## Bayuk Cigars

How Warren Buffett Earns 50\% on Small Sums


How Warren Buffett earns 50\% on small sums: Bayuk Cigars
In 1982, Buffett bought 6\% of Bayuk for his private account. His \$572,907 investment produced a $50 \%$ IRR with "virtually no risk."

Here's the story...


Bayuk was the US's fourth-largest cigar maker. Their low-priced Phillies and Garcia $Y$ Vega brands earned \$3M pre-tax but "had been in decline over the past decade." Bayuk also owned \$15M of securities. The board wanted to sell these assets "without paying [capital gains] taxes."


The solution? Liquidate.
On December 21, 1981, shareholders voted to (a) sell the cigar assets to American Maize, (b) convert the securities to cash and (c) liquidate the company and distribute the proceeds to shareholders.

Liquidation value: \$27M (\$15 a share)


One day after the vote, the DOJ moved to block the American Maize deal. Bayuk's backup plan: sell Garcia Y Vega to Culbro and find a buyer for Phillies over the next few months. The Culbro transaction closed on March 15, 1982.

The net proceeds: $\$ 10 \mathrm{M}$ (\$5.49 a share)


The $\$ 10 \mathrm{M}$ Garcia $Y$ Vega sale left Bayuk with $\$ 26 \mathrm{M}$ of cash and Phillies, which was worth $+\$ 2 \mathrm{M}$. Liquidation value remained within the $\$ 15$ range on Bayuk's 1.8 M shares, and the board (a) declared an $\$ 8$ distribution payable on April 6 and (b) guided to an additional $\$ 4$ by year-end.


Buffett started buying Bayuk in early March. He bought before the March 25 ex-distribution date at $\$ 13.50$ and kept buying after the ex-distribution date at $\$ 5.675$ ( $\$ 13.675$ equivalent). Between March 2 and April 30, Buffett bought 104,200 shares at a post-\$8 distribution cost of \$572,907.

Buffett's average purchase price:

- Pre-distribution $=\$ 13.50$
- Post-distribution = \$5.50

QUESTION: If you were investing a small sum of money, what approach would you use?
WARREN BUFFETT: I would use the approach that I think I'm using now of trying to search out businesses where I think they're selling at the lowest price relative to the discounted cash they would produce in the future.


Buffett started buying in March at \$13.50.
Why invest $\$ 13.50$ for $\$ 15.00$ ? Bayuk was going to pay $\$ 8.00$ within weeks and $\$ 4.00$ within months. Given these large upfront payments, Buffett's purchase price was cheap relative to the present value of Bayuk's expected cash flows.

## Bayuk Sets \$4-a-Şhare Liquidation Payout, Sells Phillies Brand

Bayuk satid It wIIl pay the second Ilquida- tlon distribution of \$t a share on Jume 29 to slock of record June 11. The company has about 1.8 milltion common shares outstanding and its officers and directors own about $40.9 \%$.



BAYUK CIGARS
Date of cash flow


In June, Bayuk (a) sold Phillies for $\$ 5 \mathrm{M}$ and (b) paid the $\$ 4$ distribution. Buffett got $\$ 12.00$ of his $\$ 13.50$ cost back in less than 90 days. And due to a better-than-expected Phillies sale price, he'd likely get more than \$3.00 of future distributions.


How much more?

In October, Bayuk delisted its shares and transferred its assets to a liquidating trust. The year-end balance sheet comprised $\$ 6.3 \mathrm{M}$ of cash and $\$ 1.1 \mathrm{M}$ of receivables against just $\$ 0.3 \mathrm{M}$ of liabilities. Distribution forecasts increased from $\$ 3.00$ to $\$ 3.89$ per share.


Bayuk paid a third distribution of $\$ 1.50$ on March 15, 1983. Buffett got his $\$ 13.50$ back in less than a year. And he received three more payments: $\$ 1.25$ on December 15, 1983; $\$ 0.54$ on December 15, 1985; and $\$ 0.84$ on April 15, 1986.

The total distributions: $\mathbf{\$ 1 6 . 1 3}$ per share


Distributions of $\$ 16.13$ only produced $20 \%$ on Buffett's $\$ 13.50$ purchase price. But consider the timing. Bayuk returned 59\% of Buffett's capital within weeks, $89 \%$ within months and $100 \%$ within a year. These frontloaded payments increased Buffett's IRR to 50\%.

| WARREN BUFFETT'S PERSONALACCOUNT |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| NEAR-ZERO <br> (MARCH 21, 1975) | \$500 MILLION <br> (OCTOBER 6, 2008) |
| 0. Do you make any persomal investwents other than Berkshise and Biue Chip and Diversified for yoursels? <br> A No, Hy wise rade a Eev, bue I havent $t$. <br> Q. Could you explain why you don't make any personal <br> investments, you placo everything through insurance companies? <br> A. The best reacon is I don't have any money, cash. <br> All my money is basically in chose 3 companies*, just total. <br> But I like it that vay. That was intentional. I just don't want to be running a portfolio nyself the same cima $I$ an zunnira one for Berkshize. <br> *Berkshire Hathaway, Blue Chip Stamps and Diversified Retailing (Blue Chip and Diversified Retailing merged into Berkshire Hathaway) | Once this program is off the ground, I would suggest that the capitalization of PPPF - both equity and debt - be doubled. In this instance, however, Wall Street firms - again on a pro-bono basis - would offer $\$ 10$ billion of PPPF's common stock to the American public on exactly the same terms as those granted the initial institutional investors. If PPPF is going to be a good deal for equity holders - and I believe it will be - I would want to be sure that the average American has a chance to share in such an investment on a basis equal to that secured by Berkshire Hathaway and other institutional investors. If this offer is fully subscribed, Treasury would purchase an additional $\$ 40$ billion of notes, giving PPPF total buying power of $\$ 100$ billion. <br> I would be willing to personally buy $\$ 100$ million of stock in this public |

QUESTION: Mr. Buffett, you've said that you could return 50 percent per annum, if you were managing a $\$ 1$ million portfolio. What type of strategy would you use?

WARREN BUFFETT: It might well be the arbitrage strategy, but in a very different, perhaps, way than customary arbitrages. One way or another, I can assure you, if Charlie was working with a million, or I was working with a million, we would find a way to make that with essentially no risk, not using a lot of leverage or anything of the sort. There are little fringe inefficiencies that people don't spot.

## Was Bayuk a one-off?

No. Buffett grew his private account from $\$ 0$ to $\$ 500 \mathrm{M}$ in 33 years. And he did it with Bayuk-type holdings: "fringe inefficiencies," "little wrinkles" and "arbitrage but in a different way than customary arbitrage."

That's how Buffett earns 50\% on small sums.

## Sources

- Berkshire Hathaway Shareholder Meeting Notes
- Bayuk Cigars Filings
- Newspaper Clippings

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