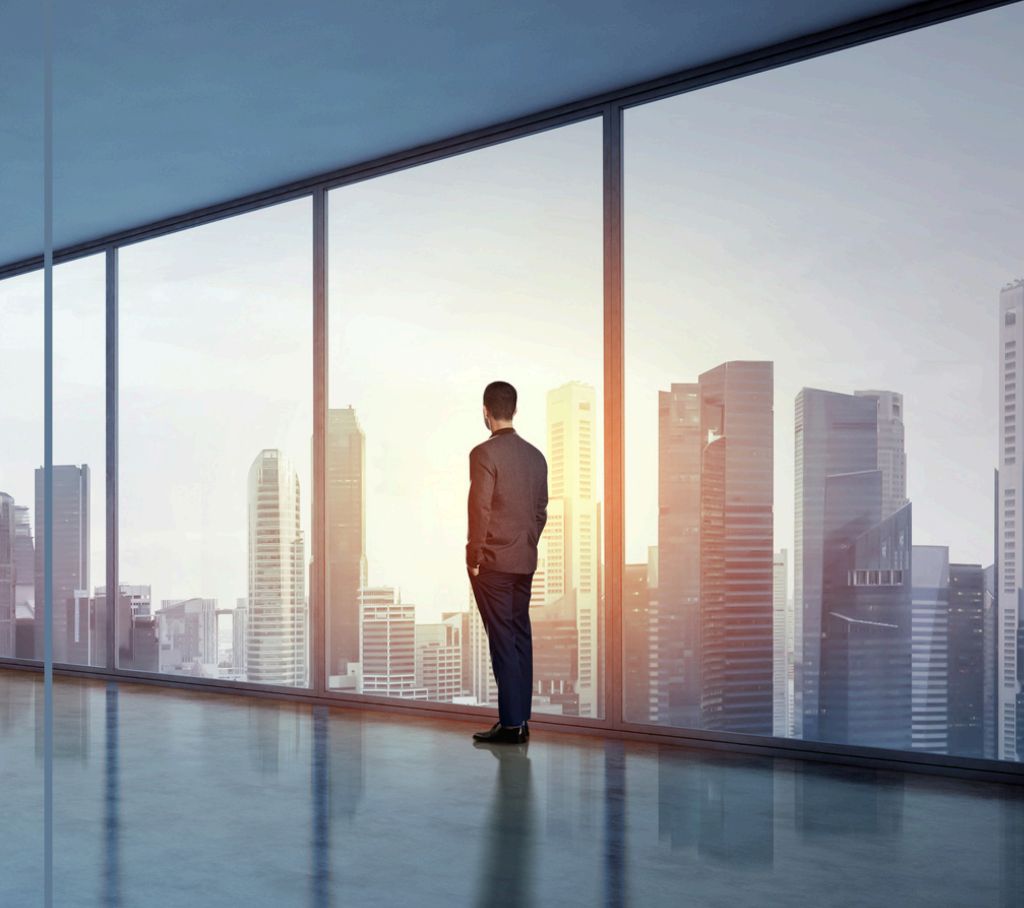
THE A/E/C FIRM OWNER'S 90-DAY READINESS PLAN

7 Steps to Protect Your Value and Legacy — Starting Now



stonemill®

GUIDING A/E LEADERS THROUGH SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

DON'T LET TIMING DESTROY YOUR OPTIONS

Every year, we meet talented A/E/C firm owners who waited too long to plan their exit or succession. They were busy leading projects, managing teams, and keeping clients happy until one day, an opportunity (or crisis) forced their hand. Without a clear readiness plan, their options were limited, their leverage weakened, and in some cases, their legacy was left in someone else's hands.

The good news? Protecting your firm's value doesn't have to be overwhelming. In just 90 days, you can put foundational steps in place that reduce risk, increase your attractiveness to buyers or successors, and give you peace of mind even if you're years away from a transition.

This guide will walk you through 7 proven steps we use with A/E/C leaders. Each step is simple, actionable, and designed to be completed in bite-sized chunks. Whether you're preparing for retirement, exploring a merger, or just want to safeguard your legacy, this 90-day plan is your starting point.

If you want to go deeper, our confidential readiness assessment builds on these steps to create a fully customized exit playbook for your firm. But even if you start here, you'll be ahead of most owners and far better prepared when the time comes to make your move.

STEP 1 – CLARIFY YOUR GOAL

Why it matters: Every deal flows from your endgame. Without clarity, you risk pursuing offers or opportunities that don’t align with your personal or professional vision.

Action: Answer this; Do you want to retire, stay on in a reduced role, exit quickly, or merge into a larger platform? Then, write a one-sentence vision for your future.

STEP 2 – AUDIT YOUR LEADERSHIP BENCH

Why it matters: Buyers and successors pay for transferable businesses. If your firm’s success depends solely on you, your value drops.

Action: List your current leadership team, assess who could step in for you tomorrow, and identify capability gaps. Put a development plan in place for the next 12 months.

STEP 3 – ASSESS CLIENT CONCENTRATION

Why it matters: If one client makes up more than 20% of your revenue, buyers see higher risk. That can reduce offers or stall deals.

Action: Calculate your client concentration. If it’s high, start building a diversification strategy, new sectors, new geographies, or additional service lines.

STEP 4 – STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL HYGIENE

Why it matters: Clean, accurate financials build buyer confidence and speed up due diligence. Messy books can kill deals.

Action: Update your P&L and balance sheet, resolve outstanding tax issues, and clearly separate owner perks from operational expenses. If possible, get a CPA to review your books annually.

STEP 5 – PROTECT KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Why it matters: Relationships drive revenue, and losing a key contact during a transition can spook buyers.

Action: Document your top 10 client relationships and introduce a second-in-command to each. Ensure there's a clear succession plan for maintaining those accounts.

STEP 6 – BUILD YOUR NICHE STORY

Why it matters: In the A/E space, specialization drives value. Buyers pay a premium for expertise that's hard to replicate.

Action: Define your niche in one clear sentence. Gather proof, case studies, awards, project metrics, and keep them organized for use in proposals and marketing.

STEP 7 – DEFINE YOUR LEGACY PLAN

Why it matters: Your legacy isn't just about dollars; it's about people, culture, and impact. Buyers who align with your legacy are more likely to protect what you've built.

Action: Write down your non-negotiables for a buyer or successor. This might include protecting your brand, retaining certain staff, or continuing a specific community commitment.

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

You've just taken the first step toward protecting your firm's value and legacy.

The next step is simple — schedule a confidential discovery call with Stonemill Partners. In 30 minutes, we'll review your current position, identify hidden risks, and outline your clearest path to a high-value, low-stress transition.

Your future is too important to leave to chance — let's design it together.

SCAN THE QR-CODE TO BOOK YOUR DISCOVERY CALL!

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