



# The Leading Voice in M&A

**Benchmark International is an industry-agnostic mid-market mergers and acquisitions firm focusing on sell-side mandates in the USA, Europe and Africa. In June, Corporate Vision magazine named Steven Keane the International Chairman of the Year in the ongoing 2018 Corporate Excellence Awards. On the back of this win, we spoke to Steven to find out how he has steered Benchmark International to extraordinary success in the M&A industry.**

A native of Manchester, England, Steven Keane has a marked history of success as an entrepreneur and business-owner, that informs and influences his notable skill as a Chairman, guiding Benchmark International through what is, by all regards, a highly competitive, and complex business sector. Benchmark International is, in all aspects, the realisation of a need for a specialised, professional, and truly global M&A management firm. Steven goes into more details about Benchmark's work and its clientele, "Benchmark International employs experienced and talented teams on all three of the aforementioned continents with affiliate offices in Asia and South America. Our clients are typically owner-operators of businesses with Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) ranges of \$5 - \$200mm who are looking to exit or grow their business."

"The typical prospective client focuses on the analytical and financial aspect of our services when deciding whether or not to engage our firm, but we know that servicing this market requires an added personal dimension to our services. Clients come to us for

our technical skills. However, by the time the typical engagement reaches a successful conclusion, they come to appreciate, to an even higher degree, the human side of our service delivery model."

This service model plays a large part in Benchmark International's approach to new clients, as Steven details their unique methodology, "We work closely with business owners to help them achieve maximum value for their businesses by utilising various exit and growth strategies. As our focus is on sell-side clients, they are always our first priority, so we discuss the goals they hope to achieve in great detail, and we do all we can to make them happen. We view our relationship with each client as a partnership, collaborating with them and firmly staying by their side through every step of the process. For many of our clients, it's not always the value that dictates what is important in an exit, but the cultural and strategic fit of a buyer which will ensure the continued success of the business going forward."

This idea of creating a working partnership plays a crucial role in Benchmark International's overall mission for a seamless business sale for all of their

clients, "Benchmark International operates under the philosophy that we leave no stone unturned. We truly look at partnerships with our clients from every angle, and we seek the best possible outcome on every level. In addition, we recognise that owners are emotionally attached to their businesses, and rightfully so as many of our clients have grown these enterprises from infancy. After identifying the most suitable buyer for an opportunity, guiding a client through the minefield that is an exit or growth strategy is equally paramount. At Benchmark International, we allocate each of our clients to a dedicated Transaction Director who, in turn, heads up a local team of M&A professionals. This approach enables a dedicated, personal, and local relationship with a client, walking them through the process step-by-step, whilst at the same time providing an expansive reach through our network of international offices, comprehensive proprietary databases, and Benchmark International employees."

Ultimately, according to Steven, Benchmark's future lies in steady but robust, growth. "Benchmark International continues to adopt an organic and conservative approach to growth, utilising the successes of the business as



a platform to the next phase of growth. We believe that every business is now a technology business and during 2018, we have committed over \$3 million to new software which we target to roll out in January 2019. Also, we are working on opening up new regions, holding discussions with potential partners in Australia/ New Zealand, and targeting four new transaction offices in Europe and seven in the US. Lastly, we have a proven business model developed on the back of decades of success which puts our clients at the very heart of everything that we do."

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