

# Enterprise Exchange

THE PAGE FOR GROWING BUSINESS

EDITED BY CATHERINE WHEATLEY

## Fine tuning can engineer a safe retirement plan

Dear Company Doctor...

I have run my engineering firm for 25 years. It turns over £4 million a year and has 28 staff. At 56, I want to retire and see the world. My family is supportive. Where do I go from here?

BC, Essex

Company Doctor responds...

There are practical and emotional issues to consider. On the practical side:

- Will you sell your firm as a going concern, for its location or just for its assets?
- Will the proceeds from the sale form part, or all, of your pension fund?

Nobody can build a business like you have without feeling some emotional attachment and pride, so you must take the following into account:

- Do you want to see your business continue after you have retired?
- Do you want a total break or partial, gradually building up to complete detachment?
- Do you want to see a family member, employee or friend take over?

The easiest way of recouping the funds you have invested in your firm is by selling it. This will take time and planning, probably about a year. Your priority will be to get the best price with the least amount of disruption. Assessing market value is difficult but a commercial valuer or business

**COMPANY DOCTOR**

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# A fresh approach to organic growth

Picture: ALBANPIX.COM/JERRY DAWS

By Robin Pagnamenta

**T**HE POPULARITY of alternative foods and lifestyles is booming and small UK firms are poised to benefit. Almost 80 per cent of

UK households buy organic foods at least once a year, according to the Soil Association. And the organic industry grew 15 per cent last year alone, to about £920 million, and is the largest market in Europe apart from Germany.

However, it is not just supermarkets and big retailers that are making the most of the trend. Karen Knowler runs a small business based in Ely, Cambridgeshire, called The Fresh Network, which concentrates on raw and organic food and she claims there has never been a better time to be in the business.

"It's an idea whose time has come," she says. "Ten years ago,

