Tom Bronson, President of Mastery Partners, most businesses that attempt a transaction fail to reach the finish line; only 17% of these “transactions” close. Working

with a Value Advisor and actively participating in Value Creation will allow you to move forward in creating a more easily transferrable business.

Value Creation is like a Garden Hose

Value Advisor, Justin Goodbread, CEO and Founder of Heritage Investors, LLC, describes the Value Creation process to his clients in a way that simplifies the complex nature into a manageable analogy. Justin explains Value Creation like a garden hose. We have all seen a garden hose, whether it is used to water flowers or for a refreshing summer sprinkler, the effectiveness of the hose depends on a few factors: the water pressure and the water’s path through the hose. If you do not have enough pressure to push the water through the hose, it severely impacts

“Can you maintain or increase your current lifestyle with what you have saved?”

Vincent Mastrovito, Founder and President of Prometis Partners Inc.

efficiency. The most frustrating part of using a garden hose is the kinks that cause the hose to twist in on itself and prevent the water from flowing freely to its destination. Justin describes Value Creation as a means to “unkink the hose” and increase efficiency in your business.

Owner Involvement

Corby Megorden, Principal at ENNIS Legacy Partners, emphasizes that creating value in a company is, “not a marathon or a sprint, it’s a 10-mile race” in which the owner must be willing to participate or the race is in vain. Owner involvement in Value Creation is vital for the success of the business. Owners influence their leadership teams, who therefore influence the culture of the business as a whole. Kyle Danner, Founder of Kyle Danner Solutions for Family Business, asks owners “Are you willing to admit your own role in this business? If not, there is no point in moving forward” in the process. A lot of owners know what they want in their businesses, but most have not spent the time to consider “why?” Sean Hutchinson explained that Value Advisors cannot offer solutions if the owner does not understand the problems in their business. Additionally, creating value is near impossible if owners focus on their past instead of the potential in the business. Kent McKown says that “Past success is the largest hurdle to get over for future success”.

To begin the Value Creation process, both the owner and the Value Advisor need to be aligned on the business, personal, and financial goals of the owner. In addition, the owner must be prepared to spend quality time working on their business and not just in their business. Value cannot be grown and harvested without the full commitment of the business owner.

DO YOU NEED THE INCOME PRODUCED BY YOUR BUSINESS TO SUPPORT YOUR PRESENT LIFESTYLE?

9.84% plan to reduce their lifestyle

14.75% say the company will have to continue to perform well for them to maintain their lifestyle

44.81% say their lifestyle will not change regardless of what happens in the company

30.6% are not sure how it will affect their lifestyle.

* 2019 Nebraska State of Owner Readiness Survey

WHAT DOES YOUR VALUE CREATION PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

“Many owners plan for
the wedding but not the
marriage”

Erik Owen
President, Oak Hill Business Partners

Every Value Advisor utilizes a slightly different method when it comes to Value Creation, but the general goal remains the same: build value in a business and educate the owner on how to successfully close their Value, Profit, and Wealth Gaps.

Where Do You Begin?

The first step in most Value Advisors process is to understand the owner’s goals. By asking where the owner is now and where they would like to see their business in the next 5 or 10 years, the Value Advisor has a framework with which to start their analysis. Linda Ruffenach starts every initial client interaction by asking, “How are you feeling about where you are today?”. Value Advisors have a holistic view of owner’s goals, ensuring that both personal and business goals are met

during the Value Creation process. Travis Catania, President of Business Succession Pros, Inc., mimics this sentiment by referring to the value creation process as a deeply emotional one for the owner.

Corby Megorden says that sometimes the goal is not to maximize dollar value, it is to build sufficient value to allow the owner to do what they want in their next act. Erik Owen, President of Oak Hill Business Partners, notes that most business owners, while planning for their business, have completely forgotten about planning for their life after their exit. He refers to this as, “planning for the wedding but not the marriage”. Our 2019 Nebraska State Of Owner Readiness Report found that only 5.46% of owners have a written plan of what they will do after exiting their business and 26.23%

have not thought about their life after business at all, let alone have a written plan prepared.

Advisors provide the owners with an overview of their methods and detail the time commitment and expectations of the owner. Lee Jones, CEO of Empyrean Associates, Inc., recommends walking the owner through how much time they will need to spend per week to reach their goals. This helps determine the owner’s readiness to accept the responsibility of conducting systemic change to their organization. Vincent Mastrovito, Founder and President of Prometis Partners Inc., suggests showing the owner a 12 month engagement in “bite size pieces” detailing what the Value Advisor will do, what they expect from the owner, and what the leadership team should accomplish in that time frame.

Assessment Tools

The next step in the process is to conduct a baseline value assessment of the client’s business. There are assessment tools that can be utilized in the initial assessment but most of the Value Advisors use their own proprietary tools. Corby Megorden conducts a 62-question scaled questionnaire to determine starting value and performs 90-day sprints to follow up with the owner on their progress. Vincent Mastrovito also conducts 90-day sprints after doing a

WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO TRANSITION THE COMPANY?

- 12.56% plan to transition within 1-2 years
- 23.12% plan to transition in 3-5 years
- 34.17% plan to transition in 5-10 years
- 30.15% have no plans to transition and are looking to build value

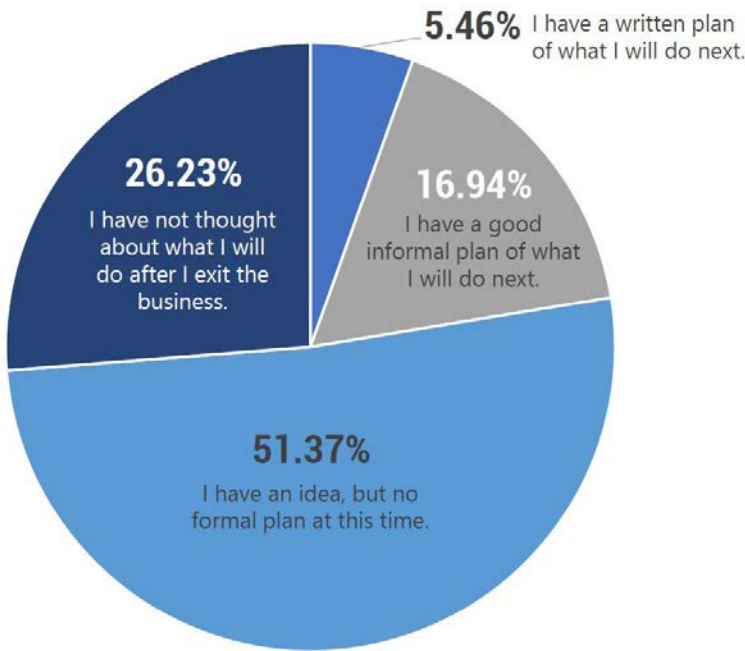
* 2019 Nebraska State of Owner Readiness Survey

virtual Triggering Event with the owner and leadership team. This ensures that the owner and the leadership team are on the same page.

In addition to tactical assessment tools, Value Advisors determine areas to improve value in the personal lives of owners. Both Justin Goodbread and Linda Ruffenach spend time with the owners to determine what it will take to align the business to their goals and set priorities to ensure those goals are met.

Tom Bronson assesses business value through a proprietary four step process. The first step includes a 500-question scaled assessment that determines the business value at that moment in time. Upon completion of the assessment the owner will receive a 30-50 page report on the business as a whole, as

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POST-TRANSITION “LIFE-AFTER-BUSINESS” PLAN?



“If you are not having tough conversations with a CEO, you are not doing your job.”

Kent McKown
Founder, McKown Company

well as segmented into departments, and a 10-12 page opinion on enterprise value. The second step walks the owner through all their transaction options and identifies their ideal desired outcome. This step also includes a quarterly breakdown of what the owner will need to do to prepare for that transaction. Step three is the owner completing the quarterly tasks to build and protect business value. Step four varies from client to client. This step is when the owner decides what they would like to do: exit the business or continue to build value.

The Issue with Owner Dependent Businesses

Owners like to have their stamp on

every aspect of their business, but most do not realize how detrimental this can be for the success of the company. A business that is dependent on the owner will never reach full value potential because most of the value in the business is locked in the owner. According to Tom Bronson and Justin Goodbread, transactions will stall if a business is owner dependent and one of the easiest ways to build value in a business is to decentralize the owner. A company should not be dependent on any one person's individual successes.

Melisa Silverman, Managing Partner at Founders Group, says that a value advisor's job is to reset the owner's expectations about their role in the business. Owner centralized businesses often lack well documented processes and strategies because the owner was the only one to manage certain aspects of the business. Without detailed business processes, a company not only is unprepared for market, but is missing out on valuable time-saving systems as well. A value advisor will assist in engaging leadership teams in the creation of systems and will ultimately incorporate more structure to the business, decentralizing the owner.

Kent McKown sits in on leadership meetings to learn about the CEO, leadership team, and the culture of the company itself. These meetings also inform the value advisor about the intrinsic and marketable value of a

business so they can help mitigate the risk and determine who would eventually buy this business.

How Long Does This Process Take?

Value Creation is not something that happens overnight, or even in a month or two. The Value Advisors we interviewed all stated that ideally an owner will see the most impact in their business value growth in three to five years. This estimate may change given how market ready the business was before the start of the Value Creation process. Melisa Silverman says that while it may take a while to reach the owner's goals, "they should start to see the impact on business efficiency, increased sales, and improved processes within the first year".

Justin Goodbread says that his company can almost double net worth every three to five years if owners truly follow his recommendations. Justin knows that fatigue sets in quickly in a process like this, so he provides the owners monthly highlights of what the owner has done and how it will impact their value growth goals. Vincent Mastrovito and Linda Ruffenach provide similar value growth checklists to their owner clients every 90 days to limit fatigue and show the positive impact they have had on the owner's business. Travis Catania highlighted that it takes some business owners six months to even see the problems in their business before they can make

improvements.

The Value Creation process varies for each client and each Value Advisor, but no matter the desired result, working with a Value Advisor will greatly increase your chance of achieving that goal.

“Get comfortable with being uncomfortable”

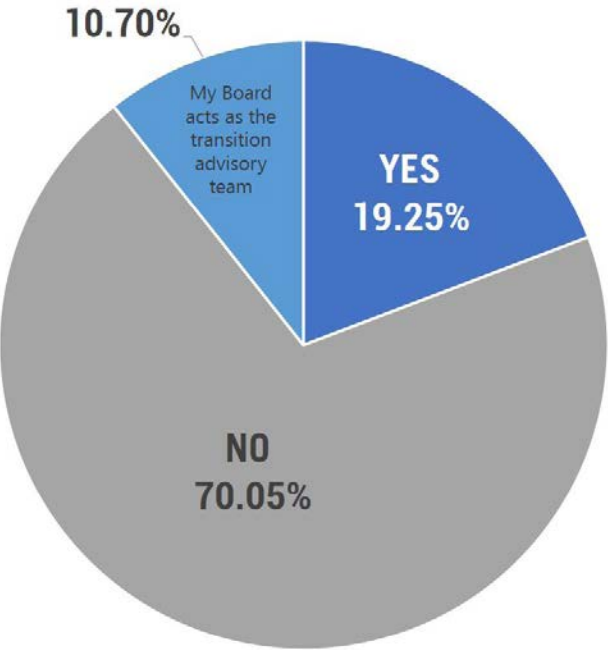
**Travis Catania, President,
Business Succession Pros,
Inc.**

HOW DO VALUE ADVISORS WORK WITH AN OWNER'S TEAM?

“Working with an owner’s team begins with a mutual understanding of each team member’s speciality.”

Martha Sullivan
President, Provenance Hill Consulting

HAVE YOU ESTABLISHED A FORMAL TRANSITION ADVISORY TEAM?



A Value Advisor is an important part of a business owner’s team. Business owners work with an interdisciplinary team of advisors to manage their business, personal, and financial needs. An owner’s transition advisory team is an important aspect of the exit planning process. However, according to our 2019 Nebraska State Of Owner Readiness Report, when asked if owners have established a formal transition advisory team, 70.05% said no. Value Advisors work with Financial Advisors, wealth managers, CPAs, and the owner’s leadership team to build value and reach the owner’s individual goals. With many advisors working for the same client, fear of being cut out

WHO IS ON AN OWNER’S TRANSITION TEAM?

Core Team:

CPA
Financial Advisor
Attorney
Value Advisor

Functional Team:

Risk Advisor
Estate Planning Attorney
Family Advisor
Banker
M&A Advisor
Family Members
Board of Advisors
Management Team

of the project is a common experience. We spoke with Value Advisors about how they work with an owner’s financial team to understand how to best serve the client.

Martha Sullivan says that working with wealth managers begins with a mutual understanding of the other’s specialty. Kent McKown seconds this idea saying, “To best support the owner, a wealth manager must understand the basic job of business valuation” so they know how to effectively work with a Value Advisor. The role of the Value Advisor is

to build value in the business while the Financial Advisor provides insights and builds a strategy around the owner’s personal finances and goals. Tom Bronson says that he helps owners find a Financial Advisor to assist in their personal finances if they are not yet working with one. Some advisors like to work on the client’s needs separately, but the Value Advisors we spoke with suggested working collaboratively at first to develop a plan for the client that incorporates all their needs. Linda Ruffenach likes to meet with the other advisors before beginning her valuation process. She rightly states that she needs to “understand the financial advisor and CPA” to understand the client, as they have worked with the owner longer and will know information that the owner may not think to disclose to the Value Advisor.

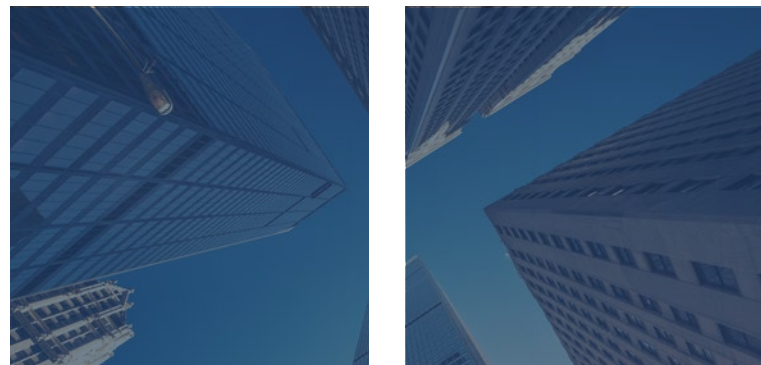
Sean Hutchinson develops a meeting plan with the other advisors before meeting with the client. At this initial meeting, the Value Advisor, Financial Advisor, CPA, and Attorney will determine what aspects of the value building process will be conducted by each advisor. Sean recommends working with the other advisors on as much of the plan as possible to provide a unified plan to the owner. After discussing the value growth plan with the advisors, Vincent Mastrovito and Lee Jones compare the financial advisor’s ideas with those of the owner. Vincent shared that when possible, the advisors should work as a team to save

time and money for the owner by combining resources and expertise. The owner’s leadership team should also be included in the Value Creation process. Justin Goodbread says that the Value Advisor does not do all the work but instead teaches the owner and their leadership team how to perform the work on their own business. For that reason, Justin conducts a company-wide strategic planning session before creating the value plan. Tom Bronson meets with the owner’s transition team annually to discuss value growth, pain points, and areas that might need updating. These meetings may occur more frequently if needed to reach the owner’s personal, financial, and business goals.

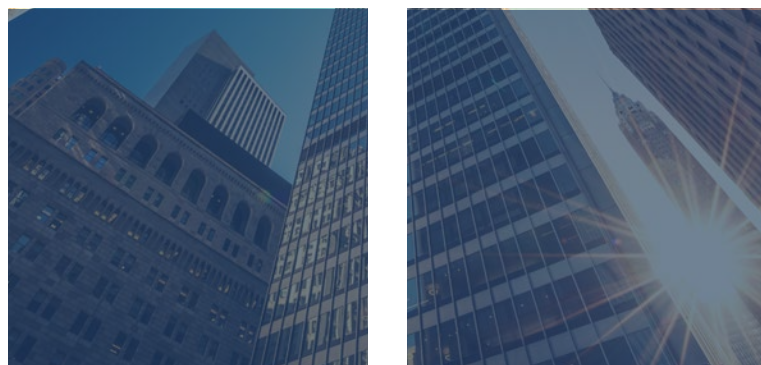
With the addition of a value advisor, this wealth is not only protected, but begins to grow in value.



Meet the Value Advisor Focus Group



In interviewing 13 Value Advisors, we discovered what makes each advisor unique to the Exit Planning Field. Along with the technical expertise and a systematic approach, Value Advisors have high emotional intelligence and can connect with business owners on more than only their business strategy. While each advisor has their own distinctive background, they all have one thing in common: they help business owners achieve their value growth goals and prepare them for their life after business.



Tom Bronson
President, Mastery Partners
tom@masterypartners.com

Tom shared that, while “not an expert at what you do, I understand process, operations, marketing, sales, and finances”, making him a great addition to an owner’s financial team. With over 30 years of experience in a variety of industries, Tom provides insights for his business owner clients in a breadth of topics.



Travis Catania
President, Business Succession Pros Inc.
travis@businesssuccessionpros.com

Travis serves as an interim Fractional CEO to enact positive changes in businesses for owners. As CEO, he builds value in the business to allow the owner to either exit successfully or continue to grow business value. Travis refers to being a Fractional CEO as “holding the owner’s hand until they are ready to lead the business themselves”.



Kyle Danner
Founder, Kyle Danner Solutions for Family Business
kyle@kyledanner.com

Kyle grew up working for his family’s printing business and helped grow it to the fifth largest printing company in Kansas City. He uses that experience to help family businesses build value by facilitating difficult conversations with the owner and their family. Kyle helps businesses grow value by implementing the Entrepreneur Operating System (EOS).



Justin Goodbread
CEO/Founder, Heritage Investors
jgoodbread@heritageinvestor.com

Justin believes in growing an owner’s business as well as their sellable value. To be a successful Value Advisor, according to Justin, you must have been a business owner yourself. Justin says that value advisors must, “have the heart of a teacher so they can break things down for the client to absorb easily.”



Sean Huthinson

Partner, Ready For Next Advisory Group
sean@readyfornext.com

Sean enjoys working with family businesses and owners as he is the third generation heir to his family's 60-year old millwork manufacturing business. Sean says he is, "by nature, a creator, a grower of things, and a real informational sponge", which helps him assist owners in their businesses.



Lee Jones

CEO, Empyrean Associates, Inc
lee.jones@empyreanassociates.com

Lee has over 30 years of experience in computer software and hardware, product distribution, and not-for-profit industries. He has served as a Fractional CEO/COO in both start-up businesses as well as those that need a value boost. In addition to Lee's Value Advisory role, he also served as Chair of the Houston Biotechnology Forum.



Vincent Mastrovito

Founder & President, Prometis Partners Inc
vincent@prometispartners.com

Vincent has over 30 years of experience providing wealth management services to his clients. Vincent focuses on the leadership team in his Value Creation process and helps to align the owner's goals with the leadership team's goals. Vincent is also the President of the very successful EPI West Michigan Chapter.



Kent McKown

CEO, McKown Company
kent@mckowncompany.com

His leadership and advisory agreements create sustainable growth and provide companies valued between \$5 and \$500 million in revenue with a competitive advantage. Kent has over 20 years of experience in C-suite and advisory roles. He shared that to be a successful Value Advisor you need to have a deep understanding of leadership traits and company culture.



Corby Megorden

Partner, ENNIS Legacy Partners
corby@ennislp.com

Corby has a diverse background including a 22-year tenure in the Naval Reserve, 14 years as a licensed pastor, and a Master's Degree in Engineering Administration. This unique combination provides Corby with a wealth of knowledge surrounding process and interpersonal dynamics for a variety of industries. He views Value Advisors as those who "simplify the complex" problems in a business to create the most value for their clients.



Erik Owen

President, Oak Hill Business Partners
erik.owen@oakhillbp.com

Erik has over 20 years of experience in business leadership in a variety of industries. Erik assists his clients in building intrinsic value in their businesses to minimize their Wealth Gap. Erik says his goal is to increase a businesses productivity, profitability, and peach of mind.



Linda Ruffenach

Founder & Chief Strategist, Execuity LLC
linda@execuity.com

Linda helps clients achieve what she refers to as, "total world domination". In addition to her Value Advisory practice, Linda is the Founder or Whisky Chicks LLC, a community of Kentucky bourbon and whiskey aficionados that empowers others with knowledge about the whiskey industry.



Melisa Silverman

Partner, The Founders Group, President, Avenue M Advisors
melisa@foundersgroup.biz

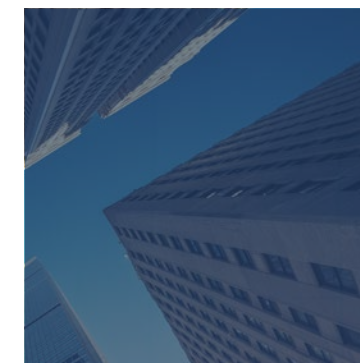
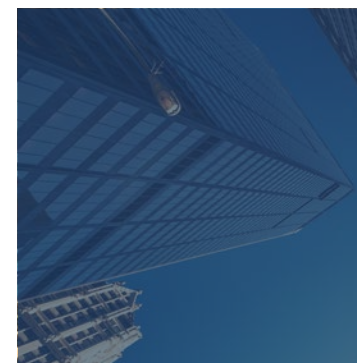
Melisa specializes in business transition planning and implementation as well as business valuation. She has over 15 years of experience in the technology space and works with companies of all sizes. She says that she likes to "Physically help business owners increase the value of their business – not just tell them how to do it."



Martha Sullivan
President, Provenance Hill Consulting
msullivan@provenancehill.com

Martha began Provenance Hill Consulting after working for years at a CPA firm. Martha helps business owners build and create value before transition and relies on her CPA background to provide owners with a holistic Value Creation approach. Martha says, "I see myself as an owner's confidant, coach, and accountability buddy."

Where Do We Go From Here?



After interviewing the Value Advisors, we have drawn the conclusion that to support an owner through a transition successfully, a Value Advisor must be an educator as well as a business advisor. An effective advisor mitigates risk in an owner's business, implements positive personal changes, and emphasizes ways to meet financial goals.

As a business owner, it is paramount that you start working on your exit plan now, no matter when you plan on exiting your business. According to Scott Snider, Vice President of EPI, "More deliberate action creates better companies today that will create easier or more transferrable companies when that time comes".

About the Author



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Colleen is responsible for creating engaging and unique content for the EPI website. She generates organic communication between EPI and the Exit Planning community and conducts targeted market research.



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