



EXECUTIVES' ADVANTAGE

The 2025 State of Owner Readiness: Why Exit Planning Can't Wait

By: Emory G. Hendrix, Jr. AAMS®, CEPA®
Managing Director at Crescent Wealth Management

In 2013, alongside the Northeast Ohio Chapter of EPI, Grant Thornton®, PNC Bank®, and the Ohio Employee Ownership Center at Kent State University®, the Exit Planning Institute (EPI) launched the first National State of Owner Readiness (SOOR) Survey. Fast-forward to 2025, and the newest SOOR results paint a clear picture: owners value exit planning, but many still haven't built or practiced the plan.

What the 2025 SOOR says

- Exit planning and strategy matters to everyone. Owners across generations strongly agree that having an exit strategy is important.
- Gen X leads at 87% agreement; Millennials are close behind at 83%.
- Yet, across the board, owners report being “too busy” to formally plan.
- The bright spot: commitment to outside exit-planning advice rose from 38% to 68% over the past decade.
- A near-term exit wave across several generations is at hand. ~40%–58% of Millennials through Boomers want to exit in the next 5 years.
- Still, 44%–87% have no transition plan or post-exit personal plan.
- Education & awareness skew younger: Millennials report 85% with exit-planning education and 78% awareness of exit options vs. Boomers at 42% and 53%, respectively.
- Preferred paths: Internal/family transitions top the list (26%–47%), while internal sales to partners lag (5%–7%). Notably, 31% of Boomers plan to sell to an external buyer (Gen X/Millennials: 14%–15%).



What this means for owners

- Choose the path and then plan accordingly.
 - If family/internal transition is most appealing, align governance, leadership development, and financing now. If an external sale is likely, prioritize quality of earnings, customer concentration, and management depth. There are several highly qualified family business consultants I collaborate with who can help you with these tasks and projects.
- Plan the personal side.
 - Your financial independence, tax strategy, and post-exit purpose are as critical as deal structure. Build a written personal plan that complements the business transition as well as estate, tax, and wealth implications and developments. Helping owners plan for their “next chapter” post-exit is one of the most valuable areas of expertise and passion an experienced certified exit planner can offer their clients.
- Professionalize the process.
 - Assemble an advisory bench (CEPA, CPA, M&A attorney, CPAs for personal needs and valuation/QofE) and run a readiness assessment. Owners who engage early typically command more options — and better terms.

Final Thoughts

The 2025 SOOR makes one thing clear: while most owners recognize the importance of exit planning, far too many are waiting until it's almost too late to act. Whether your transition horizon is five years away or still undefined, the sooner you align your business, personal, and financial strategies, the more options and leverage you'll have. Exit (readiness) planning isn't a one-time event; it's an ongoing process that strengthens your company today while preparing you for tomorrow. Starting now ensures that when opportunity knocks, you'll be ready to answer with confidence.

Prepared by a Certified Exit Planning Advisor® for educational purposes. If you'd like, I can tailor these insights to your industry, size, and preferred exit path.

About Crescent Wealth Management:

Crescent Wealth Management is a financial advisory firm based in Greenville, SC, specializing in custom portfolio management and comprehensive financial planning for high-net-worth individuals and families. The firm distinguishes itself by directly managing assets, ensuring a disciplined investment approach, and fostering long-term relationships through clear communication and client introductions. Their services include investment strategies, retirement planning, estate planning, and risk management, catering to both personal and business financial needs. For more information visit www.crescentwm.com.