



How do you reach business owners who are inundated with enquiries every day?

The modern business owner has become one of the most difficult people to reach.

Whether they own a manufacturing company in Germany, a software business in the United Kingdom, or a family enterprise in South Africa, they all have one thing in common: they are overwhelmed by unsolicited approaches. Every week, they receive emails, LinkedIn messages and telephone calls from accountants, consultants, wealth managers, business brokers, private equity firms and M&A advisors—all claiming to have the perfect buyer or investment opportunity.

As a result, many business owners have developed a natural resistance to these approaches. Their inboxes are crowded, their time is limited, and most messages sound remarkably similar:

"We have interested buyers."

"Have you considered selling your business?"

"Our investors are actively seeking acquisitions in your sector."

After hearing the same pitch dozens of times, business owners quickly learn to ignore them.

For M&A advisors, this presents a significant challenge. If traditional outreach methods are losing their effectiveness, how can advisors establish meaningful contact with business owners and build the trust required to secure a mandate?

The answer is not more messages—it is more value

The reality is that business owners are not interested in being sold to; they are interested in solving problems.

Many entrepreneurs are approaching retirement without a succession plan. Others are concerned about rising competition, geopolitical uncertainty, labour shortages, or the impact of artificial intelligence on their industries. Some simply want to understand the value of their life's work.

The most successful M&A advisors do not begin the conversation with, "Are you interested in selling?"

Instead, they ask:

- What are your plans for the next five years?
- Do you have a succession strategy in place?
- Have you recently assessed the value of your company?
- How prepared is your business for a future transaction?
- Are there international growth opportunities you may be overlooking?

These questions transform the discussion from a sales pitch into a strategic conversation.

Trust is the new currency

In today's market, trust has become the most valuable asset an M&A advisor can possess.

Business owners rarely appoint an advisor because of a clever email or an impressive presentation. They appoint advisors they trust—individuals who demonstrate expertise, listen carefully and provide genuine insight long before a transaction is contemplated.

Building that trust requires consistency. Publishing relevant articles, hosting educational webinars, speaking at industry events and maintaining regular contact can position an advisor as a long-term partner rather than another intermediary looking for a fee.

Ironically, many mandates are won months—or even years—before the engagement letter is signed.

The importance of differentiation

Another challenge facing M&A professionals is differentiation.

If every advisor promises confidentiality, a broad buyer network and transaction expertise, what makes one advisor stand out from another?

Increasingly, the answer lies in the ability to offer something unique.

For some firms, this may be deep sector expertise. For others, it may be an international footprint or access to proprietary technology that identifies strategic buyers across borders.

Business owners are far more likely to engage when they perceive a clear competitive advantage. They want to know not only that you can sell their business, but also that you can achieve a better outcome than anyone else.

Relationships still matter

Despite advances in technology and artificial intelligence, M&A remains a people business.

Many successful mandates still originate from referrals, existing clients, lawyers, accountants and trusted professional networks. A warm introduction continues to outperform cold outreach in most markets.

This reinforces an important lesson: every interaction matters.

The entrepreneur you meet at a conference today may become a client in three years' time. The accountant you help on a small transaction may introduce you to a significant sell-side mandate in the future.

Relationships compound over time.

Final thoughts

Reaching business owners has never been more difficult. They are busier, more selective and more sceptical than ever before.

However, the advisors who focus on creating value, building trust and differentiating themselves will continue to succeed.

The question is no longer, "How do I get a business owner's attention?"

The better question is:

"Why should they give it to me?"

Those who can answer that question convincingly will continue to win mandates—even in the most competitive M&A environment.



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