



Capvion Insights

Strategic perspectives on capital, growth and transformation

You Can Build a Business.

You Don't Have to Build Its Next Chapter Alone.

Succession, Sale and Transformation: Why the Next Chapter Is a Team Effort

When the future of a business depends on sharing responsibility, the people you bring into the conversation matter as much as the plan

Sander Barens | October 25, 2026

with Irwin Fouwels, Erik van Stokkom and Charles Karsten

In Brief

Many founders reach a point where the next chapter of their business requires more than they can bring alone. It can arrive through succession, a sale, new investment or changes that have been put off for too long.

This issue is about that moment: what it asks of the person who built the business, what AI changes about working together, and why the people you bring into the conversation matter as much as the plan.

Sharing the Responsibility

This month feels personal.

It is the first edition of Capvion Insights with all four of us together at Capvion: Irwin Fouwels, Erik van Stokkom, Charles Karsten and me. Seeing our names together means something to me. These are people whose judgement I value, each bringing a different perspective.

It has also made me reflect on something that runs through almost everything I have done in technology: the moments when you realise that what comes next requires more than you can bring on your own.

That can be an uncomfortable admission. Especially when you have spent years being the person expected to have the answer.

Building a business teaches you to take responsibility. You make decisions with incomplete information. You carry worries home that you cannot always share with the team. Over time, being needed can become part of how you define yourself.

And then the business reaches a point where its future depends on sharing that responsibility. I think that is one of the hardest transitions in leadership.

Technology Has Always Been a Team Effort

No one builds alone, and I learned that early. My years in international connectivity taught me how much a business depends on people beyond its own walls.

A promise to a customer might depend on several network operators, a local delivery team, a technology partner and colleagues working across different time zones. You could own the customer relationship and still depend on someone else to make the service work.

The quality of those relationships mattered enormously. So did the willingness to be honest when something was going wrong.

That experience shapes how I think about collaboration today. Bringing more people into a conversation only helps if they can challenge each other, share what they know and take responsibility for what happens next.

AI Raises the Stakes on Collaboration

This is why I believe AI makes collaboration more important, not less.

AI can help us prepare, analyse and explore options. It can give a small team access to capabilities that once required far more resources. But someone still has to decide which problem matters, whether the answer is credible and what the organisation should do with it.

Consider something as ordinary as preparing a customer proposal. AI might help produce it faster. Delivering what it promises still requires sales, finance, product and operations to agree on what can actually be done.

If those people were disconnected before, a faster proposal may simply get the business into trouble sooner.

The real opportunity is to use AI to help people work better together, so that knowledge is easier to find and experienced people have more time to use their judgement. That takes leaders who are willing to change how the work gets done.

The Company's Next Chapter Is Personal, Too

Sharing knowledge is one thing. Sharing the responsibility for a business you have built is harder. That becomes especially clear when a founder starts thinking about succession.

Who can carry the relationships? Who has the confidence to make decisions? Will the team have room to lead, or will every difficult question still find its way back to the founder?

Irwin has led from the chief executive's chair and from the boardroom. As he puts it:

"Succession planning starts with giving others the space to lead while you are still there to support them."

Irwin Fouwels

There is real humility in that. A successful handover asks you to take pride in decisions you no longer make yourself.

It also takes time. Relationships, confidence and authority cannot all be transferred on someone's final Friday.

A Sale Is a Personal Process

Erik sees selling a company as a deeply personal process.

A buyer sees a business, its earnings and its potential. A founder also sees the first employee who took a chance, the difficult years, the customers who stayed and the family moments that work interrupted. Those memories shape what a good outcome means.

Price matters. So do the future of the team, the character of the buyer and the role the founder wants afterwards. Sometimes the hardest question is what life will look like when the business no longer needs you in quite the same way.

A good process makes room for that conversation. Otherwise, it is possible to complete a successful transaction and leave the person behind it unsure of what they have agreed to.

Readiness Can Mean Changing the Business

Charles's perspective raises a practical question: what actually needs to change before the business is ready?

Preparing a business for a sale, new investment or another stage of growth can mean making some difficult changes. Perhaps too many customer relationships depend on one person. Perhaps the technology has become hard to maintain. Perhaps the commercial model needs to evolve, or the management team needs more authority.

AI may help with parts of that work. It may also reveal how much knowledge lives in people's heads, and how little agreement there is about how the work is actually done.

Can your own team make those changes? Sometimes, absolutely. An internal team may have the capability, the trust and the determination to deliver them.

The harder question is whether the team has the time, has managed changes like these before, and feels able to challenge long-standing decisions, including the founder's.

That is where outside support can earn its place. It is useful when it helps people make difficult decisions and see them through: adding a missing capability, making room for an honest conversation or helping a stretched team deliver. The test is whether the business becomes stronger and more capable through the work.

Why Four Matters to Me

That is why bringing the four of us together matters to me. It is the kind of collaboration I want us to offer through Capvion: listening carefully, asking the awkward question and staying involved when the answer creates work.

I have spent much of my career building through partnerships, so it feels right to build our own next chapter in the same way.

And it leaves me with a question for anyone thinking about the future of their business:

Who do you trust to help you think through your next chapter, and have you brought them into the conversation?

About Capvion

Capvion is a strategy and M&A advisory firm working with leadership teams, investors and entrepreneurs in technology and telecommunications on growth, transformation and transactions.

The firm is led by four partners, Sander Barens, Irwin Fouwels, Erik van Stokkom and Charles Karsten, supported by experienced industry specialists. Together, they combine operational, leadership and transaction experience, from board level to hands-on execution.

For more information visit www.capvion.com or contact insights@capvion.com