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HELPING Entrepreneur's

Transition Into or Out Of Business Ownership...

Progressive Thinking Creates a Client Focused Boutique Firm in VR Business Sales/Mergers & Acquisitions.



Client Focused

VR Business Brokers / Mergers & Acquisitions looks for the right franchisees to drive its client-first culture forward. BY STEPHANIE CRETS



VR Business Brokers / Mergers & Acquisitions operates with a client-first philosophy. “Valued Representation” is the meaning behind the company’s name and the service it offers its clients. Its name illustrates the company’s strong business ethics, along with its ability to identify and assist today’s entrepreneur. VR continues to be the innovative leader in the sale of privately owned companies and prides itself on a corporate consciousness that fits the needs of its clients and the general public.

VR was founded in 1979, and CEO Peter King and his business partner, President JoAnn Lombardi, acquired it in 1999. “We bought it with the belief that, in a lot of cases, the industry does a disservice to its client base by acting as residential real estate agents rather than advisors to the needs of business owners,” King says. “We want to help people unlock the true value of their business before going to market and fulfill the needs of new entrepreneurs. We saw an opportunity for an industry to become a profes-

sion, similar to investment banking but directed at a client base made up of the family operated and founder-owned businesses.

“Our goal is to attract individuals who want a career they can be proud of while understanding the serious responsibility to transparency in the sale of a business,” he continues. “Maximizing or unlocking the true value of a business was a change in the industry. And this led to the opportunity to become a boutique firm, rather than a mass-produced franchise,



which ultimately meant we could move into lower-middle market and be seen as an advisor not just a broker.”

VR’s goal is to be the best, not the biggest, which again goes against the traditions of its industry. With this idea in mind, King and Lombardi enacted a cultural change within the company and created a corporate consciousness of responsibility to the client. Therefore, VR provides the same level of transactional services and professionalism to each and every client – no matter their size. If the business is privately owned, VR can assist in the mandate to sell.

The process of selecting a client is crucial for VR. First, a two-sided interview is conducted. VR ensures it can give the client the representation it needs, while the client can see if VR is the right fit for

it. Then, VR conducts a full valuation of the business before presenting it to the seller. If both parties agree to move forward, VR then prepares a VR Business Profile or VR Offering Memorandum and begins a pre-due diligence checklist with the seller.

VR initiates the delicate task of balancing the marketing of the business confidentially while gaining maximum exposure. The sensitive nature of a business sale must be respected so as not to damage value. If an employee, landlord, vendors, clients or any other relevant parties find out about the sale in advance, it could affect how the business is run and negatively impact the business’s revenue and ultimate value.

VR handles the entire process, which entails qualifying the buyer and inte-

grating the new owner into the business. “First we listen, then we advise and finally, assist in the sale or purchase of a business,” Lombardi explains.

BOUTIQUE ATMOSPHERE

VR is nearing 60 locations with the goal to grow to 200 franchise locations throughout the United States and Canada while creating a boutique firm that services its core business and the lower middle market. But that expansion is based on finding the right people with the kind of experience that benefits the overall company.

“We’re not in a rush,” King notes. “Our real goal is a long-term commitment to helping the entrepreneur. The company directive is to grant franchises to the right people and not sell for the sake of

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franchise count. The business owners we represent have built the American and Canadian economies; they have earned and deserve the respect of full-time professional representation.”

VR doesn't believe in expanding just to expand; it prides itself and is motivated to create a boutique firm atmosphere rather than a mass-produced franchise factory. “We want to create value on every level,” King explains. “To choose VR, you have to have a calling to help the entrepreneur. If you want a fulfilling professional life, you need to understand it's your responsibility to help clients position or reposition their business and, in some cases, even reverse some things that negatively affect value prior to going to market.

“At VR, we want to help the entrepreneur because they need help. If you've never bought a business, you don't know how, so they're relying on us. We're looking for people who want to be a driving force in their community, who can leverage their past career and who want to be the best.”

Once VR finds someone that is the right fit to move forward, the franchisee will go through a three-week training program. VR offers more than 75 online courses, along with regional training and annual conferences. In addition, VR builds and optimizes the franchisee's website, sets up all necessary social media and markets them accordingly. “Our goal is to make sure our people are presented as the experts in the field and spend their valuable time representing buyers and sellers, not worrying about office management,” Lombardi adds. “We want them to build a business for their families that has value.”

After training, VR will continue to support the franchisee's day-to-day operations. The company operates



President JoAnn Lombardi (left) and CEO Peter King help clients understand the true value of their businesses.

under the notion that everyone is on the same team with the same goals for success. A shared goal of developing strong relationships with its clients is the driving force behind VR's culture, both at its corporate headquarters and throughout its franchise locations. Thanks to this commitment, “VR Has Sold More Businesses in the World than Anyone.®”

“Our clients entrust us with a responsibility that can change a family's future,” Lombardi says. “I can't think of anything more important given today's society.”

“We want to continue to be a leader

and be seen as a boutique firm by the private equity world and sophisticated investor,” King says. “We always want to help the client. That sometimes means telling someone they should wait to go to market. That's putting the client first. You're not going to be getting a commission by telling someone to wait a year, but it's the right thing to do. And we see how seriously our people take their responsibility. The people that JoAnn and I have surrounded ourselves with are the most satisfying part of this journey because we know how they treat their clients.” 🌐