

Chemical Distribution DEALTRACKER

*Who's buying, why they're buying,
and what it means for owners and executives.*

What is a DealTracker?

Our DealTrackers give business leaders and owners a clear view of M&A activity in their sector. They are designed to help answer critical strategic questions such as:

- Who are the key deal-makers, and what do they value?
- What is the current market value of businesses like mine?
- Is now the right time to diversify, invest, or divest?

This **Chemical Distribution DealTracker** draws on:

- Proprietary deal data, with a focus on the often overlooked lower-mid market.
- Interviews with M&A decision-makers at mid-cap distributors.
- Conversations with private equity principals investing in the sector.

Result:

A practical, executive-level snapshot of buyer behaviour, market valuations, and emerging trends – insights we rely on when advising our chemical distribution clients.

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The DealTracker is a summarised version of the proprietary data and insights we use every day working with our M&A and strategy clients.

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Matt Dixon
Managing Partner





Section 1

Activity, Valuation, and Trends

A selection of deal flow and valuation metrics combined with insights on strategies from M&A and investor decision-makers.

Acquirers using M&A to stay ahead of industry trends

Three big trends we're hearing

Green chemistry solutions

Demand for bio-based, low-carbon, and water-based chemistries is beginning to outstrip supply.

Agile value-added services

Services like formulation and lab-based development can add real value for customers in specialty markets.

AI integration

Predict demand, optimise inventory, ensure compliance, personalise service - AI integration has revolutionary potential.



Our dedicated research team has discussed M&A strategies and intentions with >70 decision-makers in the space.

Executives looking to M&A to help hit their strategic growth ambitions



"We're looking to further consolidate in the United States and expand our value-added services offering."

CEO and Owner
\$100m+ revenue distributor



"We're looking for businesses which accelerate our position in green solutions."

CEO
\$400m+ revenue distributor



"We've consolidated in our home markets and are now only interested in strategic bolt-ons which enhance our engagement with customers."

Owner
\$200m+ revenue distributor

Rising deal flow and multiples

Momentum is building into H1 2026.

The key question: sustained rebound or temporary surge?

Chemical distribution deal flow is rebounding in 2025

After a slowdown following the post-pandemic peak in 2022, activity is picking up again. Our discussions point to renewed momentum as economic conditions improve, supply chains rebalance, and private investors put more capital to work.

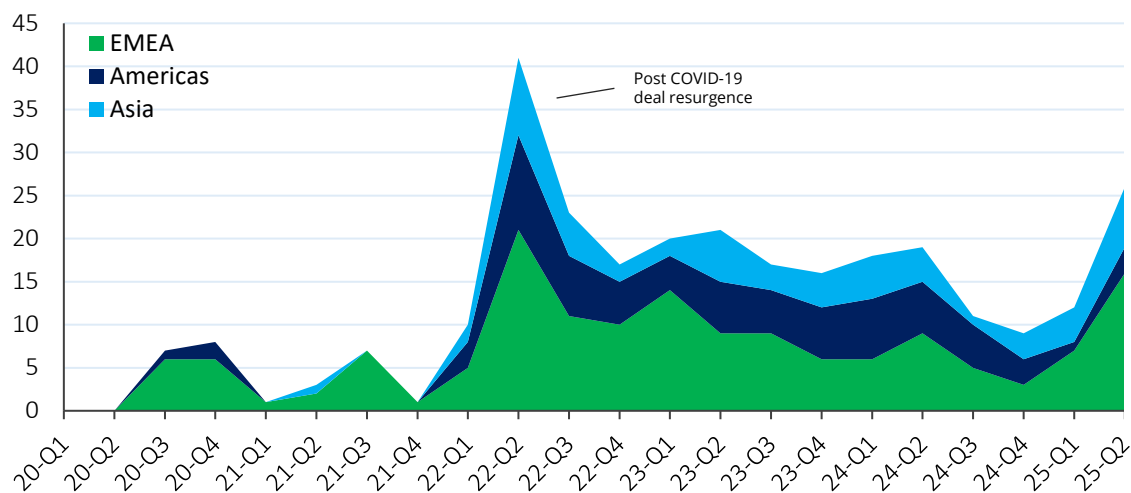


Chart: Chemical Distribution deals recorded per quarter per region
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

Average multiples above historic trend and growing

With 2025/26 shaping up as a favourable window for M&A: competition for quality assets is increasing - and with it, valuations.

In the lower-mid market (targets below \$100m in sales), we have seen the average revenue multiple rise since 2022.

Revenue multiple = Enterprise Value / Revenue
e.g. at a 1.12 multiple, a \$100m revenue business would be valued at \$112m

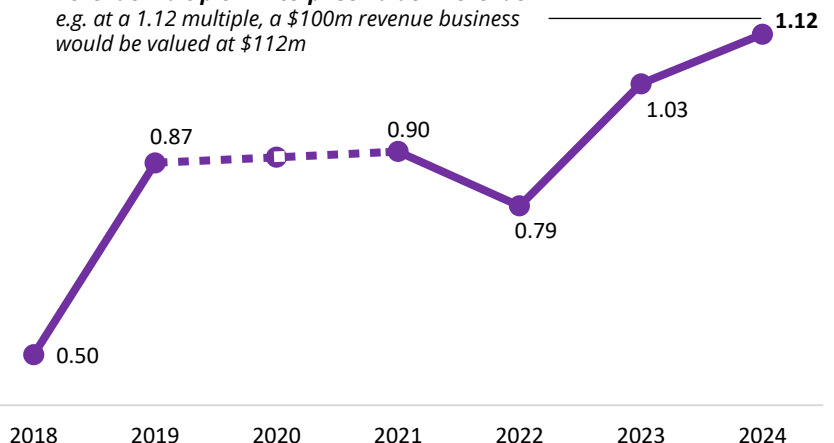


Chart: Average Chemical Distribution transaction revenue multiples recorded per annum
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Insufficient data reported in the period

Specialty premium remains strong

Specialty still pays: premiums hold firm in chemical distribution.

Distributors with exposure to specialty products – e.g. in pharma and personal care ingredients – still command premium valuations.

We have also seen moderately differentiated players record strong multiples by incorporating a specialty approach into their growth story.

The data are supported by our discussions in the market; the appetite is still there for specialty businesses.

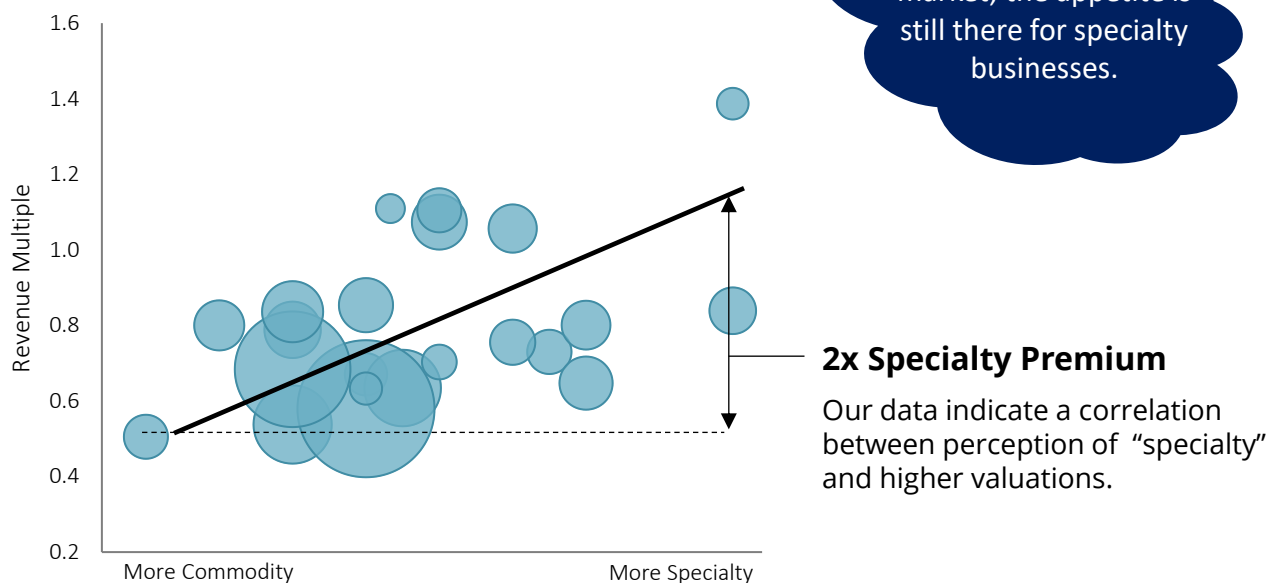


Chart: Revenue multiples vs perception of specialty products for lower-mid chemical distribution deals
Source: CCD Partners' proprietary database and public data, ranges estimated by mix and market position

The trend is stronger still for market leaders

Further "trickle down" of premium to smaller players in the future?

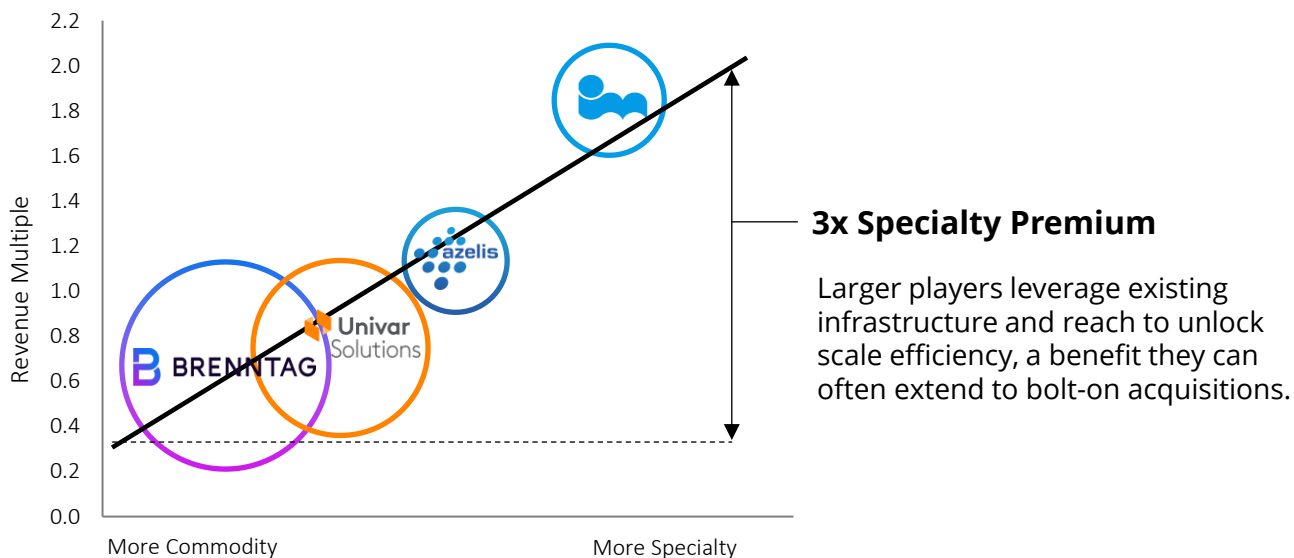


Chart: Revenue multiples vs perception of specialty products for large public chemical distributors
Source: CCD Partners' proprietary database and public data, ranges estimated by mix and market position

The background of the slide is a photograph of a chemistry laboratory. In the foreground, there are several pieces of glassware: a large Erlenmeyer flask containing a blue liquid, a smaller beaker with blue liquid, and a graduated cylinder. In the background, a microscope is visible, and a person wearing blue gloves is working with a test tube. The image is partially covered by a large, light green geometric shape that contains the text.

Section 2

Strategic Buyer Landscape

Analytics on the cohort of ~250 strategic trade buyers we have identified as likely interested in acquiring in the chemical distribution sector.

Based on a combination of publicly available data and interviews with M&A decision-makers (typically, CEOs and strategic executives).

246 Potential Trade Buyers

Analytics based on the profiles we have on almost 250 strategic trade players: where they operate, what they sell, and what they want to buy.

Strategic consolidators remain central to the chemical distribution buyer landscape - yet often little detail is published on their M&A priorities. Real insight comes from direct conversations and long-term relationships.

Here's what we found:

>30 mid-large distributor conversations
(and ~240 profiled) this year

Cross-border ambitions

Many trade players are looking beyond their home markets to fill portfolio gaps and access higher-growth markets, making cross-border acquisitions an important part of M&A strategies.

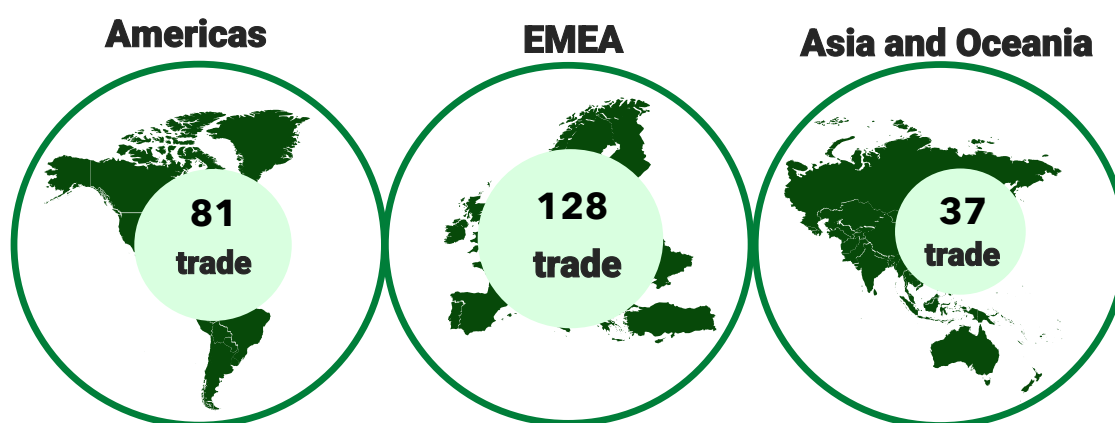


Chart: Mid-large chemical distributors split by HQ region
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

Portfolio enhancement

The portfolios of large distributors can be highly diverse. Which targets constitute strategic, high-value, additions is not always clear from publicly available information. One of the key data points we record is what constitutes the 'ideal' acquisition.

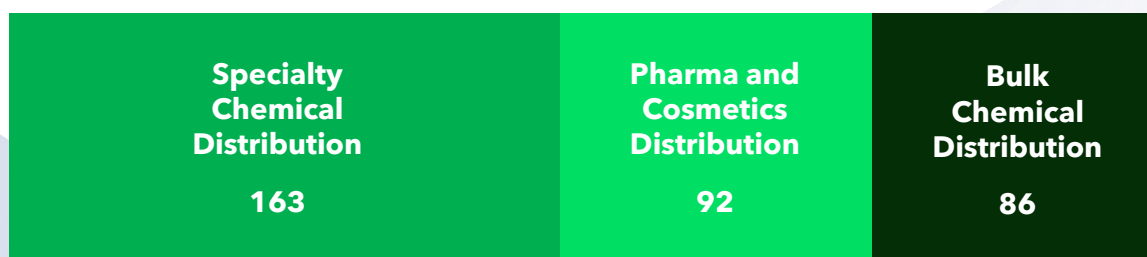


Chart: Mid-large chemical distributors present in each high-level product classification (not mutually exclusive)
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

Growth vs strategic focus - often driven by size

From our discussions, Market Leaders' M&A teams continue to favour larger deals, but they seem to be increasingly keen on smaller strategic bolt-ons too.

Mid-sized players we are talking to are also targeting acquisitions as a key driver of growth, but the focus is primarily on gaining access to new markets, often targeting complementary supply chains.

Lower mid-sized businesses tend to complete fewer acquisitions but can sometimes pay top value for transformative transactions.

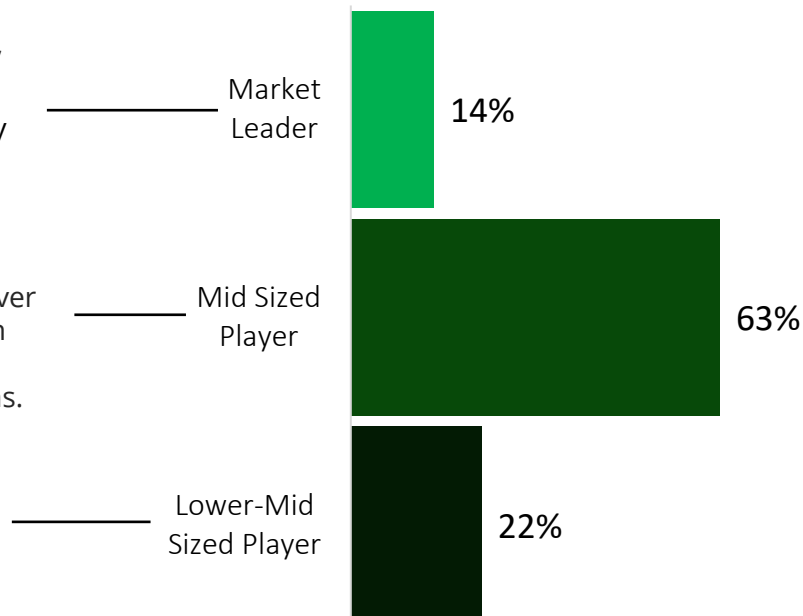


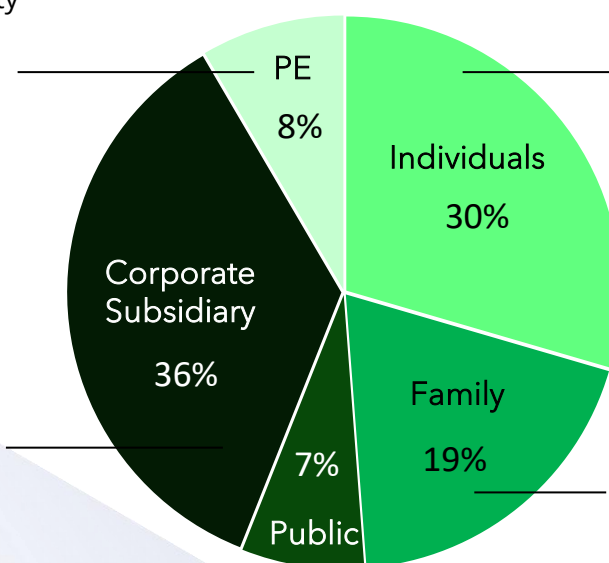
Chart: Mid-large chemical distributors split by revenue / size data
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

Ownership structure can drive priorities

The trade buyers come from a variety of ownership backgrounds, each bringing its own angle on M&A priorities.

Many of the private equity backed distributors we speak to are under pressure to capitalise on rising market confidence to lock in acquisitions.

Many of the listed groups and corporates we are speaking to are focused on portfolio rationalisation at the same time as looking for strategic bolt-ons.



Most of the founder-led buyers we are speaking to espouse an entrepreneurial culture and want to see the same in M&A targets.

The majority of the family-owned firms we speak to take a longer-term view. Though there are some notable exceptions!

Chart: Mid-large chemical distributors split by ownership structure
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data

Strategic M&A priority themes

...we see cutting across most of the conversations we are having with decision-makers of mid-cap chemical distributors.



Geographic Expansion



Technical and Formulation Capabilities



Growth in New Markets



Cultural and Operational Fit

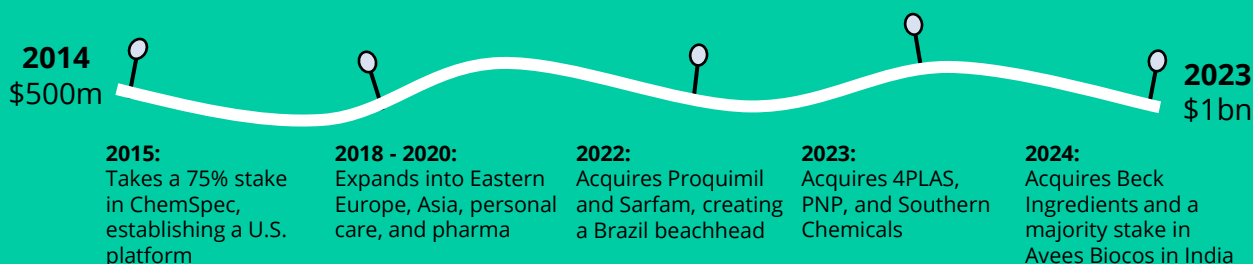


Specialty Segment Deepening

Case Study

Safic-Alcan

Safic-Alcan is an example of a chemical distributor executing a growth-by-acquisition playbook. The business has grown from approximately \$500m in 2014 to \$1bn in 2023.



M&A Themes:

Geographic Expansion

Targeting high-growth or underserved regions (SE Asia, India, Brazil, Southern Africa).

Specialty Segment Deepening

Acquisitions focused on personal care, nutraceuticals, coatings, and cosmetics strengthen segment positioning.

Technical and Formulation Capabilities

Many targets bring labs or application know-how, elevating value-added offering.

Cultural and Operational Fit

Companies like Ingredients Plus and Beck Ingredients align with Safic-Alcan's entrepreneurial environment.

Source: Summarised CCD estimates and public information, including Safic-Alcan's website, trade journals, and press releases.

The background image shows a person wearing a blue lab coat, using a glass pipette to add a drop of liquid to a small green plant growing in dark brown soil. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor environment. The image is partially covered by a white hexagonal overlay on the right side, which contains the text.

Section 3

Financial Investor Landscape

Analytics on the cohort of ~250 private equity and family office investors we have identified as likely interested in investing in the chemical distribution sector.

Based on a combination of publicly available data and interviews with principals.

250 Potential Financial Buyers

Analytics based on the profiles we have on 250 financial investors: where they operate and their investment theses and preferences.

Private equity and family offices are an important part of the buyer landscape, but their enthusiasm for specific deals is hard to predict, even with close monitoring of their investment theses and preferences.

The only reliable way is to test each opportunity with a wide group of investors - fortunately, PE screening processes are typically fast and efficient.

Nonetheless, some general themes did emerge from our discussions:

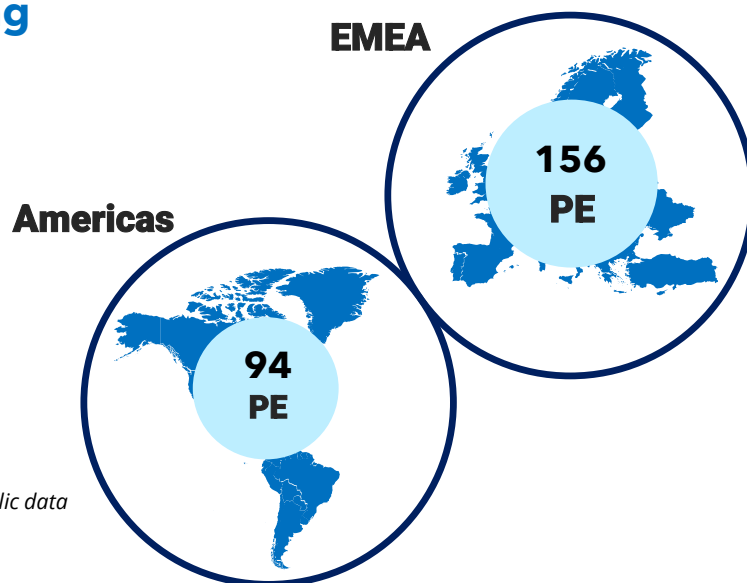
>50 private equity
conversations
(and ~250 profiled)
this year

Regional focus sharpening

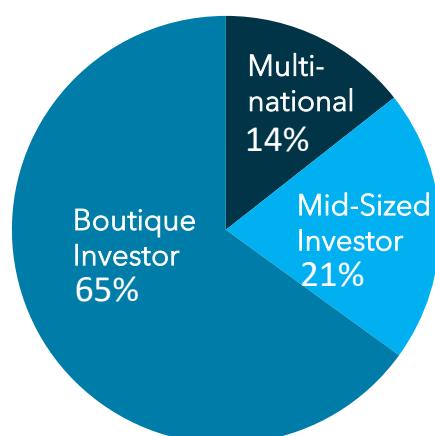
Historically, a number of financial investors have looked to make investments across the Atlantic (in both directions).

This trend continues, but we have also noticed an increase in investors that more strongly prioritise focus in a specific local region.

*Chart: Financial investors split by HQ region
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data*



Proliferation of boutique investors



*Chart: Financial investors split by scale and scope
Source: CCD estimates, proprietary database, and public data*

We have noticed an appreciable uptick in boutiques, family offices, and other smaller more entrepreneurial investors. Often originating from seasoned principals setting out on their own rather than relying on a well-known umbrella brand.

Such smaller, more agile investors, bring both advantages and challenges for sellers. In particular, lower-mid market sellers that may have been too small for a classic PE play are now more likely to attract viable financial investor options.

Private Equity FAQs

Below we have noted some of the most common questions we're asked by owners considering private equity options. The answers are a blend of our experience and views from "PE" professionals themselves.



Do PE firms have fixed investment terms?

The typical term range is 3–7 years, but it depends on the growth plan and specific circumstances. PE firms are increasingly flexible on timing, and this is often an attractive trait for sellers.



Do PE firms offer less as they don't benefit from synergies?

In our experience (in the lower-mid market) PE can often actually offer more than strategics. Particularly if a growth case can be made, typically using the target business as a platform for rapid expansion.



Can we engage trade buyers and PE at the same time?

For PE to be a viable option the business must meet certain criteria. Most of which can be prepared in advance. In which case, we typically recommend both tracks are pursued simultaneously.



Do owners typically stay after a PE acquisition?

In most cases, yes. PE firms often want the owners to remain involved to maintain continuity in management. To what extent and for how long will vary depending on the circumstances and negotiation.



What are the biggest drivers of valuation for PE?

Positioning the business as a platform for growth that only requires support and guidance on "how" to grow rather than "why" it will grow. This is the holy grail for many PE investors.

PE investment priority themes

...we see cutting across most of the conversations we are having with principals in PE firms interested in chemical distribution.



Strong Committed Leadership



Adjacent Markets Potential



Growth-Boosting M&A Pipeline



Differentiated and Diverse Portfolio

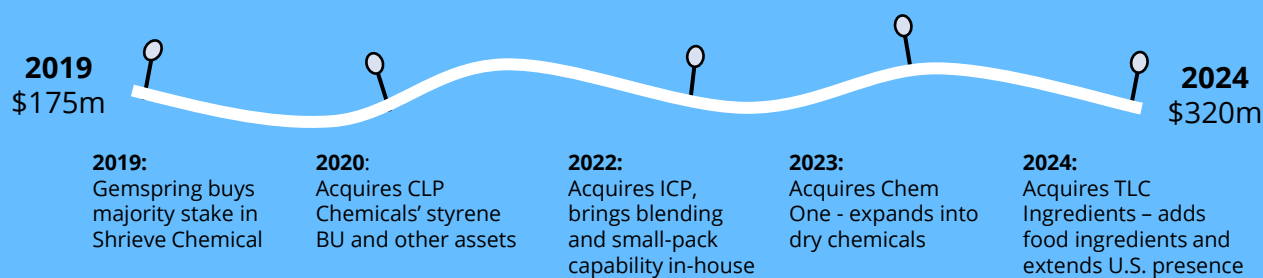


Demonstrable Scalability

Case Study

Gemspring Capital and Shrieve Chemical

Shrieve Chemical is a value-added chemical distributor that has grown rapidly following an investment from Gemspring Capital in 2019, reaching \$320m in 2024.



Investment Themes:

Technical Differentiation

Moves from box-moving to problem-solving; raises switching costs and gross margin, stabilises demand across cycles.

Portfolio Breadth and Balance

Diversifies demand drivers (industrial, life sciences, water, ag/food), smoothing cyclicality and expanding cross-sell.

Operational Scalability

In-house packaging/toll blending and tank/terminal access create service advantages that are hard to replicate at scale.

M&A Accelerant Programme

Targeted add-ons can accelerate capability build (labs, import infrastructure, life-science exposure) and lift mix/margin faster than organic alone.

Source: Summarised CCD estimates and public info, including Gemspring and Shrieve websites, trade journals, and press releases.

About the Authors

CCD Partners is a people business. We pair senior ex-industry advisors who know the market personally with an execution team that knows how to deliver deals – all backed by a market engagement team out in the world collecting data and insights not available online.



Matt Dixon

Managing Partner

- 18+ years' transactional experience
- Co-founded CCD Partners and is Head of M&A

Deloitte.



Peter Dixon

Chairman

- 40+ years' industry and transactional experience
- 100+ chemistry-driven M&A clients



Vlad Panferov

Chemical Distribution Advisor

- 12+ years' transactional experience
- Chemicals M&A execution specialist with experience in distribution, life sciences, and specialty chemicals



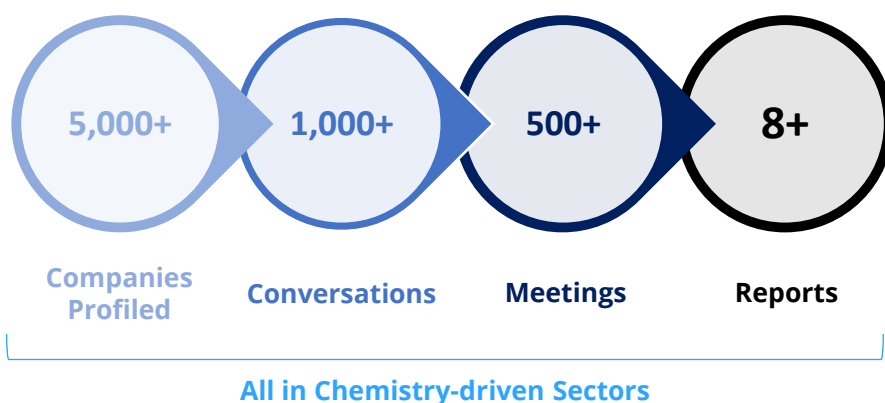
Matthew Wise

Head of Data and Market Engagement

- Specialist at acquisition searches, landscape screening, and market research
- Oversees **market engagement and data gathering team**



Overview



Other Publications

available at ccdpartners.com or via email to contact@ccdpartners.com

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Reports on lower-mid market companies in specific sub-sectors

Pre-Clinical CROs



CPHI Start-Ups



Performance Additives



Adhesive Formulators



Chemical Distributors



DealTrackers

Reports on deals and mid-cap acquirors by headline sector

Chemical Distribution



Specialty Chemicals



Pharma-Services



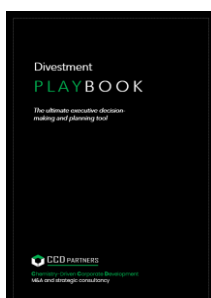
Green Chemistries



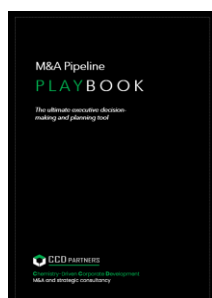
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Your M&A playbook. Built for you.

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Acquisitions



"A bespoke executive planning tool powered by the full WatchList and DealTracker intelligence – applied to a client's specific circumstances."

Matt Dixon
Managing Partner

