

Play #1: Establishing Your Dealmaker Identity

EP Play #1

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Play 0-1, establishing your dealmaker identity. Getting clear on your path before you pursue deals. A note from Chris Moore, when I first started helping people secure equity and businesses without traditional acquisitions, I noticed something interesting. Those who struggled the most weren't lacking skills, connections, or even opportunities. They were missing clarity about themselves. They hadn't defined what I now call their dealmaker identity. I've spent years refining this concept, watching thousands of students transform their results simply by getting clear on who they are as dealmakers before chasing a single opportunity. This foundational step might seem basic, but I've seen it make the difference between years of frustration and rapid success. Take your time with this chapter. It's the cornerstone everything else we will build upon. Think of your journey to becoming a business buyer like planting a garden. You wouldn't just scatter random seeds and hope for the best, right? You'd first decide what you want to grow, understand your soil conditions, and make a plan. Business acquisition works the same way. Before you start looking for businesses to acquire or partnerships to secure, you need to answer a few crucial questions about yourself. What do you want buying a business to do for you? What does business ownership look like in your vision? What change are you seeking in your life? Are you planning to acquire businesses solo or with partners? How might financing options like SBA loans shape your approach? These aren't just casual questions to brush aside. They form the foundation of every decision you'll make from this point forward. Without this clarity, I've watched countless ambitious entrepreneurs waste months, sometimes years, chasing deals that didn't align with their strengths, resources, or goals. I remember working with Michael, a marketing executive who jumped straight into looking at businesses for sale. He spent nine months and nearly \$20,000 on due diligence for three different companies, before realizing none of them aligned with his actual goal of creating passive income. Had he defined his deal maker identity first, he would have immediately filtered out these businesses that required his full-time presence. Successful deal makers don't just buy businesses. They execute a predefined intentional acquisition strategy based on their unique skills, experience, financial position, and long-term goals. So before you even think about sourcing deals, let's establish your deal maker identity. The path to deal clarity. Many people get excited about the prospect of business ownership and jump straight into searching for businesses. Without first understanding what type of business is right for them specifically, how acquisitions fit into their broader life goals, or which strategies align with their particular skills and resources. This enthusiasm is understandable, but it often leads to frustration. You might find yourself

pursuing deals that require capital you don't have, exploring industries where you lack crucial experience, or structuring acquisitions that clash with your ideal lifestyle. When you take the time to establish your deal maker identity first, something powerful happens. Decision making becomes easier, your focus sharpens, and the right opportunities begin standing out from the noise. Let me guide you through this process. Crafting your deal maker vision. First, let's talk about your motivation. Not everyone pursues business acquisitions for the same reasons. You need to get crystal clear on why you're doing this and what you expect from it. Some people want time freedom. They're looking to own a business that runs without their daily involvement, so they can focus on other priorities or simply enjoy life. Others are focused on cash flow creating reliable monthly income streams. Many are interested in wealth building, growing a portfolio by increasing business value, and eventually selling for substantial exits. Some simply want a lifestyle business they can build around their passions. Some others already own various assets and want to add businesses for portfolio diversification. Your primary goal will dictate your entire acquisition strategy. If time freedom is what you're after, you'd be miserable buying a business that demands 60 hour work weeks. If immediate cash flow is your priority, then your deals must generate income right away, not just promise future returns. Think of your motivation as your North Star. It guides every decision that follows. Next, consider what role you want to play in the businesses you acquire. This isn't a one size fits all journey. There are multiple ways to be involved, and finding the right fit is essential. You might see yourself as an owner operator, running the business day to day, deeply involved in operations and strategy. This works perfectly if you enjoy being hands on and want to immerse yourself in the business, or perhaps you're better suited as an owner investor, where you own the business but hire capable people to run it. This creates more passive income without demanding your daily attention. Maybe you see yourself as a strategic partner, leveraging your specific expertise, relationships, or capital to help businesses grow in exchange for equity, what we call partnering for equity. Some people thrive as roll up investors acquiring multiple businesses in the same industry to increase market share and create a more valuable combined entity. Users prefer a board member role, taking an equity position without operational involvement, providing guidance and oversight instead. Getting clear on your preferred role prevents you from pursuing deals that demand a type of involvement you don't want or aren't equipped to provide. Now, let's assess what resources you bring to the table. Contrary to popular belief, you don't need millions in the bank to acquire businesses, but you do need to honestly evaluate what you're working with. Do you have capital ready to deploy, or will you need to use creative financing? Are you planning to utilize SBA loans or traditional bank financing? Have you considered partnering with others who have complementary resources? What specific industry experience or specialized skills can you leverage to add value? Have you built a network that can open doors to deals? Are you prepared to be hands-on? Or do you prefer a more passive approach? Your available resources shape how you'll structure acquisitions. If you're a marketing wizard, that skill becomes leverage and partnering for equity deals. If you have access to capital or strong relationships with lenders, you can consider more traditional acquisitions. If you've developed deep industry expertise, you can partner with operators who need your specific knowledge. I worked with

Sarah, who initially felt she had nothing to offer because she lacked capital. When we dug deeper, we discovered her 15 years in healthcare administration gave her unique insights into operational efficiencies that many medical practices desperately needed. She's now built a portfolio of equity partnerships with healthcare businesses by solving their operational challenges. Understanding your resources helps you target the right opportunities and position yourself effectively in negotiations. You also need to carefully consider which industries and business models align with your strengths and experience. What sectors are you genuinely familiar with? Which types of businesses complement your skills and background? Do you have existing relationships in particular industries? One of the biggest mistakes new buyers make is chasing deals in unfamiliar territory. I call this the stay in your lane principle. If you've spent your career and software development, acquiring a restaurant will likely be challenging. If you've built marketing agencies, a manufacturing company presents an entirely different set of challenges. Focus on what you know or partner with someone who brings the industry expertise you lack. This approach significantly shortens your learning curve and helps you spot both problems and opportunities that others might miss. Finally, it's time to visualize your ideal acquisition. With your goals, preferred role, available resources, and industry focus defined, you can now paint a picture of your perfect deal. Think about the cash flow you want from your first acquisition. Whether you prefer active involvement or a business that runs without you, determine what size business you're comfortable with, is it a \$500,000 revenue operation, a \$1 million company, or something larger, define your preferred deal structure, whether it's seller financing, partnering for equity, or another creative arrangement. Are you planning to leverage SBA financing or work with angel investors for the downpayment? This visualization acts as a filter, screening out deals that don't align with your vision and helping you focus only on opportunities that truly serve your goals. Let me share another example of a fully defined deal maker identity. Rebecca is a former corporate finance executive who wants to acquire a business in the professional services sector. Her goal is to apply her financial expertise while maintaining work-life balance to spend time with her family. She's planning to utilize an SBA loan for the acquisition with an angel investor providing the 10% downpayment in exchange for a 20% equity stake. She's looking for a business with \$2 to \$5 million in revenue, strong management already in place, and potential for growth through improved financial systems. Her ideal role is as a strategic leader rather than day-to-day manager, focusing on growth initiatives while her team handles operations. She plans to hold the business for five to seven years before executing an exit strategy. This level of clarity immediately eliminates businesses that would require her constant presence or that fall outside her financial parameters. It also shapes how she'll structure her search negotiations and transition planning. Your deal maker blueprint. When you've worked through these questions thoughtfully, you'll have a clear picture of what you should be looking for in an acquisition or equity partnership. This becomes your deal maker identity, your personal blueprint for successful deals. Here's what a fully defined deal maker identity might look like. My goal is building a portfolio of cash flowing businesses that don't require my daily presence. I want to be an owner investor hiring strong operators rather than running businesses myself. My key resources include a network of investors and expertise in scaling through digital marketing. I'll focus

on digital businesses, SaaS companies, lead generation, and service-based businesses. My ideal acquisitions are businesses with \$1 million plus in revenue and at least \$200,000 in EBITDA, where I can add value through marketing and rapid scaling. I prefer structures like partnering for equity, performance-based buyouts, and seller financing arrangements. With this clarity, every decision about which deals to pursue, how to structure them, and who to partner with becomes much more straightforward. You'll save countless hours by quickly identifying which opportunities deserve your attention and which ones to pass on. Take some time now to reflect on these questions and craft your own deal maker identity. This foundation will make everything else in your business buying journey more focused and productive.

Dealmaker Checkpoint Before moving on to the next play, take a moment to solidify your deal maker identity by answering these questions.

1. What primary outcome do you want from business acquisitions? System freedom, cash flow, wealth building, etc.
2. What role do you ideally want to play in the businesses you acquire?
3. What unique resources, skills, or advantages can you leverage in deals?
4. Which industries or business models do you have experience with or knowledge about?
5. What specific characteristics would make a deal perfect for your situation?
6. Are you planning to acquire businesses solo or with partners? If partners, what complementary strengths would they ideally bring?
7. What financing methods are you considering? SBA loans, traditional financing, seller financing, angel investors, etc.
8. What is your timeline for acquisition and eventual exit?
9. How much time can you realistically commit to your business or businesses weekly?
10. What specific value do you bring that would make you attractive for partnering for equity arrangements?

Now combine your answers into a concise deal maker identity statement that will guide your acquisition journey. Keep this statement visible as you search for opportunities. It will be your compass for finding the right deals and avoiding the wrong ones. Also, to help you on this journey, I would like to provide you with my proprietary taking inventory self-assessment worksheet. I designed it to help you identify exactly what you have to trade for equity in partnerships. You can download a copy here at partnerforequity.com/takinginventory. In the next play, we'll explore how to define your buy box and ideal win scenario. The specific criteria that will determine which businesses are worth your time and resources.