

Edgeview Partners

Charlotte, North Carolina-based Edgeview Partners provides high quality merger, acquisition, strategic advisory, and financing services to middle market companies. Founded by former partners of Bowles Hollowell Conner, the firm has grown from just 5 investment professionals in 2001 to more than 40 today. Edgeview's professionals have completed over 250 transactions around the world across a range of industries, and have advised such diverse companies as W.H.Energy, Hunter Manufacturing, and Constella Group.

EDGEVIEW PARTNERS

"If the system lets you uncover a single strategic relationship that helps you win a deal, it has more than paid for itself. And that's just scratching the surface of its value."

SUSAN MOORE,
BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR,
EDGEVIEW PARTNERS LLC

It All Comes Down to Relationships

In the current competitive deal environment, investment banks must leverage their network of relationships and their firms' proprietary knowledge to gain an inside edge. With so many groups competing for deals, they must find ways to set themselves apart from the crowd.

If you ask investment professionals what it takes to successfully identify and close a deal, they will all mention the value of their relationships. "Our ability to tap into our various contacts including private equity funds, referral sources, lawyers, accountants and strategic buyers on behalf of our clients is critical in helping us achieve our clients' objectives," said Susan Moore, business development director for Edgeview Partners.

But beyond leveraging their "Golden Rolodexes," the top dealmakers have a knack for knowing exactly which deal to present to whom — and when. They can recall the key market players, their interests, preferences and requirements and make that information work for them. "In order to successfully market a deal, we need to understand potential strategic and financial buyers' transaction criteria," explained Moore.

The real challenge for investment banks is that while deal fundamentals have not changed over the years, business has. Financial institutions are more geographically dispersed and employ more mobile workforces than in the past, making it increasingly difficult for colleagues to share knowledge and relationships. Technology and communications advances have accelerated deal cycles, placing a premium on instant access to information. Finally, growth and consolidation strain existing business processes that cannot scale, rendering growing firms vulnerable.

Technology for Relationship and Deal Intelligence

As Edgeview Partners expanded, it became increasingly challenging for the firm's investment professionals to keep track of their network of relationships and deal details. "We can talk to up to one hundred people when we're marketing a deal," said Moore. "We needed a way to quickly mine our relationship and deal intelligence to bring employees quickly up to speed."

Finding a relationship-centric technology would be critical to maintaining the firm's agility and responsiveness as the firm scaled. A software selection committee was created and began evaluating a number of solutions including Act! and Saleslogix. The team decided, however, that those products were not sufficiently tailored for the unique requirements of the investment banking industry. "Most were traditional CRM packages geared towards product-oriented companies that have traditional sales forces and call centers," explained Moore. "That's not how we operate."

The team made some additional inquiries through business colleagues and was referred to LexisNexis InterAction® the leading Relationship Intelligence solution for investment banks and other relationship-based financial services institutions. Critical to the firm's decision was InterAction's ability to track and manage complex relationships and provide easy access to who knows whom, who knows what, relationship and deal intelligence. "A person can play a different role in various deals," said Moore. "An individual can be a reference, a potential buyer, or a client — and InterAction allows us to easily keep track of multidimensional relationships and gain visibility into who has relationships with whom."

InterAction's seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook® also played a pivotal role in Edgeview Partner's decision-making process. The system enables investment professionals to access a full range of InterAction functionality, including contact profiles, Who Knows Whom™, deal profiles, contact history and other intelligence — directly from Outlook. As a result, professionals that otherwise would not be inclined to learn a CRM solution can still benefit from it with virtually no learning curve. "Our people are comfortable with Outlook," said Moore. "We liked that partners and our vice presidents can use InterAction through Outlook with very small modifications in their current work process."

Finally, the software selection team was impressed with InterAction's ability to facilitate sharing of information while still leaving investment professionals in complete control over their contacts and relationships. For instance, the system's "ethical wall" security allows

users to determine which contact details and activities to share with the firm and which to keep confidential — such as notes from private conversations or clients cell phone numbers. The system also gives users the choice of accepting or rejecting changes to their Outlook contacts that come from the central repository. For instance, a banker's most important client might be linked from his Outlook Contacts folder to InterAction. If an administrative assistant in the firm changes some contact details, such as the title from "Director" to "Vice President", the banker can control whether he wants that change to flow back down to his version of the contact in Outlook. "Control is important to our users," said Moore. "Some users don't want their Outlook data to be overwritten without knowing about it."....

Super-charging Deal Marketing

According to Moore, Edgeview now manages the entire deal marketing process in InterAction — from research and relationship discovery, to marketing communications, pipeline management and reporting.

The firm has established procedures by which deal processors profile active deals in InterAction. These profiles include such information as company description, financial metrics and summary deal information. Edgeview also profiles the companies that investment professionals have met with in the past, providing a rich history of data that includes such things as company history, financial information, acquisition criteria, and other details. Corporate data from Capital IQ is also automatically imported into the system. Finally, information on closed deals is captured, such as how long the sales process took, valuation range, contract terms, leverage ratios and more.

With this data easily available to all users with the appropriate security rights, critical relationship and deal intelligence can easily be shared with team members. "We can now use InterAction to quickly access who we know that might be influential in winning a deal and what we know about them," explained Moore. "The system also provides us with an instant snapshot of potential investors and their preferences, allowing us to target potential buyers very efficiently."

Moore acknowledges that regardless of how easy the system is, some partners nonetheless do not have the time, patience or inclination to learn a new software system. InterAction's Outlook integration has made it possible to include these "hard to convert" users in the central repository despite their misgivings, and allow them to share and access InterAction's relationship and deal intelligence. "InterAction is great for some of our senior partners who are reluctant to embrace technology," Moore said. "They want information where they can easily access it. They can add activities and do everything in Outlook the way they always did."

Within just a few months of going live on the new system, InterAction is already starting to deliver an impressive return on investment. Mailing list management and client communications had always been an expensive, cumbersome process prone to delay and error. Using the new system, the firm can correspond with its constituent base in a fraction of the time. "Previously it could take over a week to prepare a large mailing, such as our annual holiday card distribution," recalled Moore. With InterAction, it took just a few hours."

However in the long run, Edgeview is counting on InterAction to provide the type of competitive intelligence, such as who knows whom, that can make the difference between winning and losing a deal. "If the system lets you uncover a single strategic relationship that helps you win a deal, it has more than paid for itself," said Moore. "And that's just scratching the surface of its value."