

Selling your business

Do not let the dream of selling your business turn into a nightmare!

case study



adventbusinesssales

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“I soon learnt from my solicitor and my accountant that selling a business in ninety seven days is almost unheard of”.

Christine Gregory
Ex Publishing House Owner



How it started...

My name is Christine Gregory and I would like to share my personal experience of selling my publishing company.

If you're thinking of selling your business and you're unsure about where to start, then you're not alone.

Watch our story online: www.adventsales.com/testimonials



Christine Gregory



Keith Gregory

A little about those that helped Christine & Keith sell their business in 97 days!

Advent Business Sales (Advent) are a business transfer agent focusing on selling small to medium sized businesses, as well as providing franchising resale opportunities. Bringing a wealth of experience, Advent has been able to establish itself as a forward thinking agent. Our key to success has been simple – provide innovative techniques (where applicable) that helps to sell businesses swiftly and for maximum value whilst maintaining confidentiality.

At Advent, we're proud to say, "We specialise in bringing together buyers and sellers."

The background...



My name is Christine Gregory and I would like to share my personal experience of selling my publishing company.

If you're thinking of selling your business and you're unsure about where to start, then you're not alone.

I was in that position almost three years ago and don't mind admitting that I made plenty of mistakes at first. Hopefully, you can learn from my experience and save a lot of time, money and hassle.

Aged 67 and having owned a successful publishing company for over six years, the thought of retirement had increasingly been occupying my thoughts. It would be sad to see it go but I felt I had earned the right to take it easier and enjoy the fruits of my hard work.

In fact, my husband (Keith) and I had often discussed selling the business and then fulfilling our lifetime dream of travelling around the world. However, the truth was that neither of us had the faintest idea of how we could go about selling the business.

Eventually, I decided to get the ball rolling. On the assumption that the buyer would be local, I placed an advert in our local paper. After spending almost £1,200 on a six week advertising campaign, we waited expectantly without receiving a single enquiry, which was disheartening to say the least.

My husband and I sought the advice of a professional, who suggested that we advertise the sale through our company's website. At last, we started getting some phone calls, which was quite exciting at first. However, it did not take long for us to realise that they were not suitable buyers.

There were mainly two types of callers who responded to the website advert. The first were loyal customers expressing their views about our decision to sell and the second were competitors who were obviously trying to extract inside and confidential information, in order to gain a competitive advantage.

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It became clear that the news of the sale was spreading fast, as a result of which the pressure soon became unbearable. On a single day, I received calls from 9 customers and 6 suppliers all enquiring about what was going on. It turned out that some of them had been speaking to my employees too.

A friend then advised me to place an advert in a trade journal and 5 different websites specialising in business sales. This decision set me back almost £1,000 over an eight week advertising campaign. We received 57 enquiries during this period.

Initially, we were overwhelmed with the interest generated. However, we soon realized that the interested parties wanted details, photographs, sensitive supplier and customer information, as well as our last three years accounts and VAT returns. As we did not know anything about these respondents, we felt quite vulnerable, especially as none of them were prepared to confirm their funding position. We had no way of checking their identity or verifying their ability to purchase. We felt helpless.

I suspected some of them might have been competitors trying to wheedle out financial information, so the whole thing was a bit of a double-edged sword.



One difficulty was trying to field these calls without alerting my staff. At the same time, I was busy running the business and the idea of collating and sending dozens of confidential documents was just too much to handle, especially due to the confidential nature of the sale. Another mistake we made was buying a contact list of people in our sector on the advice of a business associate. The theory was that we would have access to a pool of the most suitable buyers. In practice, it involved making a lot of phone calls, running around and once again sending out confidential details.

There were a few responses, but it became clear that we had put ourselves at risk, as we had given too strong an impression of desperation by contacting them directly in the first place and they had obviously seized upon this.

The other downside of this method was the amount of negative rumors it generated in our sector and the fact that we were selling eventually filtered down to our suppliers. Some of them were nervous and imposed new credit terms on us, which were much less favorable. I am reluctant to say how much we paid for the list, but let's just say it was about the same as we had already paid in total for advertising so far.

By now it had become obvious that we were going to have to get professional help. All the time and money we had spent had only endangered the sale and profitability of the very asset we were trying to sell. At this point, I felt that our dream was turning into a nightmare.

After searching the phrase business for sale and sell my business on the internet, I found several business transfer agents (as I learned they are called) and went about arranging meetings with three business selling agents.

The valuations they gave were so different from each other, as were the fees quoted and the terms of selling. To our amazement

one of the agents wanted a large upfront fee for advertising (which equated to hundreds of pounds per week until the business was sold). We were told that this fee would be charged regardless of whether a sale took place or not. Given that there was no specified time limit in which our business would be sold, we struggled to see what the agent's incentive would be for a quick sale.

The second agent wanted a very large upfront fee (several thousands of pounds). Again, this would be charged irrespective of a sale taking place. The agent had nothing to lose by signing us up. On the other hand, we stood to lose thousands of pounds even if the business was not sold.

When the third agent informed us that his company did not charge upfront fees, we thought this may be the one to move forward with. However, it was not long before he told us that a percentage (significant value) of the sale proceeds would be payable upon completion. I could not see the sense in pursuing the sale through this agent, as we would have to part with an unreasonable percentage of the sale figure.

During all three meetings, I found myself being put under immense pressure to sign up quickly. We didn't expect them to do it for nothing, especially as we were aware of how much the advertising can cost, but the fees quoted seemed to be unreasonable and excessive. We decided not to use any of these agents.

My husband and I were distraught. We felt we would never sell the business and our dream of travelling overseas looked an impossibility.

It was quite by chance that I discovered one of my clients had recently sold her business. I called her and quizzed her about it. It turned out that she had also wasted a lot of money trying to sell her business by herself at first and had gone through a similar experience to mine. Luckily, her friend had recommended a company, who had successfully sold her business.



How ABS helped...

The fees my friend mentioned seemed a bit more realistic than those I had come across. Also, she told me that the selling agent had actively monitored everything until the day of completion. More importantly, the selling agent had achieved a sale at the full asking price for my friend, which was very close to the original asking price discussed with the consultant.

When I asked my friend for the selling agent's contact number, I had already spent over 6 months and many thousands of pounds trying to find a buyer, so it was with mixed emotions that I decided to call. Would it be a case of "here we go again"?

At this point in time, I could never have imagined that in just over three month's time, the proceeds of selling my business would be safely in my bank account!

18th March

From the very start, I was treated courteously and professionally by the lady who took my call. She listened to my challenging experience of trying to sell the business by my own efforts and then she took the time to explain how Advent sold businesses. She stressed that buyers introduced by Advent would be asked to provide background details, information of available funding and a confidentiality undertaking.

She suggested sending out one of their consultants for an initial appraisal of the business. She also pointed out that there was no obligation to proceed and that there would be no charge for the initial consultation.

I decided to make an appointment for the consultant to visit and received a full information pack in the post on the following day. This explained how the selling process works in clear and simple language. This pack was much more informative than anything that I had received from the agents I had found via the Internet. The information pack answered a lot of my questions even before the consultant had come out to see me.



Advent Business Sales helped overcome the anxieties and complications suffered by Christine & Keith by selling their business swiftly and discreetly. Make it simple by contacting us on 01163 360 360.

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25th March

The consultant from Advent called me a day in advance to reconfirm the appointment time and place. Before discussing the appointment, the consultant made sure that he was talking to me and not my staff. I appreciated the consultant's professional and discreet approach.

26th March

The consultant arrived as scheduled for the appointment. He asked an exhaustive range of questions and pointed out several unique selling points, as well as scope for future development, which the previous agents had overlooked. He fully explained how Advent marketed businesses and where we might expect to find a likely buyer. He also took the time to go through the agreement with us and made sure that we understood everything. Then, he clearly detailed the fees involved and gave us the opportunity to ask questions regarding anything we did not understand. This was a world away from my previous experiences with the other agents.

At the end of the meeting my husband and I were impressed with what the consultant had explained and with his understanding of our business. We decided to instruct Advent to handle the sale at the end of the meeting.

**2nd April**

Within a week, I received the sales particulars for my approval. I was more than happy with these, as they were articulate and included just enough detail to engage a buyer's interest without breaking any confidentiality. I signed them off immediately.

11th April

It was good (if a little unnerving) to see the adverts go live but the coverage was excellent and exactly as described in the agent's marketing plan.

18th April

Finally a viewer! Advent had received a number of enquiries, which were being screened.

In fact, they dismissed several as likely "time wasters" for a variety of reasons. It felt a bit strange to be turning people away, but the first viewer was genuinely interested and Advent had asked them to confirm that she had access to funding. Advent had also investigated her work history and identified that she had the relevant skills to run the publishing company.

The Advent employee, who was negotiating on our behalf, always kept me up-to-date about interested buyers. She told me that she had spent a lot of time highlighting the future potential of the business, which contributed towards the perceived value of the business, and possibly a high sale price.

8th May

All of the work undertaken by Advent had paid dividends. I was over the moon when the negotiator called me to say the buyer had made an offer of the full asking price (which was actually more than I had been asking for myself) and meant all the costs that I had wasted/incurred previously when trying to sell the business had been recovered.

The time and effort the negotiator had put into working with the buyer had made all the difference to her perception of the price and put us in a really strong position.



I confirmed my acceptance of the offer over the phone and was told to expect a confirmation letter very soon which I received the next day.

At the same time, they confirmed to the buyer in writing that her offer had been accepted. The letter also requested her solicitor's details, as well as a holding deposit, which I was happy to accept in return for not allowing any further viewings (30 day exclusivity period).

Even though the viewings had stopped, the negotiator explained that Advent would continue marketing the business to ensure that there would be buyers on standby. This certainly helped me sleep better at night!

15th May

At this stage, we started to take care of all the legal issues (due diligence) involving my solicitor, the buyer's solicitor and both sets of accountants. They dealt quickly with all queries and provided regular progress reports. Even though it had gone fairly quiet while the solicitors played their part, I still had a good picture of how well things were progressing as Advent kept me up-to-date.

3rd June

I think we remember this date better than the completion date! Getting the solicitor's legal

documents which confirmed the completion date certainly got the pulse racing. Our dream was now becoming a reality and we started looking at holidays over the internet.

30th June

With a bottle of champagne in the fridge, we waited expectantly for the phone to ring with confirmation that the sale had completed. There were a few moments when I mentally kicked myself for trying to do it all by myself the first time round, as I realised we could have been here a lot sooner.

Even at that final stage, it was hard to believe that it was really about to go through so quickly, having only instructed Advent a few months prior to the completion date! Ninety seven days after first contacting Advent, the phone rang and the champagne cork popped, as the proceeds of the sale had been transferred to my bank account!

I do not claim to be an expert at selling a business, but I know a lot about how not to sell one, as well as the pitfalls to avoid!

If you would like to find out about how you can sell your business, contact Advent. They sold my business in 97 days!

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I sold my business in 97 days through Advent. Had I gone to Advent 6 months earlier, I would have saved many thousands of pounds which was wasted on trying to sell the business all by myself.

All I can say is that I can't imagine it would have happened without Advent.

"We have just got back from our third holiday abroad and are making the most of our eagerly awaited retirement thanks to Advent Business Sales"

Selling your business will shape your future, so make sure you are choosy when it comes to selecting an agent, when the time comes to sell.

"I highly recommend the services of Advent Business Sales."

Christine Gregory,
Ex-Publishing House Owner

Watch my story online today:
www.adventsales.com/testimonials



For additional testimonials call:

0116 360 360

or email:

richard.harris@adventsale.com

to request a brochure

Hear what our clients have to say: www.adventsales.com/testimonials.asp



In the heart of the recession Christine & Keith Gregory sold their business in 97 days with Advent Business Sales. Review similar successes on www.adventsales.com today.

Remember any discussion with our consultants and support staff is in total confidence. You have our word.

Get in touch today.

Advent can help whether you are selling your business today or in the future. Remember any discussions with our team are completely confidential.

Our consultants are highly skilled, dedicated and experienced in business sales. We provide a no obligation, no cost consultation during which you'll get a clear understanding of the opportunities for selling your business.

For a FREE business appraisal contact our specialist today at our head office on:

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e: enquiries@adventsales.com
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All the information contained in this brochure is true. Whilst Advent will try to find a buyer for your business as quickly as we did for Mr & Mrs Gregory we can't guarantee it but we will try our best!



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 Approved Redress Scheme



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 Information Commissioner's Office



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