

# From Roller Coaster Rides To Successful Exits—Business Blueprint Interview With Dale Beaumont



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**Dale Beaumont:**

Kerry Boulton is Australia's most respected exit strategy advisor and CEO of The Exit Strategy Group. Welcome to this week's segment.

Hi, I'm Dale Beaumont, and welcome to Secrets Exposed. This is the show that takes you up close and personal with world-leading business experts. Our topic for this interview is how to sell your business for the best possible price. That's coming up in just a moment.

My special guest today is leading business advisor Kerry Boulton, and our topic for this interview is how to successfully sell your business for the best possible price. Kerry, thanks for joining us.

**Kerry Boulton:**

My pleasure, Dale. Thank you.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So, tell me about your business career and some of the successes you've had over that time.

**Kerry Boulton:**

I'll start at the beginning. I was a 16-year-old in the workforce as a secretary back then, self-educated, pretty much alongside the best people I could possibly find to learn from. And finally, one day, an opportunity presented itself for me to have my own business.

**Dale Beaumont:**

And what age were you then?

**Kerry Boulton:**

I was 20 years old by then. So, it took a little while, but I had been through various industries and had some great experiences, including moving interstate for work. I suppose there's a point there: you can start a business at any age.

**Dale Beaumont:**

Absolutely. So, at this time, you'd risen to a level in a corporate environment at Maine Nicholas Ltd, where you were the first female General Manager in that organisation, running an international freight forwarding business. When they decided strategically to exit the business, you put up your hand and said, "I'd like to buy the business."

**Kerry Boulton:**

Yes, that was the beginning of my first business.

**Dale Beaumont:**

Okay, so you're working for the business as the General Manager, and you basically said, "I'm going to buy the business." Now, if I could ask, how did you fund the business? Did you have that amount of money sitting in your bank account?

**Kerry Boulton:**

No, I had zero money at the time.

**Dale Beaumont:**

Well, you have to tell us—there are people watching this who will want to know how you did it.

**Kerry Boulton:**

It's actually a really interesting story. The business plans you write in a corporate organisation are not the same as the business plans needed to find investors. I learned from a book called "How to Write Plans that Win Dollars," written by Stanley Rich and David Gumpert from MIT. I read it cover to cover in 24 hours and wrote my plan exactly by the book to attract investors.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So, you went to investors, saying, "I know how to run this business. I've been doing it for several years, and now there's an opportunity here." How many investors did you have?

**Kerry Boulton:**

I started with 44 investors. I was fortunate to have a mentor who said, "Kerry, write the plan. If you can convince me, I'll help you get the money together." And that's exactly what he did.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So, you got the money together, bought out the previous owners, and what happened next?

**Kerry Boulton:**

I took over a business with 63 staff and five offices around Australia. I also gave birth to my first child the day I had to sign the contract.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So what happened in those first couple of years?

**Kerry Boulton:**

The first couple of years were incredibly turbulent. We faced the 1987 Black Monday stock market crash, lost a state manager in a car accident, and endured interest rates that were up around 18-20%. It was a rollercoaster ride. However, the business plan worked out exactly as I had planned, which included having an exit strategy. We planned to sell to an international group between the five and ten-year mark, and that's what happened.

**Dale Beaumont:**

You won awards, including the Telstra Small Business Awards, and implemented continuous improvement processes.

**Kerry Boulton:**

Yes, we found and fixed profit leakages, turning the business around with a \$1.5 million improvement in one year.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So, how many years later did you sell the business?

**Kerry Boulton:**

Nine years later.

**Dale Beaumont:**

And what was the outcome? Was it a success? Did the investors see a return?

**Kerry Boulton:**

There were many learning experiences, but we were happy in the end. While it wasn't multi-millions, we received a return on our investment and maintained cash flow for the nine years. The most important part was that everyone had a job.

**Dale Beaumont:**

You've done it again, this time in the real estate industry. Did you buy that business or start it from scratch?

**Kerry Boulton:**

That business was a startup.

**Dale Beaumont:**

And how many years later did you exit that business?

**Kerry Boulton:**

From 1996 to 2007, so 11 years.

**Dale Beaumont:**

And that was a multi-million dollar bottom line return?

**Kerry Boulton:**

Yes, that's correct.

**Dale Beaumont:**

So, why do people sell their businesses?

**Kerry Boulton:**

People sell their businesses for various reasons. It might be part of their original strategy, they might want to retire, or they might want to reap the rewards of their investment. Often, it's about achieving a return on investment.

**Dale Beaumont:**

With the baby boomer population making up the largest demographic and many retiring in the next five to ten years, there will be thousands, even millions, of businesses sold.

**Kerry Boulton:**

Dale, it's a tsunami of business sales that's coming. The baby boomer generation owns a significant portion of businesses, so this wave is unavoidable. Even if you have a strong, viable business, unless it's managed for sale, you won't maximise its value. Start preparing your business now.

**Dale Beaumont:**

People can get value from this interview in two ways: either by learning how to sell their business

for the best possible price or by understanding strategies to buy a business from someone looking to exit.

**Kerry Boulton:**

Exactly.

**Dale Beaumont:**

If you don't have a copy of Kerry's new book, ***The Uncensored Truth About Exit Strategy***, please visit [freeexitstrategybook.com.au](http://freeexitstrategybook.com.au).