



Sterling Investment Acquires Sales Training Firm

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Sales staff are on the front line for companies as they fight to grow in a slow economy, and Sterling Investment Partners in Westport believes that its most recent acquisition can play a crucial role in the survival of a business.

Sterling, a middle-market private equity firm, teaming with management at Miller Heiman, Inc., has bought Miller Heiman, a global provider of sales performance improvement products and services to improve the effectiveness of sales organizations.

The business was acquired from Leeds Equity Partners, a New York-based private equity firm, for an undisclosed price. The debt financing was provided by GE Antares Capital, Madison Capital and York Street Capital Partners.

Headquartered in Reno, NV, Miller Heiman has offices in the United Kingdom and Australia and serves clients in Argentina, Mexico, China, India, Germany and France.

"Its corporate clients are involved in myriad industries, including financial services, consumer products and marketing," said Charles Santoro, managing partner and cofounder of Sterling Investment Partners, which controls a portfolio of businesses that employ 20,000 people.

"Miller Heiman's clients offer complex lines and products and services, in turn requiring in-depth training," Santoro said.

"It's mission critical that the sales force is selling in a way that cross-sells products — a sales process that works strategically for large corporations," he said, commenting that a sales staff is trained in the advertisement complexities of selling a mix of a company's products and services. "Brand reinforcement also is an essential part of the sales process."

"The need for a well-trained sales staff is particularly important during a struggling economy," said Santoro, whose firm has completed 75 transactions totaling \$8 billion since its founding in 1991.

"In a difficult market, more companies are competing for fewer consumer dollars. In a time of economic downturn, we have an opportunity to grow our business," he said.

"Leeds set a five-year deadline to achieve its goals for Miller Heiman but reached them in three years and opted to sell the business," said Sam Reese, Miller Heiman chief executive officer.

"Sterling has international experience and can provide additional resources leading to further expansion," he said.

"Our global coverage is great, but we want to expand the depth," he said.

Many of Miller Heiman's clients in overseas areas are American- and British-based corporations with facilities around the world. Reese said he wants to expand the client base to include companies that are based in those countries.

In its nearly 30 years, the company has served more than 1 million sales professionals.

"Sales training companies can be a good investment for a private equity firm during a slow economy," said Ken MacFadyen, editor of Mergers & Acquisitions Journal, a Source Media publication.

"A lot of private equity firms are trying to find things that stand up to a tough landscape," he said, adding that there has been a slowing of mergers and acquisitions. "Strategic buyers are getting worried about the economic picture."

"The health care and energy industries remain as strong investment targets," he said.