The Advisor's Succession Briefing

What every advisor should consider before choosing a succession path, selling a practice, or stepping away from the business.

AQUEST WEALTH STRATEGIES

Transition to Freedom™

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A note from our founder

You've built something meaningful—your practice, your client relationships, and a life's work shaped by years of trust, service, and commitment.

At some point, nearly every advisor begins asking the same question: What comes next?

This briefing was created to help you think through that question with clarity. Succession is not simply a legal or financial event. It is a personal decision that affects your clients, your team, your legacy, and your future.

A thoughtful transition should do more than produce a valuation or deal structure. It should protect what you've built, preserve continuity for the people who depend on you, and create a path forward that reflects your goals and timing.

Inside this briefing, you'll find practical guidance on:

- Preserving client continuity and the trust you've earned
- Supporting the team that helped build your success
- Understanding what truly affects practice value
- Choosing the right succession path and partner
- Timing your transition with flexibility and confidence
- Creating the freedom to focus on what matters most next

There is no one-size-fits-all path. But with the right preparation, your transition can provide continuity for your clients, support your staff, preserve your legacy, and give you greater confidence in what comes next.

We're honored to walk alongside advisors as they begin that process.

Jason Van Duyn

Dr. Jason Van Duyn - CFP®, CHFC, CLU, MBA

Founder of AQuest Wealth Strategies



Selling is not the same as transitioning

Many advisors begin the succession conversation by asking one question:

What is my practice worth?

It is an important question, but it is not the only one. A valuation may help define a number, but it does not answer what happens to your clients, your staff, your income, your role, or your life after the transition begins.

The distinction matters because each path leads to a different conversation. One centers on the terms of a sale. The other considers the people, timing, structure, and continuity needed to make the transition work.

Selling the practice

- A valuation
- A buyer
- A contract
- A payout
- A handoff
- A transaction

VS.

Planning the transition

- Client continuity
- Advisor timeline
- Operational relief
- Staff support
- Tax strategy
- Legacy protection

> *Selling the practice is a transaction. The right transition plan is what preserves the relationships behind it.*

Waiting can quietly limit your options

Many advisors delay succession planning because they are not ready to retire, sell, or make a final decision.

That's understandable. But exploring succession is not the same as exiting the business. It is about understanding what is possible before health, energy, family priorities, staffing changes, or market conditions force the conversation.

The right transition partner may also take longer to find than expected. A planned successor may leave. A junior advisor may not fit your timeline. A buyer may show interest, but lack the capacity, capital, experience, or process to continue the level of care your clients expect.

Starting early gives you time to evaluate your options, prepare your practice, and decide what role you want to play as the transition unfolds.

What can change quickly:

- Personal timing
- Client confidence
- Staff stability
- Successor fit
- Practice value
- Family priorities
- Health or energy level

> *Starting early does not mean you are ready to leave. It means you are serious about creating better options.*

A valuation is only part of the story

Many advisors assume that once they receive a valuation, they know what their practice is worth.

But a valuation is not always the same as the price a qualified buyer is willing to pay. The number on paper matters, but buyers also evaluate the risk, complexity, fit, and effort required to transition the practice successfully.

A practice with recurring revenue, organized systems, clear client records, and a transferable service model may be easier to integrate. A practice with concentrated revenue, aging clients, unusual investment processes, paper files, or heavy dependency on one staff member may create more uncertainty.

The same is true of buyer fit. There may be many people willing to talk about buying a practice. Far fewer have the experience, capital, staff, process, and patience to protect client relationships forward through the transition.

What buyers may consider



The number matters. But the confidence a buyer has in the transition can matter just as much.

Complexity makes your practice harder to transition

Once a buyer looks beyond the headline number, the next question is practical: how easily can this practice be understood, serviced, and carried forward?

Unnecessary complexity can create risk. If holdings are difficult to evaluate, client records are incomplete, systems are outdated, or the service model lives mostly in the advisor's head, the transition becomes harder for everyone involved.

Practices that appear simple on the surface can become more difficult to absorb when the underlying business includes inconsistent holdings, multiple providers, paper files, unusual technology, or an investment process another team cannot easily continue.

A more transferable practice gives a future transition partner clarity. It helps them understand how your clients are served, how your team operates, and what needs to continue after the transition begins.

What makes a practice easier to transition

- Organized client records
- Consistent CRM usage
- Documented service model
- Transferable investment process
- Simplified product/provider mix
- Clear staff responsibilities
- Exportable files and notes
- Clean account documentation

> *A clear, organized practice is easier to value, easier to service, and easier to transition.*

Clients need confidence. Staff need clarity

A succession plan does not only affect the advisor. It affects the clients who trusted you for years and the staff who helped you serve them.

Clients want to know who will be helping them next. They want to feel that the relationship is not being replaced, rushed, or handed off without care. That requires communication, personal introductions, and a process that gives them time to build confidence in the next team.

Staff need clarity as well. They need to understand what the transition means for their role, their responsibilities, and their future. When staff feel uncertain, the transition can become more stressful for everyone involved.

A thoughtful transition also recognizes that continuity should not be reserved for only a handful of top relationships. Every client matters. Maintaining trust means having a plan for the broader client base, creating a smooth handoff, and making sure people feel cared for through the change rather than overlooked by it.

When clients and staff feel informed, respected, and supported, they are more likely to experience the transition as a continuation of care rather than a disruption. That kind of confidence does not happen by accident. It has to be planned, communicated, and reinforced over time.

A thoughtful transition should provide continuity for the people behind the practice, not just account for the revenue it represents. That means planning for every client relationship, creating clarity for your team, and choosing a partner with the capacity to continue the level of care your clients have come to expect.

> *“Successful transitions are about relationships, not transactions*

The right partner needs more than interest

Many advisors assume the best succession partner is another successful advisor. In some cases, that may be true. But success alone does not always mean capacity.

A strong advisor may already be running near capacity with their own clients, staff, meetings, planning work, and service responsibilities. Adding hundreds of new relationships can create pressure quickly, especially if the transition depends on one person absorbing the entire practice.

A younger advisor may have more time, but may not yet have the capital, experience, staffing, or operational structure needed to support the full client base with confidence. Good intentions are important, but they are not the same as a proven transition process.

That is why the decision is not only about finding a buyer. It is about finding the right transition partner: one with the people, process, planning depth, and service capacity to continue supporting clients after the agreement is signed.



Selling to one advisor

- Depends heavily on one person
- Capacity can become strained
- Staff support may be limited
- Service model may vary by client
- Less transition structure

VS.



Transitioning to a firm

- Team-based client support
- Dedicated operational resources
- Broader planning capabilities
- Structured transition process
- Continuity beyond one advisor

So what does a better transition look like?

By this point, one thing should be clear: succession is not just a valuation, a buyer conversation, or a purchase agreement. It is a process that affects your clients, your staff, your income, your timeline, your role, and the legacy you want to carry forward.

That is why Dr. Jason Van Duyn developed Transition to Freedom™. Shaped by his doctoral research, over two decades of industry experience, and lessons learned through eleven successful advisor transitions, the process was designed for advisors who want more than a transaction.

Across those transitions, the same lesson became clear: successful succession is about relationships, not transactions. Advisors need more than someone willing to buy the practice. They need a thoughtful path that reflects their goals while helping clients and staff continue receiving the care, clarity, and support they expect.

Three stages guide the Transition to Freedom™ process: **Merge** when the fit is right, **Control** the transition as relationships are introduced and responsibilities shift, and **Retire** on a timeline that reflects your goals.



The right transition plan gives you more than an exit. It gives you a path forward.

Is it time to think through your transition?

Every advisor's journey is different, and the next step does not have to be a commitment. It can simply be a confidential conversation.

Whether you are years away or already planning ahead, a private conversation can help you think through your goals, timing, clients, staff, and what a thoughtful transition could look like for you.

The purpose is not to pressure a decision. It is to give you clarity, answer questions, and help you better understand your options before the moment feels urgent.

> *You do not need to be ready to sell to have a thoughtful conversation.*



If succession has been on your mind, I invite you to schedule a private conversation with me.

Jason Van Duyn

Dr. Jason Van Duyn - CFP®, CHFC, CLU, MBA
Founder of AQuest Wealth Strategies

Request a Private Conversation

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