The Ultimate 2026 Guide to Selling Your Business in South Africa

Selling your business is a big move, and not something to rush.

Whether you're planning your next venture, preparing for retirement, or simply ready for a new chapter, the process requires careful timing, the right strategy, and a clear understanding of today's market. Owners at every stage of this journey need help positioning their businesses to attract the right buyers.

So, what does the current market look like for business owners?

The 2026 Market: What's Really Happening?

Right now, the market is showing cautious optimism. Growth is steady, and importantly, there is still consistent buyer activity, particularly in the SME space.

Current trends include:

- Continued investment in small and medium sized businesses
- Strong demand for established profitable businesses with a track record
- Interest across sectors including services, technology, distribution, and industrial and manufacturing businesses
- A shift toward strategic acquisitions, with buyers focusing on operational fit and growth potential
- Expansion of opportunities in emerging and underserved markets
- Increased activity from owner operators and first-time buyers entering the market

What this means for you: buyers are active, but selective. A well-prepared business not only sells faster, it often achieves a stronger outcome.

Legal & Tax Essentials

Before listing your business, it's important to ensure that your legal and financial foundations are in order. This protects you during the process and also builds confidence with potential buyers.

Key considerations include:

- Full compliance with company regulation, including shareholder agreements, disclosures, and transfer provisions
- A clear understanding of your tax exposure, including:
    - Capital Gains Tax (CGT)
    - Company Tax
    - Dividends Tax
    - VAT implications, particularly in the case of a going concern
- Ensuring contracts with suppliers, clients, and key staff are up to date and transferable where required

There may be structuring options or relief measures available depending on how your business is set up, but these need to be considered early in the process.

Engaging the right expertise at this stage can prevent delays, avoid unnecessary costs, and support a smoother transaction.

What Is Your Business Actually Worth?

One of the most common challenges for sellers is getting the valuation right. Price too high, and you risk losing serious buyers. Price too low, and you leave value behind. There is no single formula, but most businesses are assessed using a combination of:

- Profit based valuation, often linked to EBITDA multiples
- Asset value, particularly for asset heavy or operational businesses
- Market comparisons with similar businesses
- Future earning potential and growth prospects

In the current market, buyers are placing increasing emphasis on consistent performance, clear financial records, and realistic expectations.

A well-considered valuation not only improves your chances of selling, it also strengthens your position during negotiations. If you need a clearer view of where your business stands, this is often the best place to start.

The Selling Process (Simplified)

Selling a business is a structured process. Being prepared at each stage can make a meaningful difference to both timing and outcome.

Step 1: Preparation

Ensure your financial records, legal documents, and operational information are accurate and up to date. A well-prepared business creates confidence from the outset.

Step 2: Positioning and Buyer Reach

Getting your business in front of the right buyers is critical. This may involve:

- Listing on established platforms
- Working with a broker
- Targeting qualified buyers directly

Step 3: Due Diligence

Once interest is established, buyers will review the business in detail. Being organised, transparent, and responsive helps maintain momentum and trust.

Step 4: Negotiate the Agreement

This stage covers the final terms of the deal, including price, structure, and conditions. A clear and well-structured agreement protects both parties.

Step 5: Transition

A smooth handover ensures continuity for staff, clients, and suppliers, and supports the long-term success of the business under new ownership.

Throughout this process, having the right support can make it more efficient and less disruptive.

Final Thoughts

Selling your business is not just a transaction, it is a transition. The outcome is often shaped long before the business is brought to market.

Sellers who achieve the best results tend to:

- Plan ahead and prepare properly
- Have a clear understanding of their financial position
- Approach the market with realistic expectations
- Choose the right channels and support for their sale

There is a real opportunity in the current market, but preparation and positioning remain key.

If you're considering selling your business, now is the time to start planning.