

BUY A BUSINESS

How do you find businesses for sale that are not listed?

By Ayodele Olasiji, Optimax Commercial · Updated October 18, 2026 · 2 min read · Online at [optimaxdeals.com/guides/find-off-market-businesses-for-sale](https://www.optimaxdeals.com/guides/find-off-market-businesses-for-sale)

SHORT ANSWER

Off market businesses come from three places: owners you contact directly, brokers who share deals with their signed buyers before listing them, and your own network of lenders, accountants and suppliers. The fastest route is to get on a broker's buyer list with a clear buy box and a signed confidentiality agreement, so you hear about deals the day they come in.

How to, at a glance

1. Write your buy box: type, market, price, cash in
2. Join broker buyer lists and sign their confidentiality agreements
3. Reach owners directly and ask your accountant and lender
4. Have proof of funds ready to move the same day

Questions buyers ask

Are off market businesses cheaper?

Sometimes, because there is less competition, but not always. An owner who sells quietly still wants a fair price. The main advantage is access and time to look properly.

Do I have to pay to join a broker's buyer list?

Practices differ by broker. Ask in writing before you sign anything, and read the confidentiality agreement and any buyer agreement in full.

How do I get a broker to take me seriously?

A clear buy box, proof of funds, a lender prequalification, and quick answers.

Why many businesses never get listed

Owners worry that staff, customers or competitors will find out. A business that is quietly for sale keeps running normally. So many owners prefer a broker who already has signed buyers, and some sell to the first qualified buyer they meet.

Where off market deals come from

1. **Brokers' buyer lists.** Brokers match new deals to buyers who have signed a confidentiality agreement and told them what they want.
2. **Direct outreach to owners.** Letters, calls or visits to owners of the kind of business you want. Slow, but you face no competition.
3. **Your network.** Accountants, lenders, equipment suppliers and franchise reps often hear first when an owner wants out.
4. **Industry groups.** Owner associations and online groups for laundromats, c stores, hotels and car washes.

Write your buy box first

Brokers and owners respond to buyers who know what they want. Write it down in one line each:

- Type of business
- Markets or states
- Price range and how much cash you have in
- Whether you want the real estate
- Owner operated or managed

Move fast when one comes

Off market deals do not wait long. Have your proof of funds ready, a lender lined up if you are financing, and be ready to sign a confidentiality agreement the same day.

Looking for a business to buy?

See the businesses on the Optimax board by state, and get an email when one matching what you buy comes in. Sign one confidentiality agreement online to see full details, including owner direct deals that are not on listing sites.

Browse by state and get deal alerts

www.optimaxdeals.com/businesses-for-sale

Sign once and see the deals

www.optimaxdeals.com/deals

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