



Best of the Middle Market, Energy & Industrials Featured Dealmaker: Michael Piazza, Willkie Farr

As a nominee for Energy & Industrials Dealmaker of the Year for The Deal's Middle Market Awards, Piazza, co-head of the firm's energy practice in Houston, had a stellar year in 2019.

By Deal Staff | Published: June 16th, 2020

New York-based firm Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP, a nominee for The Deal's 2020 Middle Market Awards in the financial services category, is a market-leading advisor to private equity sponsors, financial services companies, asset managers, insurers and other players in the financial sector.

Willkie boasts such long-time PE clients as Warburg Pincus LLC, Aquiline Capital Partners LLC, Genstar Capital LLC, Insight Partners, FFL Partners, Atlas Holdings and Centerbridge Partners, as well as hundreds of their portfolio companies. Other prominent financial services clients include FIS, Dyal Capital Partners, Cowen, Franklin Templeton, ITE Management, Neuberger Berman and Victory Capital. The firm also represents many insurers including Protective Life Corporation, RenaissanceRe and Zurich, and numerous large banks.

As a nominee for Financial Services Law Firm of the Year for The Deal's Middle Market Awards, Willkie had particular areas of strength in 2019 including payments, fund administration, wealth management, investment management, mortgage servicing, banking, consumer finance, fintech, insurance tech, regulatory tech, securities trading and blockchain and cryptocurrencies, as well as others subsectors of the industry.

Among the firm's notable deals, it provided legal advice to Genstar and portfolio company Mercer Advisors

Inc., in a deal that saw longtime holder Lovell Minnick Partners LLC exit its stake to Oak Hill Capital LP. The firm also advised Aquiline Capital Partners, a New York-based private equity firm, in its acquisitions of Relation Insurance Inc. and CoAdvantage Holdings Inc., among other deals.

Its relationships with Genstar and Aquiline overlapped in its advisory role for Ascensus LLC, the largest independent recordkeeping services provider, third-party administrator and government savings facilitator in the U.S. In February 2019, Genstar and Aquiline looked to Willkie as they sold a significant stake in the business to an investor group that included Atlas Merchant Capital LLC and GIC Pte. Ltd.

Venture capital heavyweight and leading private equity player Insight Partners has also looked to Willkie on a number of deals. The firm worked with Insight on the \$300 million investment in German mobile bank N26, the largest financing round for a fintech company in Europe in recent years, as well as the investor's funding of Paylt LLC to accelerate the company's digitization of government payments. Willkie also advised on Insight's investment in open-banking platform Tink AB, the target's largest investment to date, among other deals.

As for Warburg Pincus, Willkie provided legal counsel to the PE shop and portfolio company PayScale in April 2019 as Warburg sold a majority stake in the software-as-a-service compensation data provider. The deal

valued PayScale at \$325 million. Willkie also last year provided legal advice to the buyout shop on its sale of Dude Solutions Inc. to Clearlake Capital Group LP.

Founded in 1888, Willkie has counseled sponsors for more than 50 years and is consistently ranked among the most active firms in private equity dealmaking. The firm consistently ranks among the top firms on The Deal quarterly and annual league tables, representing over 175 U.S. and international PE sponsors and

thousands of portfolio companies and management teams.

The firm's private equity practice is co-chaired by partners Jeffrey R. Poss and Neil W. Townsend, while its corporate and financial services department is co-chaired by partners William H. Gump and Steven A. Seidman, who also co-chairs the M&A group. David K. Boston is also co-chair of the M&A group.