

GROWTH AND EXITS, 2026

Acquirers don't pay for the brand you have today.

They pay for the brand that keeps growing after you hand over the keys.

\$3.8B

What P&G paid for Thorne, a 1984 supplement brand that passed \$500M in revenue and grew DTC 63% in 2025.

\$75M + \$278M

Constellation's price for SpikedAde: \$75M up front, plus up to \$278M in earnouts. Nearly 4 of every 5 potential dollars depend on what happens after closing.

One is a blockbuster. The other is a bet with conditions attached.

Both come from the same logic: buyers pay for certainty.

1.6x vs 4.6x

Median revenue multiple for public branded food companies in mid-2026, versus the 4.6x Marzetti paid for Bachan's. Differentiated, low-risk brands earn the premium.

SEVEN THINGS ACQUIRERS PAY FOR

**The more you can prove with data,
the stronger your position.**

A distinct position in a growing segment

Not one more option on a crowded shelf. A clear answer to a question consumers are asking more often.

A brand platform that scales beyond the founder

Thorne shifted to “consumer-first versus Thorne-first.” A written platform any team can execute beats instinct that lives in one head.

Proof that growth is repeatable

Velocity that holds as you add doors, measurable repeat purchase and new channels that perform as modeled.

Clean unit economics

Contribution margin by SKU, channel and customer after trade, freight and deductions. Uncertainty gets priced into the deal.

A supply chain someone else can run

Documented formulas, specs, co-man agreements and quality systems. Hard to integrate means worth less to the buyer who could pay most.

A team that doesn't depend on the founder

Key-person risk gets handled with long earnouts and employment agreements. Both shift value away from the seller.

Numbers you can defend in diligence

On-time closes and a forecast that matches reality. Messy numbers hand the buyer leverage late in the process.

THE EARNOUT MATH

Earnouts bridge the gap between what you believe and what the buyer can verify.

24% of private deals in 2025 included one.

21¢

Sellers have collected only about 21 cents of every potential earnout dollar, and only 59% of earnout deals paid anything at all. (SRS Acquiom)

Every risk you remove before the sale is value you get paid at closing.

After closing, you no longer control pricing, marketing spend or distribution priorities. Don't leave your price to hope.

A 12-TO-24-MONTH PLAN

Getting ready is not a last-minute project.

Months 1 to 3: See it like a buyer

Run a mock diligence. Rebuild margin by SKU, channel and customer. Name the three biggest risks.

Months 4 to 9: Fix the foundation

Monthly close, a forecast you trust, documented supply chain, a written brand platform and a weekly operating cadence.

Months 10 to 18: Prove the growth story

Consistent velocity as distribution grows, repeat purchase data and a second layer of leadership.

Months 18 to 24: Tell it with evidence

The data, systems and team speak for themselves. Then choose: sell, raise or keep growing.

Where a fractional executive fits.

A fractional COO owns cadence, margin, supply chain documentation and diligence readiness.

A fractional CMO owns the brand platform and the growth proof points buyers will test.

Build the brand you would want to buy.

Then whether and when to sell is your choice, not the buyer's.

Full piece: marc-drucker.com