

Conversation Starters for Business Owners

BUSINESS CONTINUATION AND TRANSFER:

- Do you have a business Will (buy-sell agreement)?
- If you got sick or hurt or died, who would keep the business running?
- Do you have an exit strategy, or do you plan to work until you die?
- Do you have a written business succession plan to cover the possibilities of your retirement, death, or disability?
- Have you made a provision in your estate plan for disposition of your business when you die?
- If one of your partners should die, what do you want to happen to the business?
- would you want the surviving spouse to have a voice in the management of your business?
- If one of your partners should die, what would you want to do about the business rights of the surviving spouse? Take that person into the business or buy them out?
- Would you be interested in a way to make your business worth as much after your death as it is today?
- If you had died last night, would it make more sense for a member of your family to run this business or for your family to sell it to your employees or competitors?
- Is any member of your family completely willing and as capable as you to run this business?
- Would you like to know what your competitors and other business owners are doing about the problems we've been discussing?

EXECUTIVE BONUS/DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLANS:

- Would you like to use your corporate checkbook to pay for personal benefits?
- Are you paying taxes on money you are not using today?
- Are your highly compensated employees (owners) being discriminated against in your qualified plan (limited in the amount they can contribute)?
- Would you like to set up a "selective bonus" plan that is not subject to tax law nondiscrimination rules?

COMPETITIVE QUALIFIED RETIREMENT PLANS:

- Do you have a SIMPLE/401(k) or other type of plan in place?
- Are you satisfied with the service, reporting, investment options, and returns on the investments inside these plans?
- Have you reviewed new types of plans for greater contributions to owners and key people?



- Do you have a business-sponsored tax-deductible retirement plan? Are you satisfied with the number of dollars going into the plan for you personally (compared with the amount for employees)?

KEY PERSON RETENTION AND PROTECTION:

- Who beside yourself is responsible for the profits of your business?
- If they were to get sick or hurt or die, what impact would this have on your business success?
- If they were recruited away, what impact would this have on your success?
- Do you have a plan in place to protect your profits in the event you lose a key employee?
- Do you have a “golden handcuffs” plan in effect to reward those key employees who have helped your business grow by providing additional incentives for them to stay?
- Do you have insurance on any of the key profit makers...to help make up for lost profits and added costs you will have if one dies or becomes disabled?
- Has your CPA ever talked with you about the consequences of your death—or another key person’s death—or the consequences of disability on the financial viability of the business?
- Do you think your employees would look for other jobs if you had died last night, or would they wait to see what would happen to your business?
- Whom have you trained to run the business after your death, disability, or retirement?

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