

Selling your greatest
idea? don't worry —
you'll have more

[Business](#), [Entrepreneurship](#)



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For 11 years, Arianna Huffington was the public face of the *Huffington Post*, the news site she created, nurtured and then sold. In August, she announced her decision to step down as its editor-in-chief to focus on a new health and wellness startup. focused on leaving behind a business that had taken on a life of its own.

“ Great companies always succeed beyond their founder,” the founder said.

“ Even though *HuffPost* bears my name, it is absolutely about all of you and about this amazing team we’ve been for over 11 years.”

Huffington is neither the first nor the last entrepreneur to leave behind a business, but when it comes to deciding to sell, having confidence in the future success of the company you’ve built is the easy part. What keeps a lot of entrepreneurs from moving on to the next big idea is, well, fear.

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Fight the fear.

While selling your company can feel like a radical departure from your original path, you need to recognize and overcome your apprehensions before you get stuck.

For most, the first concern is simply the unknown: *Where do I start? What do I do? How much is my business worth?* After all the years you've spend working long hours and sacrificing to make your dream a success, the business is more than your livelihood; it's your identity. Wondering who you'll be after you sell is natural, and it's tempting to avoid answering those tough questions and to just get back to work.

But you started your business to realize the growing asset value of your creation. As Huffington said, your business won't end when you sell it. After they've created their companies and proven those organizations can grow, founders aren't always the right leaders to take the business to the next level. In fact, in the majority of cases, founders become a constraint to a business's value growth.

The hard truth is that if you don't take an opportunity to maximize gain for your hard work at the right time -- if you wait too long to pass it on to the next-level executive -- will begin to diminish.

Over time, your business will be exposed to a wide variety of negative value drivers, those factors that extract value from your business. Whether those be new regulations, challenges from competitors or an error with a key client, something will eventually decrease the return on your effort. You want

to go out on a high so you can move on to your next great entrepreneurial idea.

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Get practical: Finding your next big idea.

Once you have surmounted your fears and decided to sell, the pressure is on to replicate your success. Despite the temptation to cling to the next idea that pops into your head, resist that urge: Most people don't have serial successes when they rush from one project to another. You need to sort through lots of ideas and allow your mind to rest and innovate until you reach a hit. These three steps will get you ready for that idea:

1. Sell-abrate the win.

Don't take just a few weeks off before moving on to the next deal. Take a nice, long break -- more than a month, or even a year, if you can. You've earned it, and after a sale, you've bought the time (and hopefully the money) you need. Give yourself the space and time to find an idea you're truly passionate about.

Focus some energy on personal growth, and reignite your creative genius. Consider embarking on an international trip, which increases creativity and the capacity for breakthrough insights. Or simply spend time with your family and explore hobbies you never had time for before.

2. Clear out the compartments.

Humans are wired to compartmentalize, and many try to neatly . We even hear it in our language, with phrases like “ work life,” “ family life” or “ love life.” This is a convenient way for people to borrow from one category (often " family life") to invest in another (" work life"), thinking that action will pay a dividend of some kind to the family in the future.

Unfortunately, things don't really work that way. No dividend is paid, and you just end up sacrificing family time. You really have only *one* life. The trick is merging the compartmented aspects of your life so that each serves the whole.

After you've sold a business is the perfect time to recalibrate your relationships, your health and your personal growth. When you do, your next business pursuit will fit seamlessly into your life.

3. Look for any problems.

Once you've found that next winning idea, run it through a reality check. Does it solve a problem for a broad population? Is the need growing? Will people pay money to solve it?

For example, Ford Motors executive with the baby boomers. When they were young, he tapped into their vision of a cool but affordable sports car, with the Ford Mustang. Later, realizing that the boomers had aged and now needed to cart children from place to place, he created the minivan at Chrysler -- another amazing success.

Between the aging boomers and the tech-savvy millennials, problems waiting for creative solutions abound. Just make sure you focus on solving a problem or satisfying a desire that people will pay to address.

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You may not have to search too hard to find opportunities, but it's worth waiting for the right one. Embrace the unknown that comes with selling your business, and take the chance to figure out who you are, who you want to be in your next business and which of your ideas is the one you want to pour your soul into.