

## **MIKE COURTNEY - WHITEGATES RETIREMENT HOME LTD**

“Nick made everything so much easier for us. He wasn’t just an excellent financial navigator, he has also become a great friend.”

### **THE CHALLENGE**

Mike Courtney and his wife, Kathy, retired in March 2009, following the sale of Whitegates Retirement Home – a unique, high quality, consistently highly rated residential care home in East Sussex that the couple had built up successfully over a number of years.

The proceeds from the sale provided their income in retirement so the maximization of the value achieved from the sale was crucially important. The value of the business was based on profitability and the Courtneys realized that this must be improved in the preparation for the sale

### **THE SOLUTION**

“We took Nick on because our business wasn’t as profitable as we knew it could be. We were looking for someone who could increase the profitability of what was already a profitable business to prepare for eventual sale. This process started in August 2006 and we finally sold two and a half years later in March 2009. It was a long process, but Nick steered us through this

“He advised us that we were undercharging. He identified scope for improving on the general management and on raising fees progressively in the preparation for the sale. Additionally he encouraged us to add two new rooms to the home and obtain planning permission for a further eight rooms prior to the sale. He helped us to raise profits substantially. All these factors increased the value we achieved from the sale by about 50%.”

Nick says, “I met with Mike and Kathy every two months to prepare the business for sale. We found our first potential buyer very quickly as Whitegates had an exceptional reputation and was competitively priced. We went through 15 months of careful negotiation to reach a completion date on a Monday in March. The buyer pulled out inexplicably on the Friday before. It can be soul destroying, but it can happen. That’s when it’s important to look ahead and focus even more on the goal.”

“Nick was on the case immediately and a second buyer was soon lined up. That didn’t materialize, so it was third time lucky. Whitegates was sold in March 2009.

## **THE BENEFITS**

When we felt like it was all getting too much, he took the pressure off. He was a steady hand on the tiller. He had great liaison and negotiation skills and helped us with the buyer's solicitors. His judgments were sound, he was methodical, had a clear head and could identify what was important which meant we weren't overwhelmed with information. When you come down in the morning to 15 emails from legal and financial people all talking jargon, you need someone like Nick to sort it out."

Nick is quick to underplay his role "Mike and his family had tremendous faith in me and in what I could achieve and that really helped to drive the sale. It is important to have a personal connection with your clients; after all it's their lives I'm dealing with. It is all about people."

Mike concludes "Nick also identified that our people were the most important asset for Whitegates. The loyal staff that had been there up to 15 years had contributed to the Home's profile and reputation and that was something the new owners were keen to preserve. So the staff have remained, ensuring total consistency and quality of care for the residents and no disruption at all to services. The buyers are a large company managing and operating over 100 care homes so I feel confident that their standards will mirror our own.

"Make no mistake, selling your business, due diligence in particular, can be a very long, time consuming, trying and tedious process. Nick was always positive and through all the turmoil stayed cool, calm and collected and kept everything on track – his sound guidance and wisdom helped us immensely. We could not have done it without Nick."

For more information on Whitegates Retirement Home please visit [www.whitegatesretirementhome.co.uk](http://www.whitegatesretirementhome.co.uk).