

EXIT

I want to retire. How do I sell my small business?

By Ayodele Olasiji, Optimax Commercial · Updated October 18, 2026 · 2 min read · Online at [optimaxdeals.com/guides/retire-and-sell-my-business](https://www.optimaxdeals.com/guides/retire-and-sell-my-business)

SHORT ANSWER

To sell your business when you retire, start a year or more ahead if you can. Clean up the books so tax returns show what the business really earns, make sure the lease can pass to a buyer, decide how long you will stay to train, then market it quietly to qualified buyers under a confidentiality agreement. Owners who rush at the end usually sell for less.

How to, at a glance

1. Set your target date, ideally a year or more out
2. Make the tax returns show what the business really earns
3. Confirm the lease or property can pass to a buyer
4. Decide how long you will train the new owner
5. Market quietly to buyers under a confidentiality agreement

Questions owners ask

How long before retiring should I start?

A year or more is ideal, so your records and lease are ready. A business can sell faster, but rushed sales usually take a lower price.

Can I sell to my employees?

Yes. Insiders often need financing, so the seller frequently carries part of the price. A lender can make it easier, because then you are not the only bank.

What does Optimax charge?

3% of the sale price at closing, \$25,000 minimum, nothing upfront and nothing if it does not sell. Buyers also pay Optimax a fee under their own agreement, and both sides are told in writing.

Why starting early pays

Buyers and their lenders price from the last two or three years of tax returns. Personal costs run through the business, and income that never reached the return, both lower the number buyers can pay. A year of clean records before you sell can raise the price more than any negotiation.

What to fix in the year before

- **The books.** Separate personal costs, and report all income.

- **The lease.** Get enough years left, or renewal options, to cover a buyer's loan.
- **Your role.** Hand off daily tasks to staff so the business does not depend on you.
- **Equipment.** Fix or replace what a buyer's inspector will flag.

Options if you want income after you sell

- **Carry a seller note.** Part of the price is paid to you over time, with interest. See [should I offer seller financing](#).
- **Keep the real estate.** Sell the business and lease the property to the buyer.
- **Stay on for a while.** Paid consulting or training for an agreed period.

Talk to your advisors

How the sale is structured changes your taxes. Bring in your CPA before you agree on a price, and a lawyer before you sign a letter of intent.

Thinking about selling?

Buyers already signed up and under NDA, including cash buyers. Matched directly, no public listing. 3% at closing, \$25,000 minimum, nothing upfront.

Get a private call back

www.optimaxdeals.com/sell

Get the free seller kit

www.optimaxdeals.com/seller-kit/business

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