PLAY #4

Taking Inventory of Your Value

Partner for Equity

Equity Partner Playbook
by Chris Moore

Key Insights

Before diving into the full transcript, here are the most important takeaways from this play:

> You already have valuable assets to trade for equity - skills, experience, network, and knowledge.

> Talk about problems you solve, not what you do for a living.

> Your track record and ability to predict success are highly valuable to business owners.

> Leadership, vision, and the ability to create change are equity-worthy contributions.

PLAY #4

Taking Inventory of Your Value

Play four. What do you have to trade for equity? The taking inventory process. If you want to land equity partnerships, you need to start by answering one crucial question. What do you have that business owners want? This isn't about ego or self-promotion. It's about taking a clear-eyed inventory of what makes you valuable to a potential partner. Your skills, experience, connections, and expertise all contribute to your worth in an equity partnership. Here's the challenge many aspiring dealmakers face. If you don't know what you have to trade, neither will the business owners you're approaching. You'll come across as uncertain or worse desperate, neither of which positions you as a valuable potential partner. The critical paradigm shift. From what you do to problems you solve. Before we dive deeper, I want to introduce a paradigm shift that will transform how you present yourself to potential partners. Most people instinctively talk about what they do. I'm a digital marketer with 10 years of experience. I run operations for a manufacturing company. I'm a financial consultant specializing in small businesses.

This approach immediately puts you in the service provider category in the business owner's mind, but successful equity partners position themselves differently. They talk about the problems they solve. I help businesses eliminate customer acquisition bottlenecks that are preventing growth. I implement systems that allow manufacturing businesses to operate without the owner's daily involvement. I create financial clarity that helps businesses increase their valuation by 30 to 50 percent. Do you see the difference? The first approach positions you as a vendor. The second positions you as a solution to specific valuable problems. One of my top focuses in this playbook is to teach you a new language and retrain the way you speak about yourself and how you position yourself to others. Throughout this journey, remind yourself, don't talk about what you do for a living. Instead, talk about the problems you solve, the playbooks you've created, or the profit centers you add. This shift in language creates a completely different perception of your value, one that makes equity partnerships far more attainable. Confronting the voice of doubt. I've had countless conversations with talented professionals who struggle with a fundamental question. Am I even worthy of equity in someone else's business? They reach out feeling uncertain, asking, do I really have anything worth trading for ownership? Why would a business owner want to partner with me? I have experience, but I'm not sure how to package it into something valuable. Let's call this what it is, imposter syndrome. Let's call this what it is, imposter syndrome. And it affects almost everyone at some point in their journey, even highly accomplished individuals. Most people dramatically undervalue what they bring to the table. You might possess skills, experience, or connections worth hundreds of thousands or even millions to the right business, but because these capabilities come naturally to you, you assume they're nothing special. I remember a particularly revealing conversation with one of my students. She was a highly accomplished technologist who had successfully helped numerous tech startups develop business momentum. Unlike many, she didn't lack confidence in her abilities, quite the contrary. Yet there was still that nagging voice of doubt. What I do doesn't really translate outside my industry. I don't think anyone would take me seriously in other sectors. During our coaching session, I guided her to truly recognize what she had to offer business owners across industries. The breakthrough came when she finally saw herself from an outside perspective. The key shift was moving away from talking about what she had done or the specific industry she worked in and instead focusing on the universal problems she could solve. This simple reframing opened her eyes to how businesses across dozens of different sectors struggle with these same fundamental challenges. It provided her with new clarity and vision on how to package and position herself differently. Once she started presenting herself as a solution to common business problems rather than a tech industry specialist, doors began opening in markets she had never considered accessible before. The skills that seemed ordinary to you could be exactly what certain businesses desperately need and would gladly share equity to access. Let me be absolutely clear, your experience is valuable. Your expertise is valuable. You are valuable. But if you don't recognize and own your worth, business owners won't either. That's why we're going through this taking inventory process. We need to uncover your skills, experience, and unique assets, articulate them clearly, and help you fully embrace what makes you an attractive potential partner. Understanding What Business Owners Really Want Before we dive into your inventory, let's clarify something important. Business owners don't just want more money. Yes, growth and profitability matter. But what they truly want goes much deeper than financial metrics. Business owners are human beings with hopes, fears, frustrations, and dreams. They want relief from pain, solutions to problems, and pathways to their personal goals.

Here's what I've found business owners consistently want. Symptom Relief. Many are overwhelmed, overworked, and desperately seeking solutions to problems they haven't been able to solve themselves. They want the pain to stop. More Time. Very few people start a business intending to work 80-hour weeks indefinitely. Yet many find themselves trapped in exactly that situation, unable to step away without everything falling apart. More Freedom. Related to time but distinct, freedom is about choice and flexibility. Many business owners feel imprisoned by the very operation they built to provide freedom. A Path to Exit. Countless owners want to transition out of their business, but have no idea how to prepare it for sale or transfer of leadership. Better Profit Margins. It's not just about generating more revenue. They want to keep more of what they make. Efficiency and profitability often matter more than top-line growth. Spreading Out Risk. Many owners feel like they're carrying the entire weight of the business alone. They want partners who can share both the burdens and the rewards. Operational Support. They've hit ceilings in their growth and don't know how to break through to the next level. A Stronger Team. They're exhausted from hiring, training, and losing people who don't work out. They need help building a reliable, capable team. A Visionary or an Integrator. Depending on their natural skills, they need a complementary partner. Visionaries need someone to execute and implement. Integrators need someone to provide direction and big-picture thinking. Expansion. They want to grow but lack the roadmap, resources, or confidence to make it happen. Capital and Resources. Some need funding, but more often they need strategic guidance on how to deploy resources effectively. A Buyer or Successor. They want someone they trust to eventually take over the business they've built and nurtured. The Deeper Benefits Business Owners Seek. Beyond these specific needs, business owners are often seeking the very benefits that attracted them to entrepreneurship in the first place. A Proven System. They don't have to master. Many business owners recognize they need systems but don't want to develop them from scratch. They want proven playbooks they can implement with confidence. Strategic Connections. That unlock growth. The right relationship between the business that unlock growth. The right relationship or introduction can transform a business overnight. Owners value partners who can open doors to new markets, customers, or strategic alliances. Time and Location. Freedom. The dream of business ownership often includes freedom from the constraints of time and place. Owners want partners who can help make this vision a reality rather than another unfulfilled promise. This understanding is critical because consulting for equity isn't about convincing someone to give you a piece of their company. It's about becoming the solution to problems they already have. Problems that keep them up at night and limit their success. When you solve these fundamental challenges, you don't have to sell yourself. Business owners will actively seek you out as a partner. Becoming the Solution They Need. The goal of taking inventory isn't to create a pitch where you beg for equity or try to convince business owners you're valuable. It's about developing such clarity about your strengths and how they solve specific problems so that you become magnetic, attracting opportunities rather than chasing them. When you truly understand your ideal win scenario, the specific problems you can solve better than almost anyone else, something remarkable happens. You can confidently command premium compensation plus equity. Business owners come to you instead of you chasing deals. You become a high value asset that the right companies eagerly pursue. You gain access to bigger opportunities with more significant potential upside. I've seen this transformation countless times. Professionals who once struggled to land even modest consulting gigs become sought-after partners who can selectively choose which equity deals to accept and which to politely decline. It's important to note that this approach must be coupled with a process I call gaining authority, establishing yourself as an expert in solving specific problems rather than just someone with skills for hire. We'll cover this critical process in detail in a later chapter, but keep it in mind as you develop your inventory. Authority is what transforms your skills from commodities into sought-after solutions. The taking inventory process, your value blueprint. This exercise isn't optional. It's a fundamental step that will transform how you see yourself and how business owners perceive you. By systematically identifying your strengths, you'll create a clear value proposition that makes potential partners say, I need you on my team. Let's explore the 10 key categories that determine what you can trade for equity. One, skills, your business capabilities.

What specific business functions can you perform at a high level? Consider areas like marketing and customer acquisition, sales processes and team leadership, operations and systems development, financial management and forecasting, technology implementation, product development, human resources and team building, strategic planning. Don't just list generic skills like marketing. Be specific about what aspects of marketing you excel at. Is it digital advertising, content strategy, conversion optimization? The more precisely you can define your skills, the more valuable they become to the right partner. Two, experience and expertise, your professional journey. What industries, business models or company stages do you deeply understand? Have you scaled businesses from startup to maturity, led turnarounds of struggling operations, managed teams of a certain size or composition, navigated specific regulatory environments, worked in particular business models, SAAS, service, manufacturing, etc.? Your experience creates pattern recognition that helps you anticipate challenges and opportunities others might miss. This foresight is incredibly valuable to business owners venturing into unfamiliar territory. Three, track record, your proven results. What measurable outcomes have you achieved? Can you point to revenue or profit growth you've generated, cost reductions you've implemented, successful exits you've been part of, teams you've built or improved, systems you've created that produced measurable results? Nothing speaks louder than documented results. When you can say, I helped company X increase sales by 42% in 18 months, you're not making claims. You're stating facts that demonstrate your value. Four, connections and networks, your relationship capital. Who do you know that could benefit potential partners? Do you have relationships with potential clients or customers, industry influencers or decision makers, investors or funding sources, talented potential team members, strategic partners or suppliers? The right introduction at the right time can transform a business overnight. Your ability to open doors that would otherwise remain closed can be worth significant equity to companies that need those relationships. Five, resources, your assets and access. What tangible resources can you bring to partnerships? This might include technology, tools or proprietary systems, distribution channels or platforms, physical facilities, capital or funding access, intellectual property, existing customer bases. Sometimes what you own or have access to can be just as valuable as what you know. Physical or financial resources can provide immediate leverage that makes you an attractive potential partner. Six, knowledge and wisdom, your intellectual capital. What specialized knowledge have you developed that others would value? This might include industry-specific insights that aren't widely available, proprietary methodologies or frameworks you've created, solutions to complex problems you've mastered, forward-looking perspectives on where markets are heading. Knowledge becomes particularly valuable when it's both specialized and applicable. The more directly your insights can solve specific business challenges, the more equity they're worth. Seven, ability to create change, your implementation skills. Many people know what businesses should do differently. Far fewer can actually make those changes happen.

Do you have proven ability to implement new systems that stick, drive organizational change that overcomes resistance, turn strategies into practical executable plans, measure and adapt as implementation proceeds? The gap between knowing and doing is where most businesses struggle. If you can bridge that gap consistently, you possess a rare and valuable skill set. Eight, leadership and vision, your directional guidance. Can you provide the guidance businesses need to move forward confidently? This includes setting compelling visions that motivate teams, making difficult decisions when paths aren't clear, integrating disparate perspectives into coherent strategies, building cultures that sustain long-term performance. Leadership isn't just about being in charge, it's about creating clarity and confidence when they're most needed. Business owners often seek partners who complement their leadership style or can step in when they're ready to step back. Nine, solving problems, your analytical abilities.

What specific bleeding problems can you identify and fix that business owners struggle with? Are you exceptional at diagnosing underlying issues others miss, creating practical solutions to persistent challenges, preventing future problems before they arise, turning problems into opportunities? Problem solving goes beyond general business acumen, it's about having a methodical approach to identifying root causes and developing sustainable solutions. Ten, predicting success, your business intuition. Have you developed the ability to identify businesses with high growth potential, spot specific obstacles to scaling before they become critical, recognize patterns that indicate future challenges or opportunities, make accurate projections about market or competitive developments? This predictive capability, often called business intuition but actually the result of pattern recognition from extensive experience, can be invaluable to business owners navigating uncertainty. Completing your inventory, honest self-assessment. Take time now to thoroughly assess yourself across all 10 categories. Be brutally honest but also recognize your genuine strengths. Most people underestimate their valuable capabilities while overestimating what they still need to learn. For each category, list specific examples and results. Don't just write, I'm good at marketing. Detail exactly what aspects of marketing you excel at and what results you've produced. The more specific and results-oriented your inventory, the more compelling your value proposition becomes. Remember the paradigm shift we discussed earlier. Instead of listing what you do, focus on the problems you solve. Instead of I'm skilled at content marketing, I solve the problem of inconsistent lead generation through systematic content strategies that create predictable customer acquisition. A well-completed inventory might include entries like, I solve customer acquisition challenges by implementing digital marketing systems that reduce acquisition costs by 43% while increasing qualified leads by 67%. I address sales team underperformance by building and training teams that consistently exceed targets by 20% plus using my proven playbook. I solve the owner dependency problem by developing operational systems that allow owners to reduce direct involvement from 60 plus hours weekly to less than 10 hours while improving profit margins. Notice how these statements combine specific problems solved with measurable results in defined context. This precision makes your value concrete rather than theoretical. I will provide a link to download my taking inventory worksheet a bit later in the chapter. Finding your ideal win scenario where you create maximum value. Once you've completed your inventory, it's time to define your ideal win scenario. The sweet spot where your abilities create maximum value for potential partners.

Your ideal win scenario isn't just about what you can do, it's about what you can do exceptionally well in specific contexts. It answers questions like, what types of businesses can you transform most dramatically? What specific problems can you solve better than almost anyone else? In what business situations does your particular combination of skills and experience create disproportionate impact? How can you quantify the impact you'll have on their business? The last point is particularly crucial. Being able to quantify your impact transforms vague promises into concrete value propositions. Rather than saying I'll improve your marketing, you can say, based on my previous results with similar businesses, I can typically increase qualified leads by 30-45% within 90 days, translating to approximately X dollars in additional revenue. Think of a baseball analogy. A great hitter doesn't swing at every pitch. They know exactly where they have the highest probability of making solid contact and focus exclusively on balls thrown in that zone. Your equity partnership strategy should follow the same principle. When you clearly understand your ideal win scenario, decision making becomes simpler. You'll quickly recognize opportunities that align with your strengths and confidently pass on situations where you're less likely to create substantial value.

I worked with David, a former technology executive who initially struggled to land equity deals despite extensive experience. When we defined his ideal win scenario, helping service businesses with $2-10 million in revenue implement technology systems that improved delivery efficiency and client satisfaction, everything changed. He stopped pursuing general business improvement opportunities and focused exclusively on companies matching this profile. Within six months, he had landed two equity partnerships that perfectly matched his ideal win scenario. Both businesses saw dramatic improvements in profitability, and David secured significant ownership stakes that continue to generate passive income years later. Final thoughts. Own your value. The most common mistake I see among aspiring equity partners isn't lack of skill or experience. It's failure to recognize and articulate their true value. When you complete this inventory and define your ideal win scenario, you'll discover that you bring far more to potential partnerships than you initially realized. The clarity this process provides transforms how you approach conversations with business owners. Instead of tentatively suggesting ways you might help, you'll confidently outline the specific problems you solve and the measurable results you can deliver. This confidence, backed by genuine self-awareness, is magnetic to business owners seeking solutions. Remember three key principles as you move forward. 1. Know what you have to trade. Complete your inventory thoroughly and honestly. 2. Get clear on who you can help. Define your ideal win scenario with precision. 3. Position yourself as the solution. Not just a generic partner, but the specific answer to the business owner's most pressing challenges. With this foundation in place, you'll start seeing equity opportunities everywhere you look. More importantly, you'll start seeing business owners see you as the partner they've been searching for, even if they didn't realize it until meeting you.

Dealmaker Checkpoint Before moving to the next play, complete these essential steps. 1. Take inventory of your skills, experience, and unique assets across all 10 categories using our worksheet at partner-forequity.com. 2. For each category, list specific examples with measurable results whenever possible. 3. Define your ideal win scenario, the specific types of businesses and situations where you can create maximum value. 4. Craft a clear statement of the problems you solve and the results you deliver for your ideal business partners. 5. Practice articulating your value in terms of problems solved rather than skills possessed. This foundation will serve as your compass throughout the deal sourcing and negotiation process, helping you focus on opportunities where you can create genuine win-win partnerships. In the next play, we'll explore how to conduct powerful discovery sessions that uncover the critical problems business owners need help solving, setting the stage for equity partnership discussions.

Action Items Checklist

Use this checklist to implement what you've learned from Play 4:

- [ ] Complete the Taking Inventory self-assessment worksheet
- [ ] List your top 5 skills that create value for businesses
- [ ] Document your track record with specific results and numbers
- [ ] Map your network for potential deal introductions
- [ ] Craft your "problem solver" positioning statement

Ready for the next step?

Continue to Play 5 to build on these concepts and move closer to closing your first equity partnership deal.