FOR THE OWNER

Your team can buy this firm.
You can be paid at closing.

Someone who works for you handed you this. That is not a complaint about how things are going. It means they want to keep building what you started, and they have found out there is a way to do it that pays you in cash on the day the deal closes.

HANDED TO YOU BY

Most owners think there are only two exits

THE OPTION	WHAT IT COSTS YOU
Sell to an outside buyer	You get paid, and a stranger inherits your name, your team, and your standards. Roll-ups buy firms to change them.
Sell to your people and carry the note	You keep the legacy and become the bank. You leave the firm but stay on the hook for years, collecting monthly and hoping the payments hold.
The Step-Up Legacy Plan	Your key employees buy the firm with SBA bank financing. The bank funds the purchase. You are paid at closing and you walk away.

This is not an ESOP.

ESOPs generally only make sense above roughly $15 million in revenue, cost six figures to set up, and pay the owner out gradually. This is an ordinary business sale that a bank finances.

5%
The down payment your employees can come in with

At closing
When you get paid, in cash, not over years

$1M to $10M
The firm size this is built for, measured in sales

Allen Business Advisors works only with architecture, engineering, and land surveying firms. John R. Allen, III is a former commercial loan officer, which is the reason these deals get through a bank's credit committee instead of stalling in it.

Three steps from owner to paid

1. **The firm is valued the way a bank values it**

   Historical cash flow, not projections. Most A/E and surveying firms land at 5x to 7x EBITDA, or 2x to 4x SDE for smaller owner-operated practices. You see the number before anyone commits to anything.

2. **Your employees bring the equity injection**

   SBA financing calls for a 10% equity injection, and the deal is structured so the buyers can come in with as little as 5% down. They sign personal guarantees, so the people taking over have real skin in the game.

3. **The bank funds the rest and you are paid at closing**

   The bank funds the balance of the purchase price. You are paid in cash at closing. Your employees repay the bank out of the firm's cash flow, the way the firm already pays for everything else.

The questions owners ask first

Do I have to stay?	Usually there is a defined transition period so clients and licensure move over cleanly. Staying involved is a handover arrangement, not a condition of getting paid.
Who signs the guarantees?	The buyers do. SBA requires personal guarantees from the people taking ownership.
How long does it take?	Most transactions run 6 to 12 months. Owners who start 3 to 4 years out have the most options and the best number.

If you would rather the firm keep its name and its people, and you would rather be paid at closing than collect monthly for years, this is worth one conversation.

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The first conversation is confidential and costs nothing.