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FOUNDER TO FUTURE

New Strategies for Business Impact, Equity, and Succession

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SYNOPSIS

Over the next twenty years, owners of nearly three million US businesses with employees will reach retirement age. This is being called a “Silver Tsunami” in which roughly \$10 trillion in small business assets will change hands.

Many business owners want to keep their mission-driven organizations vital, healthy, and independent beyond their personal leadership of those organizations. At the same time, many employees of those companies -as well as young entrepreneurs just starting out - are hungry to make their workplaces more healthy, purposeful, and democratic.

Some of these founders will pass their businesses on to family members. Others will unceremoniously close the doors. But many of these companies have sufficient value that they may be sold to strategic buyers, larger companies, or private equity. They may be absorbed, bundled, re-located, squeezed, carved up and “sold for parts.” Their roles as the ballast of communities may end as management without soul takes over.

But what if the 30 million-plus employees of these companies – the people who have helped to build them and whose livelihoods depend on their stability – could provide capital (through their labor and progressive lenders), assume ownership, democratically manage, and reap the rewards? Could these next-generation models alter the chemistry of our economy and culture?

This book provides stories, strategies, and tools to help business owners, leaders, and advisors to successfully accomplish four transitions:

- From original founder to next-generation leadership;
- From sole proprietorships and partnerships to widely shared ownership;
- From hierarchical control to participatory democratic management;
- From unprotected mission to long-term preserved purpose.

Each of these transitions reinforces the others. Together they comprise an important business succession path. In this book, John Abrams, the author of [Companies We Keep](#), who has helped the company he founded to make these transitions and helped other companies to do so— shows how owners, leaders, and companies can make these transitions.

The book examines a variety of models—including B Corp certification, benefit corporations, worker cooperatives, employee stock ownership plans, employee ownership trusts, and perpetual purpose trusts—which can help companies succession through these transitions. Applying these ideas and approaches will help business leaders to create a new era of meaningful work, shared prosperity, and better lives on a healing planet.

Written in a casual, conversational style, the content is primarily conveyed through a collection of inspiring real-life tales and narratives.