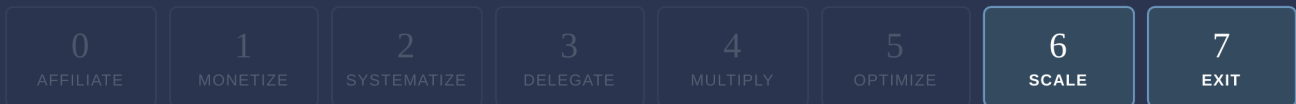


EXIT SERIES · STAGES 6 & 7

Building an *Empire*

M&A execution, enterprise infrastructure, maximizing valuation, and converting decades of effort into generational wealth and legacy.

THE 8-STAGE ADVISOR SCALING ROADMAP

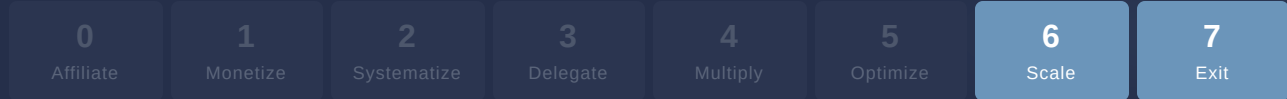


By Jeremy Straub, CEO · Coastal Wealth

You Are Here

Exit Series: Stages 6 & 7

THE 8-STAGE ADVISOR SCALING ROADMAP



STAGE 6

Stage 6: *Scale*

M&A execution. Enterprise infrastructure. Niche domination. Building from a firm into a regional or national brand.

STAGE 7

Stage 7: *Exit*

Maximize enterprise value. Execute your exit. Convert decades of effort into generational wealth and legacy.

20 to 40+
HEADCOUNT

\$700M to
\$1.5B+
AUM RANGE

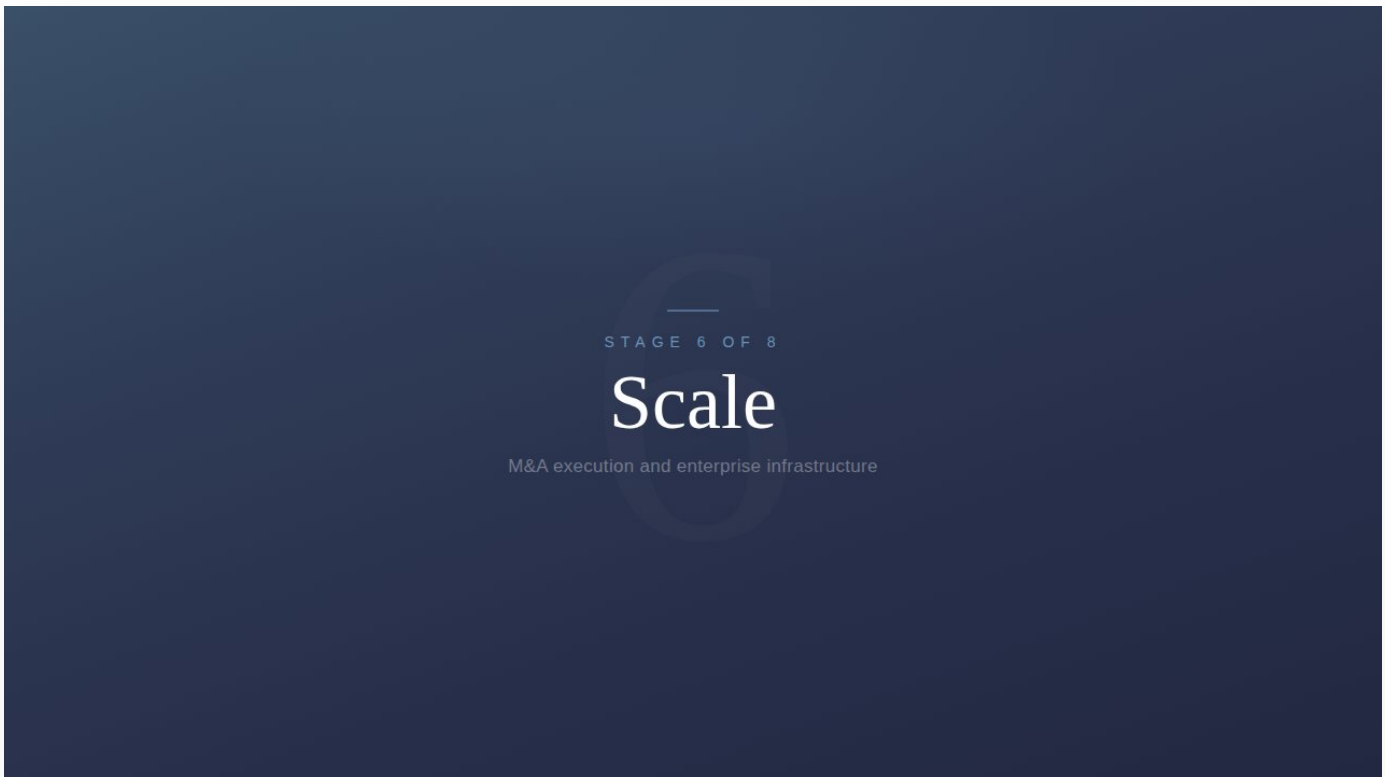
\$7M to \$15M+
REVENUE

Top 1%
OF ALL RIAs

WATCH THIS FIRST

Stage 6: *Scale*

M&A Execution. Enterprise Infrastructure. Building an Empire.



Jeremy covers M&A pipeline building (10 to 20 targets, 1 to 3 year relationships), deal structure (2 to 4x EBITDA), niche domination strategy, enterprise tech stack (\$200 to 500K/year), recruiting engines, and positioning for exit.



M&A Pipeline Strategy



Niche Domination



Enterprise Tech Stack



Enterprise Valuation

Stage 6: *Scale*

HEADCOUNT: 20 TO 40
 REVENUE: \$7M TO \$15M
 AUM: \$700M TO \$1.5B

| YOUR ROLE | CEO (mostly out of client service) | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| LEADERSHIP | Full executive team: CEO + COO + CFO + Senior Advisors + Head of BD/Marketing. Weekly exec meetings. | |
| # OF FIRMS | 200 to 500 firms at this level nationally. Top 1% of RIAs. These firms either become acquisition platforms or nationally recognized brands. | |
| FUNCTION | CONSTRAINT | TO GRADUATE |
| SERVICE MODEL / COMPLIANCE | Service must scale across multiple advisors, possibly multiple locations. Compliance is complex with 5 to 8+ advisors. | Enterprise compliance system. Hire CCO. Quarterly risk audits. Segment clients by complexity, not just size. |
| MARKETING | Organic growth plateaus. Referrals alone won't reach \$2B+. Need to become a brand, not just a firm. | Own a niche. Multi-channel brand machine (podcast, book, speaking, PR). \$3 to 5K/month on PR firm. |
| SALES | Deal flow insufficient. M&A pipeline thin. No systematic prospecting for \$1M+ clients. | BD Director + associates. M&A pipeline: 10 to 20 targets. Close 1 to 2 acquisitions per year. |
| SERVICE | Multi-office coordination. Client experience varies by location or advisor. No centralized client success. | One firm experience across all locations. Regional ops managers. 95%+ client satisfaction/NPS. |
| TECHNOLOGY / PLATFORMS | Tech stack straining at 20 to 40 people. Systems not enterprise grade. Cybersecurity gaps. | Salesforce FSC, Orion/BD Enterprise. SOC 2 certified. \$200 to 500K/year tech budget. |
| TALENT ACQUISITION | Recruiting reactive. Hard to compete with wirehouses. Retention starting to be an issue. | Recruiter on staff. Compelling equity story. University intern pipeline. Retention packages. |
| HR / PEOPLE | Culture diluting with growth. Values not documented. Leadership development informal. | Documented values. Formal leadership development. Succession plans for all key roles. |
| FINANCE | Complex P&L across entities. No CFO. Don't know true enterprise value. Gut-based capital allocation. | Hire CFO. Formal valuation (\$5 to 15K). 25 to 35% EBITDA margins. 3-year enterprise value plan. |
| Bottom Line | Organic growth has a ceiling | M&A execution, enterprise infrastructure, positioned for exit at maximum value |

STAGE 6: SCALE

From Firm to *Empire*



NICHE DOMINATION STRATEGY

Pick a niche: athletes, tech executives, physicians, entrepreneurs exiting businesses, YPO members, multi-generational families. Having a niche doesn't mean turning away other business. An advisor who built a niche with professional athletes gets 70% of his clients from business owners attracted to his athlete brand. Pick one. Go deep. It attracts adjacent clients. Build a multi-channel brand machine: launch a podcast, write a book, speak at conferences, long-form LinkedIn content, monthly newsletter (5,000+ subscribers), PR firm (\$3 to 5K/month).



M&A PIPELINE: THE 1 TO 3 YEAR PLAY

Always have 10 to 20 target practices on your radar. Target criteria: \$100 to 250M in AUM, within 100 miles, cultural fit, advisors age 60+ ready to transition, clean compliance. Source through your custodian, SEC IAPD database, industry conferences, CPAs/attorneys, M&A brokers. Year 1: meet at an event, stay in touch. Year 2: lunch, share your vision. Year 3: they come to you when ready. This is relationship-driven. Typical deal: 2 to 4x EBITDA, 30 to 50% upfront, 50 to 70% earn-out over 3 to 5 years tied to retention.



ONE FIRM EXPERIENCE

A client meeting in your satellite office should feel exactly the same as your headquarters. Same service model, same technology, same communication cadence, same quality. Build regional ops managers (1 per 2 to 4 offices). Before hiring those roles, explore AI automation first. Implement technology that works identically across all locations. Target: 95%+ client satisfaction and NPS score.



ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGY STACK

CRM: Salesforce Financial Services Cloud. Portfolio: Orion or Black Diamond Enterprise. Planning: eMoney or MoneyGuide Pro Enterprise with API. Document management: Laserfiche or ShareFile Enterprise. Compliance: dedicated platform with cybersecurity. Budget: \$200 to 500K/year (3 to 5% of revenue). Cybersecurity alone: \$100 to 150K/year. SOC 2 audits, penetration testing, employee training, cyber insurance. SSO and unified stack across all locations.



BUILD A RECRUITING ENGINE

Recruiter on staff or retained search firm (or both). Create a compelling equity story for recruits. Why should a talented advisor join you instead of hanging their own shingle or taking a wirehouse check? Retention tools: deferred comp, equity grants, succession planning. Partner with universities for intern-to-advisor pipeline. Interns convert at the highest rate in the industry. Build your EVP (employer value proposition).



FINANCE: ENTERPRISE VALUE DRIVERS

Hire a CFO (use a search firm). Get a formal valuation (\$5 to 15K). Eight factors buyers care about: revenue growth above 10%, client retention above 95%, no single client above 5% of revenue, 80%+ recurring revenue, leadership independence from founder, clean compliance, 25 to 35% EBITDA margins, demonstrable growth runway. Filter every decision through enterprise value. Build a 3-year plan to maximize it.



PRIVATE EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

PE can be 3 to 4x more lucrative than internal succession. But it comes with real trade-offs: loss of autonomy, growth pressure, reporting requirements. Don't take PE money because it is flattering. Take it because it is strategic. You are already successful. If you don't genuinely want the growth pressure, don't do it. PE is a tool, not a trophy.



START POSITIONING FOR EXIT NOW

Every decision you make from this point forward should be filtered through enterprise value. Will this acquisition improve my multiple? Does this hire reduce founder dependency? Is this technology investment making us buyer-ready? The firms that get 8 to 10x multiples are the ones that spent 2 to 3 years preparing before they ever went to market. Start now.

"Founder dependency is the number one enterprise value killer. The more unnecessary you are, the more valuable your business becomes."

- JEREMY STRAUB, CEO, COASTAL WEALTH

COMMON TRAPS

- 1 The Comfort Trap**
 Making great money, life is good, so you coast. You tell yourself you will get serious on M&A next year. Five years later, firms that were smaller have passed you.

- 2 Analysis Paralysis in M&A**
 Spending years analyzing potential acquisitions and never pulling the trigger. Your first acquisition won't be perfect. You will learn more from one imperfect deal than 50 perfect analyses.

- 3 Brand Without Substance**
 Flashy website and expensive campaigns but no niche and no genuine thought leadership. You can't buy a brand. You have to build it.

- 4 Founder Dependency**
 If your firm still depends heavily on you for client relationships, strategy, and operations, buyers will discount your enterprise value heavily. The number one value killer.

- 5 Ignoring Enterprise Infrastructure**
 Trying to grow to \$2B on systems designed for a \$200M practice. Eventually something breaks: compliance issue, cybersecurity incident, service failure.

- 6 Taking PE Money for Wrong Reasons**
 Don't take it because it is flattering. Take it because it is strategic. If you don't genuinely want the growth pressure and loss of autonomy, don't do it.

— GRADUATING FROM STAGE 6

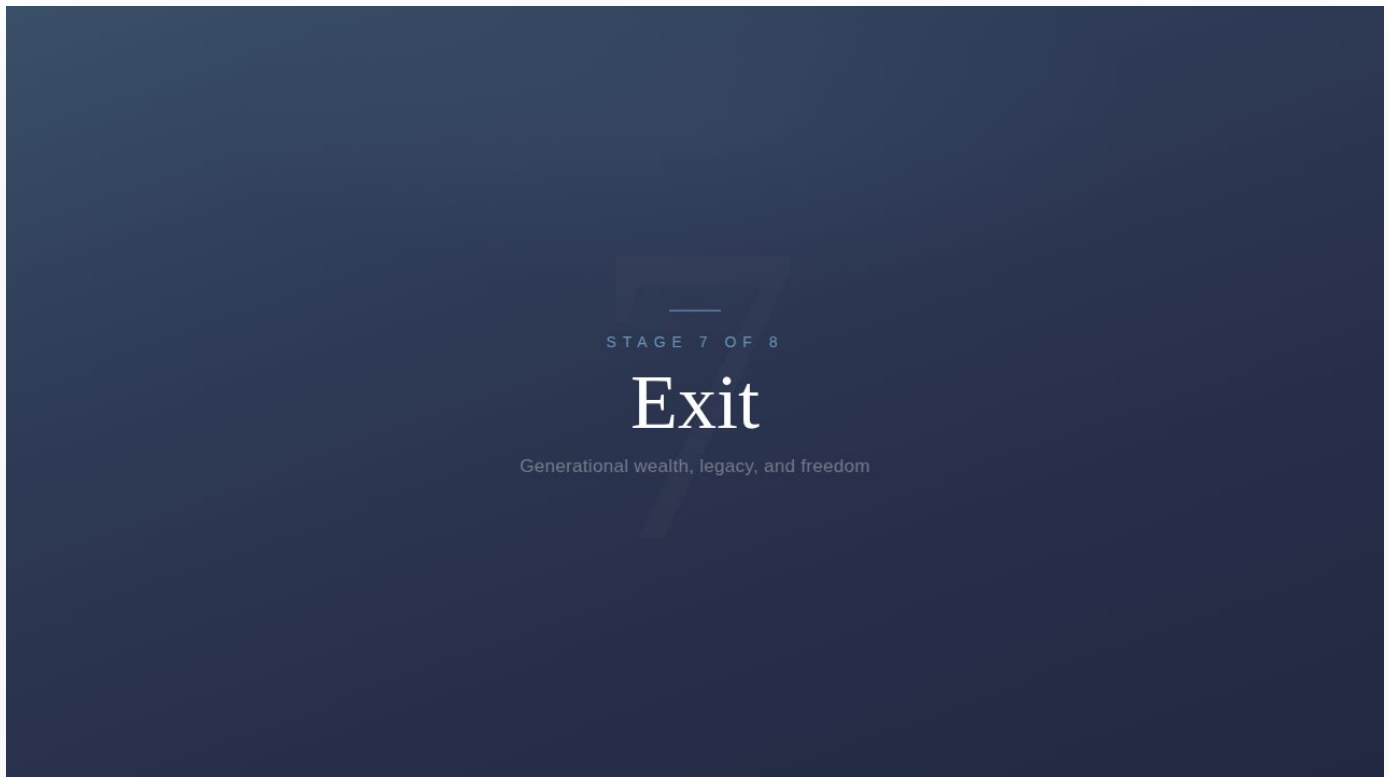
You are ready for Stage 7: EXIT when:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>✓ Executed growth strategy: 3 to 5 acquisitions or niche domination</p> | <p>✓ 5 to 8+ advisors managing 500 to 1,000+ households</p> |
| <p>✓ \$1B+ AUM, \$10 to 15M+ revenue</p> | <p>✓ Enterprise infrastructure at scale (tech, ops, compliance)</p> |
| <p>✓ Business runs without you: 10% of client meetings max</p> | <p>✓ Strong executive team, clear succession plan, recognized brand</p> |

THE FINAL STAGE

Stage 7: *Exit*

Generational Wealth. Legacy. Freedom.



Jeremy covers the four exit paths (PE, strategic buyer, internal succession, peer merger), the 24-month preparation plan, the 7 valuation drivers, founder transition timeline, and the identity shift that makes it all work.



4 Exit Paths



24-Month Prep Plan



7 Valuation Drivers



Founder Transition

Stage 7: *Exit*

HEADCOUNT: 40+
 REVENUE: \$15M+
 AUM: \$1.5B+

| YOUR ROLE | Executive Chairman / Transitioning Out | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| LEADERSHIP | Full C-suite: CEO, COO, CFO. In office 1 to 2 days/week for board meetings and strategic oversight. | |
| # OF FIRMS | 50 to 100 RIA firms at this level nationally. 500 to 1,000 including wirehouses and IBDs. Top 0.1%. | |
| FUNCTION | CONSTRAINT | TO GRADUATE |
| SERVICE MODEL / COMPLIANCE | Founder still involved in top client relationships. Service quality varies without founder oversight. | Zero founder dependency. All founder clients transitioned 1 to 2 years before exit. 95%+ retention through transition. |
| MARKETING | Brand still tied to founder's personal reputation. Without founder, marketing engine stalls. | Firm brand independent of founder. Marketing machine runs without founder involvement. |
| SALES | Key relationships and deal flow still depend on founder's name and network. | BD team closing independently. M&A pipeline has dedicated owner. Founder not needed for any deal. |
| SERVICE | Some clients still expect founder involvement. Service handoff incomplete. | Every client transitioned to team advisor. Clients barely notice when founder steps away. |
| TECHNOLOGY / PLATFORMS | Tech must be buyer-ready. Messy technology equals low valuation or deal killer. | SOC 2 Type II certified. Clean data migration. Documented APIs. Tech audit passed with zero issues. |
| TALENT ACQUISITION | Key person risk at every level. Successor CEO may not be identified or proven. | Successor CEO running firm 1 to 2 years. Bench strength at every key role. No single point of failure. |
| HR / PEOPLE | Top people might leave during sale. Culture dependent on founder presence. | Golden handcuffs in place. Culture documented. Leadership development pipeline. Next gen ready. |
| FINANCE | Books not audit-ready. Founder tax tricks embedded. Don't know true enterprise value. | Big Four audit complete. EBITDA normalized. 7 valuation drivers optimized. 6 to 10x EBITDA target. |
| Bottom Line | Decades of effort, not yet converted to wealth | Strategic exit at maximum value, legacy secured, generational wealth created |

STAGE 7: EXIT

From Builder to *Harvester*



THE FOUR EXIT PATHS

Private Equity: highest value (6 to 10x+ EBITDA), but loss of control and growth pressure. Strategic Buyer: strong value if cultural fit, usually faster process. Internal Succession: the legacy play, lower upfront (20% down, 80% over 7 to 10 years from cash flow), but you control the outcome. Peer Merger: combine to drive scale, shared economics. On \$8M EBITDA: PE at 8x = \$64M vs. internal at 4x = \$32M over 10 years. The difference is \$32M. Legitimate choice either way, but make it with clear eyes.



THE 24-MONTH EXTERNAL SALE PLAN

Months 1 to 6: Assessment. Get formal valuation. Run buyer due diligence simulation. Assemble exit team: investment banker, M&A attorney, tax attorney, valuation specialist. Cost: \$100 to 300K (worth millions). Choose your exit path. Months 7 to 18: Fix issues. Eliminate founder dependency. Clean books. Strengthen leadership. Improve growth, retention, diversification metrics. Get SOC 2 certified. Months 19 to 24: Go to market. Banker creates CIM. Quiet outreach to 20 to 40 buyers. Narrow to 3 to 5 LOIs. Negotiate to close.



7 FACTORS THAT DRIVE YOUR VALUATION

Growth trajectory, client retention, recurring revenue, founder dependency (the #1 killer), profitability, revenue diversification, and quality of earnings. The difference between 4x and 10x on \$5M EBITDA is \$30 million. Hire an investment banker who specializes in RIA transactions. This costs money upfront but is worth millions in better outcomes. Get a financial audit by a Big Four or reputable firm. Separate all business expenses from personal to normalize EBITDA.



THE IDENTITY SHIFT

For decades, your instinct has been to grow. Add clients, add advisors, add locations. In Stage 7, building for the sake of building can hurt you. The shift: stop being a builder, start being a harvester. "Who am I without this?" is a question most founders don't say out loud. Start building your post-exit life before you sell: family, health, service, creativity. The founders who thrive after exit figured this out before they left.

**ELIMINATE FOUNDER DEPENDENCY**

High founder dependency: 2 to 3x EBITDA. On \$5M EBITDA = \$10 to 15M exit. Low founder dependency: 6 to 10x EBITDA. On \$5M EBITDA = \$30 to 50M exit. Every thread that still connects you personally is a thread the buyer will discount. Transition all founder clients 1 to 2 years before exit. Document preferences, communication style, key concerns, family dynamics. Introduce team advisors as primary contact gradually. Goal: when you step away, clients barely notice.

**LOCK IN KEY PEOPLE**

If your top advisors or COO leave during the sale, the deal value tanks. Golden handcuffs: retention bonuses, equity rollover, stay bonuses tied to closing. Document culture and values so the buyer understands what they are acquiring beyond the financials. Leadership development pipeline must be in place. The next generation must be ready to lead without you.

**THE FOUNDER TRANSITION TIMELINE**

Years 1 to 2 (Executive Chairman): Board meetings monthly. Advise new CEO. Key client transitions. 2 days/week maximum. Do not hover or overrule the CEO. Years 3 to 5 (Advisory): Quarterly board meetings. Available by phone. 1 day maximum. Year 6+ (Done): Receiving checks. Attend the holiday party. You are out. Most founders struggle with this transition. The ones who prepared for post-exit life thrive. The ones who didn't, flounder.

**LEGACY**

This stage is not just about the money. A well-executed exit can be \$20, \$40, or \$60 million. But legacy matters more than the wire transfer. Legacy is the people you developed. The clients whose lives you changed. The culture that continues without you. The firm that endures has documented culture, intentional leadership development, and systems stronger than any individual. Build your firm to not need you. Develop leaders who share your values. And when it is time, let go.

"How you exit matters just as much as how you built it. I have watched founders leave \$30 million on the table because they rushed the process."

- JEREMY STRAUB, CEO, COASTAL WEALTH

TRAPS THAT DESTROY VALUE

- 1 Selling on a Whim**
 Bad quarter, someone makes an offer over lunch, and suddenly you are in a sales process you weren't prepared for. Reactive selling almost always means leaving money on the table.

- 2 Overvaluing Sentimentality**
 Selling to your junior advisor at 3x because he has been loyal, when PE is offering 8x. That is leaving \$30 million on the table. You can care about people and still make smart financial decisions.

- 3 Hiding Skeletons**
 Compliance gaps, messy books, client complaints swept under the rug. The buyer's due diligence team will find everything. Hidden issues don't reduce price. They kill trust and kill deals.

- 4 Hanging On Too Long**
 You sold, you are executive chairman, but you keep showing up, second-guessing the new CEO. You are actively destroying value. Let go.

- 5 No Post-Exit Plan**
 You sell for \$50 million and six months later you are lost. For 30 years your identity was founder and CEO. Build your post-exit life before you exit, not after.

- 6 Not Locking In Key People**
 If your top advisors or COO leave during the sale, the deal value tanks. Retention packages, golden handcuffs, equity rollover. Lock them in before you go to market.

— STAGE 7: EXIT COMPLETE

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Zero founder dependency in service, marketing, and BD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 95%+ client retention through transition |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Successor CEO running the firm, key employees locked in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Financial audit complete, EBITDA normalized, SOC 2 certified |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Exit path selected and executed at 6 to 10x EBITDA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Founder transitioned out, post-exit life planned |

THE COMPLETE ROADMAP

From Stage 0 to Stage 7

You have completed the entire Advisor Scaling Roadmap. Here is the journey from start to finish.

| Stage 5: <i>Optimize</i> | | PREVIOUS STAGE · \$350 TO \$700M AUM |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| SERVICE MODEL | Service straining at scale | Standardized delivery across all advisors |
| TALENT | High performers asking about partnership | COO hired, formalized partnership track |
| FINANCE | Complex P&L, gut-based decisions | Fractional CFO, formal valuation done |
| BOTTOM LINE | Founder still bottleneck in operations | Leadership team runs the business |

| The Identity <i>Journey</i> | | | YOUR EVOLUTION ACROSS ALL 8 STAGES |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| STAGE 0 | Aspiring Advisor | | Choose your path |
| STAGE 1 | Hunter | | Get clients, survive |
| STAGE 2 | Builder | | Build systems |
| STAGE 3 | Manager | | Lead people |
| STAGE 4 | Emerging CEO | | Build the team |
| STAGE 5 | CEO | | Get out of operations |
| STAGE 6 | Empire Builder | | M&A, scale, brand |
| STAGE 7 | Harvester | | Exit, legacy, freedom |

REMEMBER

Every advisor who built something great went through these stages. Every single one. The difference was preparation, not talent. You earned this. Now do the work to maximize it.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Make It *Concrete*

STAGE 6 QUARTERLY PLAN

- 1 This quarter:** Decide growth path with leadership: M&A, geographic expansion, niche domination, or combination.

- 2 If M&A:** Identify 5 to 10 target practices. Assign pipeline owner. Begin relationship building.

- 3 This week:** Pick your niche. Build 12-month branding plan. Assign or hire someone to execute.

- 4 This year:** Get formal valuation (\$5 to 15K). Build 3-year enterprise value plan. Close 1 to 2 acquisitions.

- Ongoing:** Block quarterly strategic planning days. Off-site, no fires, big picture only.

STAGE 7 TWENTY-FOUR MONTH PLAN

- 1 Months 1 to 6:** Get formal valuation. Assemble exit team (\$100 to 300K). Run buyer due diligence simulation. Choose exit path.

- 2 Months 7 to 18:** Eliminate founder dependency. Clean books. Strengthen leadership. Get SOC 2 certified. Improve metrics.

- 3 Months 19 to 24:** Go to market. Banker creates CIM. Outreach to 20 to 40 buyers. Narrow to 3 to 5 LOIs. Negotiate and close.

- 4 Post-close:** Executive Chairman for 1 to 2 years (2 days/week max). Advisory for 2 to 3 years. Then done.

- Before exit:** Build your post-exit life. Family, health, service, creativity. Figure it out before you leave, not after.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

The Conversations You Need to Have with *Yourself*

— STAGE 6 REFLECTIONS

- *What is my primary growth path? Am I committed or still just thinking about it?*

- *Am I avoiding M&A because of strategy or because of fear and comfort?*

- *Could someone describe my firm's niche in one sentence?*

- *If I stepped away for 90 days, what would happen?*

- *Do I know what my firm is really worth today?*

- *Am I spending time on CEO activities or still solving operational fires?*

— STAGE 7 REFLECTIONS

- *If I disappeared tomorrow, could the business run for 6 months without me?*

- *What is my actual number? Have I done the real math on what I need?*

- *Which exit path aligns with my deepest values?*

- *Who is my successor? Are they truly ready? Have they been running the firm?*

- *What will I do on Monday morning if I don't have to go to the office?*

- *What does legacy mean to me specifically?*

- *Are there skeletons that would surface in due diligence?*

- *Who am I without this? Have I started building my post-exit identity?*

RECOMMENDED READING

Books That Will Accelerate Your *Exit*

Curated for the exact challenges you face at Stages 6 and 7.



Built to Sell

by John Warrillow

The definitive guide to building a business that can thrive without you and command a premium valuation. Essential reading before any exit conversation.



The Art of Selling Your Business

by John Warrillow

From the same author. Covers the negotiation, deal structure, and emotional journey of selling what you built. Practical and honest about what the process actually feels like.



Finish Big

by Bo Burlingham

How founders who exit well do it. Covers the emotional, financial, and legacy dimensions. Especially strong on the identity questions that Stage 7 raises.



Good to Great

by Jim Collins

The Level 5 leadership framework is essential for Stage 6. Building a firm that outlasts the founder requires the kind of leadership Collins describes.



The Hard Thing About Hard Things

by Ben Horowitz

The emotional reality of being a CEO at scale. Making impossible decisions, leading through chaos, and knowing when it is time to transition. Honest and practical.



Buy Then Build

by Walker Deibel

If M&A is your growth lever at Stage 6, this is the playbook. Acquisition criteria, deal structure, integration, and valuation. All relevant for your next chapter.

AI PROMPT LIBRARY

Prompts to Put This Into *Practice*

Copy these into ChatGPT, Claude, or your preferred AI tool. Replace bracketed sections with your specifics.

— STAGE 6: SCALE

M&A TARGET IDENTIFICATION

"I am the CEO of a \$[X]M revenue RIA with \$[X]B in AUM, [X] employees, located in [region]. I want to build an M&A pipeline of 10 to 20 acquisition targets. Help me: (1) define my ideal target criteria (AUM range, geography, advisor age, cultural markers), (2) create a list of data sources to find targets (custodian, SEC IAPD, conferences, brokers), (3) build a relationship-building timeline (Year 1 to 3), and (4) create an outreach email template for initial contact. This is relationship-driven, not transactional."

NICHE DOMINATION STRATEGY

"I run a \$[X]M RIA and need to pick and own a niche. My current client base skews toward [describe]. Help me: (1) analyze which niche represents my best opportunity (athletes, tech executives, physicians, business owners, multi-generational families), (2) build a 12-month brand domination plan for my chosen niche including podcast, speaking, LinkedIn content, PR, and events, (3) create a positioning statement that differentiates me, and (4) estimate the investment required and expected ROI in new client acquisition."

ENTERPRISE VALUE ASSESSMENT

"I am the CEO of an RIA with \$[X]M revenue, \$[X]M EBITDA, [X]% margins, [X] employees, and \$[X]B AUM. Help me: (1) estimate my current enterprise value range based on the 7 key valuation drivers (growth, retention, recurring revenue, founder dependency, profitability, diversification, quality of earnings), (2) identify the 3 factors most holding my multiple back, (3) create a 3-year plan to move from [X]x to [target]x EBITDA, and (4) estimate the dollar impact of each improvement. Be specific with numbers."

ENTERPRISE TECH STACK AUDIT

"I run a \$[X]M RIA with [X] employees across [X] offices. Audit my current tech stack: [list your systems]. For each, tell me: (1) is this enterprise-grade for a firm my size, (2) what should I upgrade to, (3) estimated cost, and (4) integration requirements. Also assess: cybersecurity readiness (SOC 2 status), data migration capability, and whether my stack passes buyer due diligence. Budget range: \$200 to 500K/year."

STAGE 7: EXIT

24-MONTH EXIT PREPARATION PLAN

"I am the founder/CEO of a \$[X]M revenue RIA with \$[X]M EBITDA. I want to exit in 24 months. Help me build a month-by-month preparation plan covering: (1) Months 1 to 6: assessment, valuation, exit team assembly, exit path selection, (2) Months 7 to 18: founder dependency elimination, book cleanup, leadership strengthening, compliance and SOC 2 certification, (3) Months 19 to 24: go-to-market process, CIM creation, buyer outreach, LOI negotiation. Include estimated costs at each phase and key milestones that tell me if I am on track."

FOUNDER DEPENDENCY ELIMINATION

"I am the founder of a \$[X]M RIA preparing for exit. Help me systematically eliminate founder dependency. (1) List every area where I am still personally involved (client relationships, strategic decisions, BD, marketing, operations), (2) for each area, create a 6-month transition plan to hand off to a specific team member, (3) create a client transition script for moving my personal clients to team advisors, and (4) define measurable milestones that prove to a buyer that the firm runs without me. The goal is to go from high founder dependency (2 to 3x EBITDA) to low (6 to 10x)."

EXIT PATH COMPARISON

"I am the founder of a \$[X]M revenue RIA with \$[X]M EBITDA. Compare my four exit options side by side: (1) Private Equity: expected multiple, deal structure, pros/cons, loss of control, growth pressure. (2) Strategic Buyer: expected multiple, integration process, cultural risks. (3) Internal Succession: financial structure (20% down, 80% over 7 to 10 years), legacy benefits, risks. (4) Peer Merger: economics, shared control, scale benefits. For each, calculate the total expected payout over 5 and 10 years. Which path maximizes financial outcome? Which maximizes legacy?"

KEY PERSON RETENTION STRATEGY

"I am preparing to sell my RIA in the next 2 years. I need to lock in my key people through the transition. My key employees are: [list roles and tenure]. Help me design: (1) retention bonus structures tied to deal closing, (2) equity rollover options for key advisors, (3) stay bonuses with specific vesting schedules, (4) golden handcuff packages for my COO and top 3 advisors, and (5) communication scripts for telling key employees about the potential sale without creating panic. Budget: [X]% of deal value for retention."

— LEGACY & TRANSITION

INVESTMENT BANKER SELECTION

"I am the founder of a \$[X]M revenue RIA with \$[X]M EBITDA looking to hire an investment banker for my exit. Help me: (1) create an RFP template to send to 3 to 5 RIA-specialized investment banks, (2) list the 10 questions I should ask each banker (track record, fee structure, buyer relationships, process timeline, team assigned), (3) define red flags that disqualify a banker, and (4) create a comparison matrix to evaluate proposals side by side. Also explain typical fee structures (retainer + success fee) and what I should negotiate."

POST-EXIT LIFE PLANNING

"I am a financial services founder in my [50s/60s] preparing to exit my firm in the next 2 to 3 years. For 30 years, my identity has been CEO and founder. Help me build a post-exit life plan covering: (1) purpose and identity: what replaces the daily mission, (2) relationships: who I will spend time with and how to reconnect after years of 60+ hour weeks, (3) health: physical and mental health plan for the transition, (4) service: boards, mentoring, philanthropy opportunities, (5) creativity: what I have always wanted to do but never had time for. Be honest about the emotional challenges founders face after exit."

DUE DILIGENCE SIMULATION

"I am preparing my RIA for sale. Run a buyer's due diligence simulation on my firm. Ask me questions a buyer would ask about: (1) revenue quality and sustainability, (2) client concentration risk, (3) founder dependency, (4) compliance history, (5) technology infrastructure, (6) key person risk, (7) growth trajectory, and (8) financial accuracy. After I answer, tell me which areas would concern a buyer, what my estimated multiple range would be, and what I need to fix before going to market. Be as tough as a real buyer would be."

SUCCESSION CEO DEVELOPMENT PLAN

"I need to develop my successor CEO over the next 2 to 3 years. My top candidate is [name, current role, years at firm]. Help me: (1) assess their readiness across 8 dimensions (strategy, operations, people management, client relationships, BD, finance, culture, industry knowledge), (2) create a 24-month development plan with quarterly milestones, (3) define the specific responsibilities to transfer in what order, (4) create a title transition timeline (current role to President to CEO), and (5) script the conversation where I tell them they are the chosen successor."

WHAT'S NEXT

Ready to *Finish Strong?*

You now have the complete roadmap. From Stage 0 to Stage 7. From zero to an enterprise worth tens of millions of dollars. The question is: do you want to navigate this alone, or with a team that has already figured it out?

If you are a growth-minded advisor ready to scale, exit, or explore what is possible, let's have a conversation.

BOOK A STRATEGY SESSION

MyCoastalWealth.com

Created by Jeremy Straub, CEO · Coastal Wealth
Advisor Scaling Roadmap 2026

COASTAL WEALTH