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Banking &amp; Financial Services

# Benchmark International investment bank plans to double Austin staff, move to bigger offices 🔑

Firm expects consolidation in architecture, engineering

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Merger and Acquisition (M&A) word concept  
THINKSTOCK



By Greg Barr – Managing Editor, Austin Business Journal  
a day ago

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Riding the wave of the strong economy in Central Texas, a Florida-based investment bank plans to double the payroll at its Austin office and move its operations into a bigger space.

Benchmark International, headquartered in Tampa, opened its Austin office in January 2016 when it appointed [Kendall Stafford](#) as managing director, overseeing the Texas market.

Stafford, who transferred to Austin from the Tampa office, said she plans to begin hiring soon to increase the Austin office headcount from 12 to 24 by mid-



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2019. The company is currently based in a 4,000-square-foot office off South Capital of Texas Highway, and Stafford expects to begin a search soon for a larger space.

“We looked at several cities in Texas and chose Austin for a lot of reasons, from the employee base and the great universities as well as the talent influx of people [moving here]. And it’s business-friendly in Texas,” Stafford said.



Kendall Stafford

Benchmark works the so-called middle market for deals, facilitating merger and acquisition transactions for owner-occupied companies across all industry sectors that have revenue in the \$1 million to \$100 million range.

She said business valuations are running at an all-time high, and that many companies are looking to pull the trigger on buyouts before any further increases in interest rates. One particular sector – architecture and engineering – seems ripe for more M&A activity this year, she noted.

“Buyers can get deals done cheaper now. There’s a lot of dry powder out there that needs to be put to work,” said Stafford, who has been with Benchmark for six years.

One part of the deal-making process that sets Benchmark apart, Stafford said, is that it runs a competitive bidding process to bring multiple bidders to the table. It also has offices in South Africa, England and Ireland and can bring international bidders to the table as a result.

Benchmark recently brokered a deal for New York private equity firm Sentinel Capital Partners to acquire San Antonio-based Ubeo LLC, a printing and electronic document management company. The company operates as UBEO Business Services and has other offices in Austin, Dallas and Houston.

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