Social Services Staffing Agency

Sell-side engagement · Ontario

FINAL CLOSING PRICE

$515,000

↓ 14% below the $600,000 ask

Priced for the owner-dependency risk that sidelines most buyers, not against the business's proven value.

$1.38M
TRAILING REVENUE

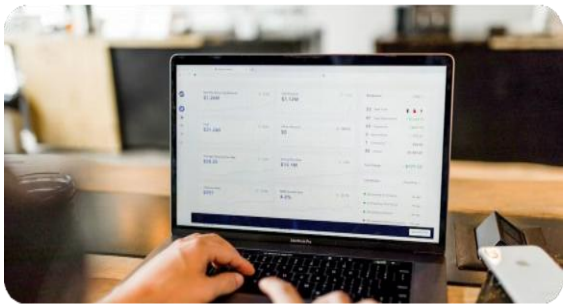
7
MONTHS TO CLOSE

1
STRATEGIC BUYER, GTA

Structured around the risk.
Closed anyway.

The Situation

The business is a well-established staffing agency placing care professionals into developmental and behavioral support roles for children and families across Ontario. Clients included government-funded programs, non-profits, and private care providers, with decades of proven performance behind it. The owner was retiring and wanted a successor who would carry the agency's client relationships and mission forward, not simply strip the business for parts.



The Challenge

Agencies like this carry a familiar risk profile: the referral relationships and institutional trust built over decades sit largely with one person. That kind of owner dependency narrows the buyer pool immediately, and it gives any serious acquirer grounds to discount the price or walk away rather than underwrite a transition they can't control. The deal had to close on terms that priced that risk correctly for both sides, not paper over it.

Referral relationships
Held personally by the owner, not documented in the business.

Narrower buyer pool
Most acquirers won't underwrite a transition they can't control.

Compliance-heavy sector
Government and non-profit contracts add scrutiny to any change of control.

1 owner. 1 point of failure.
The exact risk profile that makes most buyers walk.

"I wanted someone who'd protect the relationships we built with families and case workers, not just the balance sheet." —the retiring owner

6 The Structure

ZELD sourced a strategic individual buyer based in the Greater Toronto Area and built the deal around the risk instead of past it. An extended transition period kept the seller engaged long enough for client and referral relationships to transfer properly, and an earn-out tied part of the consideration to the business performing after handover.

Sourced the buyer

A strategic individual buyer identified in the GTA.

Structured the transition

Extended handover, plus a $85,000 earn-out tied to post-close performance.

Closed in 7 months

Listing to close, at $515,000.

EARN-OUT — BRIDGED BY STRUCTURE, NOT SACRIFICED

Contingent on the business hitting agreed targets post-close

$85,000

The Outcome

The engagement moved from listing to close in seven months and closed at $515,000, roughly 14% below the original $600,000 ask. That gap reflects the owner-dependency risk priced into the structure, not a failure to defend value – and the earn-out gives the seller a clear path to recover it if the transition goes as planned. The buyer got a business de-risked by a real handover period instead of a bet on relationships they couldn't yet see transfer; the seller got a qualified successor, continuity for the families and case workers the agency serves, and a deal that still rewards a clean transition. Both sides closed on terms they could stand behind.

Why this matters for buyers

Owner dependency is one of the most common reasons a good business never trades. ZELD's role isn't limited to sourcing opportunities; it includes structuring around the risks that stall or kill deals elsewhere, so qualified buyers can act on opportunities others pass on.

NEXT STEP

See what else is already in motion.

ZELD's active pipeline is shown to qualified buyers under NDA – his is the kind of deal it includes.

SCHEDULE A STRATEGY SESSION

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