Private Equity
Brand Equity

A Study of the Relevance of Brand in the Private Equity Industry

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Bill Haynes has more than 20 years of financial services marketing and public relations experience including senior positions at several global communications agencies and an asset management company. He has particular experience working with firms involved with the private equity industry including: ACG (Association for Corporate Growth), ArcLight Capital, AM&AA (Alliance of Mergers and Acquisitions Advisors), Black Canyon Capital, Constitution Capital Partners, Drum Capital Management, GF Data Resources, Grant Thornton's Private Equity, Capital Markets and Public Policy groups, Global M&A, Goodwin Procter, Heritage Partners, MidMarket Capital Advisors, PitchBook Data, River Associates, The Riverside Company, Streambank, Thomson Reuters and TA Associates. Mr. Haynes has received Series 6 and Series 63 licenses. He received his B.A. in Anthropology from Princeton University and an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Chicago.

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About BackBay Communications

BackBay Communications is an independent strategic marketing and public relations firm focused on the financial and professional services sectors. Headquartered in Boston, BackBay serves companies across the United States, with current clients in Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C. Through strategic partnerships, BackBay provides US-based clients with services in Europe and Asia. **www.BackBayCommunications.com**

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BackBay Communications

Introduction

BackBay Communications, a proven leader in providing brand positioning, marketing and public relations expertise to the private equity industry, recently conducted the BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey. The goal of this study was to examine the importance of private equity firms developing and maintaining a positive brand. We were curious about whether industry participants felt a strong brand was important. With which audiences it is most vital for General Partners to have positive brand recognition. How private equity brands are built and maintained. And which private equity firms the industry believes have the strongest brands. We also wondered how the current economic difficulties have influenced the need for a well-regarded brand.

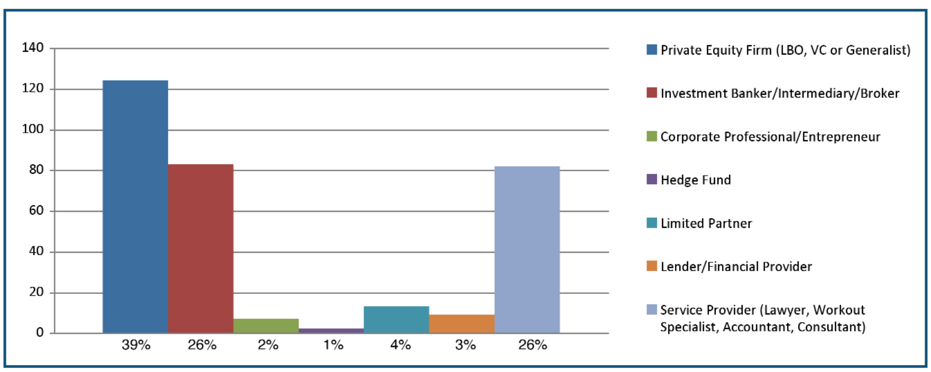
BackBay Communications polled 320 private equity professionals, Limited Partners, investment bankers, intermediaries, lawyers, accountants and consultants serving the private equity industry in September and October 2009.

We found that an overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) believe it is important for private equity firms to have a strong brand. They say it is critical for fundraising (83%), deal flow (76%), recruiting (51%), and investing (43%).

Groups with which it is most important to have a healthy brand, according to respondents, are Limited Partners (76%), CEOs of target portfolio companies (66%), lenders (60%), and investment bankers (57%).

Strong brands are those that individuals feel positively about and are top of mind. The firms that survey respondents listed most frequently as having the best brands thus tended to be the largest global buyout and upper middle market firms. As one respondent said, "They are the ones I read about every day in The Wall Street Journal."

Which of the Following Best Describes Your Business?



BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey

This white paper supplements BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey data with industry data from PitchBook, an independent marketing intelligence firm dedicated to providing premium data, news and analysis to the private equity industry. We also conducted interviews with private equity firms, Limited Partners, placement agents and investment bankers. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this project. We hope you find it interesting and useful.

A History of Private Equity Brands

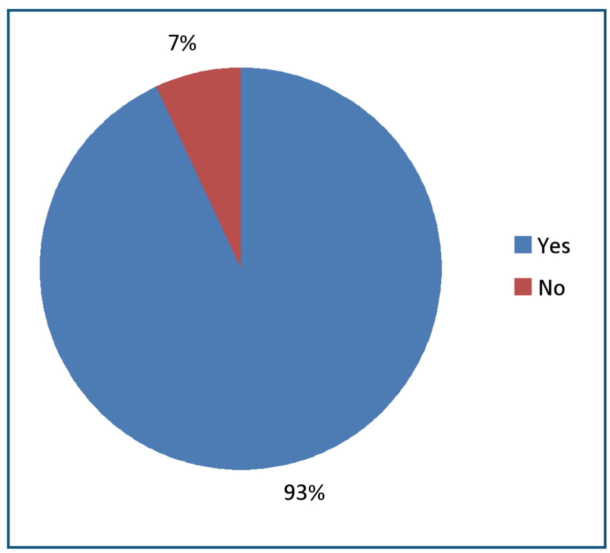
Over the last decade, an increasing number of private equity firms have come to recognize the importance of developing a brand in the marketplace. Rather than simply letting their returns speak for themselves, relying on key investment banking contacts to generate deal flow, and looking to their existing LPs to invest again in their next fund, they have made a proactive, strategic decision to build a firm brand that will be compelling, differentiated and clearly understood. Their aim was to build a brand that would help the firm source deals, raise funds, borrow capital, attract employees, and most importantly, endure.

The largest global buyout firms led the charge into branding, recognizing that some of the same branding principles employed by their portfolio companies could be applied in a modified way to their firms. Global expansion and the need to keep messages consistent around the world was one driver of early private equity branding. As fund sizes grew and the largest private equity firms were involved in taking public companies private and investing in spinoffs, they increasingly drew media attention. The managing partners of these funds were sought out by the media, and private equity no longer was so private. As a few of the largest private equity firms became public companies themselves and had to pull the curtain back and reveal more about their firms, including compensation, to retail investors and journalists, they attracted increased public interest and scrutiny.

As the number of private equity firms shot up and other alternative investment choices such as hedge funds proliferated, competition began to heat up for capital, talent and deals. More private equity firms, including those in the middle market, began to embrace branding as a way to hone their messages, package their firms, stand out from the competition, and be top of mind.

As Christopher W. Ullman, Director of Global Communications for The Carlyle Group, an early leader in recognizing the importance of developing its brand, said, "Brand matters. Whether you're raising capital, hiring employees, trying to buy a family owned business or a conglomerate, how key constituencies perceive your brand can affect the bottom line. Our goal is to have a brand that people understand, like and trust."

Is it Important for Private Equity Firms to Have a Strong Brand?



BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey

The Power of a Strong PE Brand

The importance of a powerful private equity brand is today almost universally recognized among industry participants. A strong brand must be compelling, differentiated and clearly understood and convey why various constituencies should do business with the firm. A powerful brand will help the private equity firm source deals, raise funds, borrow capital, attract employees, and grow.

In today's tough deal sourcing and fundraising environment, having a well-regarded brand is crucial. As Limited Partners re-examine their investment allocations and future commitments, it is the private equity firms with the strongest brands that are able to attract current LPs back into their new funds and bring in new investors. With quality deal flow down at many private equity firms, a strong brand assists firms in generating new investment opportunities, and can make it easier to secure acquisition financing from lenders.

Private equity firms of all sizes can learn from the firms with the most powerful brand reputations. They need not be large global firms or have multi-million dollar marketing budgets to create a recognizable and respected presence in the marketplace. What they do need is clearly articulated positioning based on a firm's focus, people and approach that helps differentiate the firm from competitors.

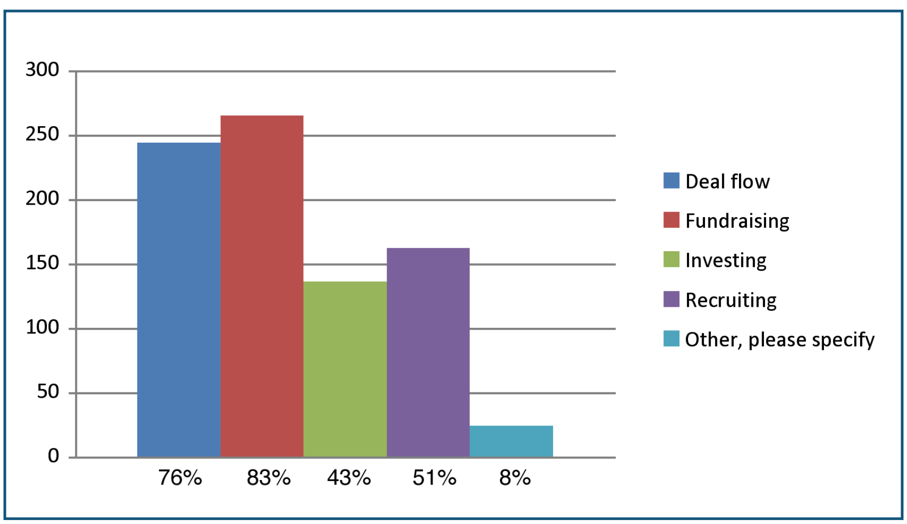
> *"Brand matters. Whether you're raising capital, hiring employees, trying to buy a family owned business or a conglomerate, how key constituencies perceive your brand can affect the bottom line."*
>
> *– Christopher W. Ullman*
> *The Carlyle Group*

Importance of Branding for PE Firms

According to the BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey, having a strong brand is important to private equity firms for:

- Fundraising (83%)
- Deal flow (76%)
- Recruiting (51%)
- Investing (43%)

For Which Activities is it Most Important for PE Firms to Have a Strong Brand?



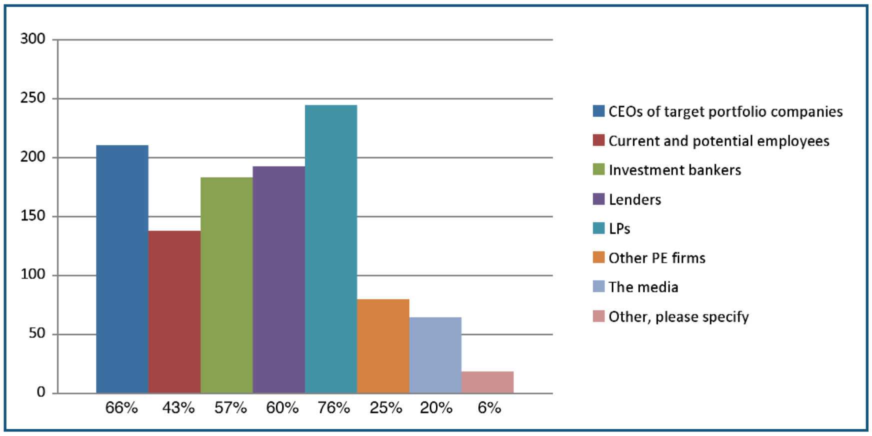
BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey

Constituents with whom it is most important to have a healthy brand are:

- Limited Partners (76%)
- CEOs of target portfolio companies (66%)
- Lenders (60%)
- Investment bankers (57%)

Each participant in the private equity arena views a private equity firm's brand through a different lens. For Limited Partners, a key component of a firm's brand is a fund's IRR and whether they are top decile or quartile. Investment banks and advisors, on the other hand, are particularly concerned with how private equity firms conduct themselves, whether they submit bids on time and whether they seek to renegotiate frequently. Lenders are concerned with the reputation of private equity firms' behavior when their portfolio companies need assistance and whether they will put more equity into troubled companies to keep them afloat. Business owners' chief goals are to sell part or all of their company for a fair price to a private equity firm they can trust and who will be there to support them in their growth, without constantly second-guessing them.

It is Most Important for PE Firms to Have a Strong Brand with Which Audiences?



BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey

Fundraising

Powerful private equity brands can make it easier to attract the lifeblood of the industry – Limited Partner capital. With fundraising down 61% through the first three quarters of 2009, according to PitchBook, the ability to attract investments from a more limited pool of capital has never been more critical.

"Right now there is a movement among LPs to higher-quality funds," said Robert E. Mast, Managing Director, Monument Group, a placement agency. "Every LP in the market is dealing generally with a reduced investment budget. They can do fewer new investments and have to be pickier and choosier than before, so performance is the top criteria. However, if investors don't feel they are being adequately communicated with, or if their interests have otherwise diverged from those of the GP, they may drop you. A fund with slightly less performance, but a great LP communications program and a GP that is doing things in the best interest of the Limiteds will have greater success."

More Limited Partners are risk averse, and there is a perceived flight to quality, or at least flight to safety. Investment committees at state pension plans, for example, are more likely to approve investments in well-known firms than new managers. "People are petrified of taking risk," said one private equity firm executive. "So brand opens doors and becomes a proxy for quality even though it's not necessarily true. There has been more of a flight to brand and political safety than a flight to quality."

"It never hurts to have a strong brand," said Lee Gardella, a Managing Director of fund of funds firm Adveq Management US, Inc. "Good brands take time to shape, and tend to be associated with well-known organizations. When a trustee has to choose a fund to invest in, having a well-known brand helps. They can't be shot between the eyes for choosing Blackstone."

Having well branded, well packaged private equity firm presentations and crisp positioning is critical for private equity firms seeking funds, said Bryan D. Kelley, Principal, NovaFund Advisors, a placement agency. "Ten years ago, getting to a first close wasn't as difficult, and a higher percentage of investors were willing to lead. Now, many investors are waiting to see who else enters a fund. Today in a more mature market, we are telling GPs to understand that there will be fewer prospective LP meetings so each meeting is very important. Their PPMs and pitchbooks have to be better than ever before and they need to know how to act with LPs."

"Good brands take time to shape, and tend to be associated with well-known organizations. When a trustee has to choose a fund to invest in, having a well-known brand helps."

– Lee Gardella
Adveq Management US, Inc.

Most investors emphasize that it is the character of the firm and its accomplishments more than the packaging of the firm's attributes that are most important. "A private equity firm's brand has little or no meaning to us," said John Guinee, a Managing Partner of fund of funds firm Constitution Capital Partners, LLC. "The brand itself is not important, but the attributes are – the firm's focus, strategy and returns."

Add a strong management team to that list, said one LP, who asked to remain anonymous. "With all the bad books and articles being written about the most famous names in private equity, you can go from adoration to condemnation pretty quickly. Regardless of whether a firm is well known or obscure it has to pass certain criteria. What's most important is the reputation of the firm's leaders. Some LPs will link performance to individuals and ask whether the same people are still at a firm and active."

"With forums like the ILPA and online communications, GP reputational information spreads quickly through the LP community and they are doing their own due diligence on GPs among their peers," said Monument Group's Mr. Mast. "PE firms are being forced to develop brands because it is more difficult to raise capital and source deals."

Deal Sourcing

Over the last 10 years, the number of private equity buyout firms has grown by 80-100 per year to 2600 today, while the number of investments in the last two years has fallen from 2724 in 2007 to 1880 in 2008, according to PitchBook. Competition is keener than ever and private equity firms need a way to stand out from the crowd to win deals.

"When I think of where a brand is most important, my focus tends to be on deal sourcing," said Mark Jones, Partner, River Associates Investments, LLC. "Given the ever-expanding number of PE shops, a firm's brand – or put another way, its reputation – can be a key reason that a firm gets to see a deal in the first place, is selected to come meet management, and is chosen by the seller and the seller's investment banker for exclusivity in a letter of intent."

> *"It is critical that PE firms clearly articulate the core qualities of their brand in a manner that separates them from the competition."*
>
> *– Mark Jones*
> *River Associates*

With internal rates of return similar among many private equity funds, and debt markets fairly standardized, a seller will likely receive numerous offers for his or her business where the valuation metrics are similar. Accordingly, sellers often look for "tie breakers," those qualities that separate one PE firm from another. Examples might include a long track record with numerous successful realized transactions, a focus on a particular size company or industry space, a reputation for treating management teams fairly, or a history of helping portfolio companies grow through add-on acquisitions.

"It is critical that PE firms clearly articulate the core qualities of their brand in a manner that separates them from the competition," said Mr. Jones of River Associates. "Further, the smart PE shops understand that the seller's advisor is oftentimes as important in the decision making process as the seller."

> *"A differentiated and well-understood brand is important to help private equity firms cut through the clutter."*
>
> *– Joe Purcell*
> *Stifel Nicolaus & Company*

"A differentiated and well understood brand is important to help private equity firms cut through the clutter," said Joe Purcell, Managing Director, Head of Financial Sponsors Group, Stifel Nicolaus & Company. "There are hundreds of private equity funds in the U.S. We can't know and cover all of them well, so we carefully look at a number of criteria to help us to determine with whom we will form long-term relationships: track record, investment style, types of companies owned, reputation and, very importantly, personal relationships. We then work hard to develop multi-faceted relationships from the managing partners on down. To us, brand is defined by a private equity firm's leadership, and how that firm conducts itself in every day interactions, and in the market."

There are other considerations that make differentiation an imperative in private equity. Large firms are willing to consider smaller deals. Also, LPs are closely monitoring their existing allocations to private equity and sparingly committing new dollars. Finally, lenders are evaluating the acumen and actions of their private equity partners in this difficult environment and using this information to allocate fresh capital to only the very best firms.

"Brand is absolutely a key element of sourcing and closing deals," said Rich Jander, Principal, Maranon Capital. "If an investment banker is engaged as a sell-side advisor to a food products business, being an acknowledged expert in the space will probably place a firm on the potential buyer list. Similarly, if two firms have submitted final valuations that are relatively close in number, the final nod will likely go to the firm with the better reputation for honoring the terms of their agreements."

Entrepreneurs

When dealing with entrepreneurs, private equity firms must pay special attention to educating business owners, building relationships, gaining trust and providing value-added benefits.

"When people are selling or buying a business it's a very personal, intimate process, so forging relationships and building trust is very important," said Allison L. Dent, CEO, Global M&A, gmbh. "Entrepreneurs are looking for evidence that a private equity firm has a perspective and approach that matches their business, and having a strong brand will help get a private equity firm to the table. Ultimately, though, it's not the brand itself but the characteristics that made their brand strong – a good track record, expertise, a competent management team – that helps them win the deal."

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– Allison Dent
Global M&A, gmbh

"Most private equity firms have somewhat of a PR issue when it comes to your typical business owners," said Stephen McGee, Practice Leader for Grant Thornton Corporate Finance. "Many business owners have an inherent skepticism and nervousness about private equity because many business owners don't understand it. I don't see PEGs doing a lot to fix that. One-on-one most of them have great case studies they can share with business owners, but they don't seem to want to broadcast that to a wider audience."

Mr. McGee recounts a tour he arranged for a Midwest business owner to meet with a number of private equity firms to gain a better understanding of how private equity works. The business owner peppered the firms' executives with questions about how they would help his firm grow and what value-added things they could deliver. Because the business owner already ran a sophisticated operation, with high-quality financial and IT systems and other best practices in place, the greatest value the private equity firms could provide was the access to people (Board), companies (acquisitions) and capital (financing sources) the owner could not easily tap into on his own.

“At the end of the day, the private equity firms’ brand names were unknown and irrelevant to him,” said Mr. McGee. “Of greater significance was the value-add they could deliver and the personal chemistry of the people he was meeting with.”

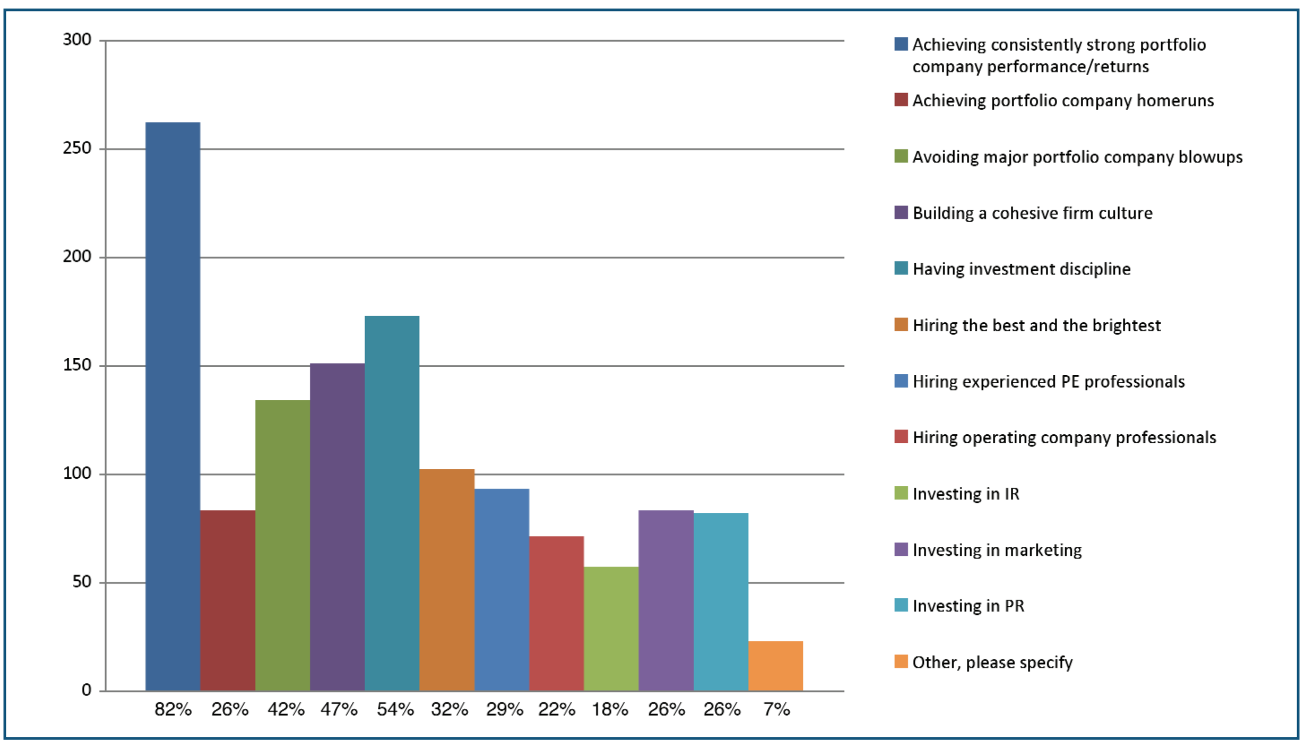
The investment is just the beginning of the relationship, of course. The relationship between the private equity firm and entrepreneur needs to be cultivated and demonstrate its value over time. A management team at a successful portfolio company can be a great reference point for other management teams considering a partnership with a particular PE firm. If treated fairly, even the management team of an unsuccessful portfolio company can reflect positively on a PE firm’s brand.

Successful Investing Builds Strong Brands

According to survey respondents, the most effective way for private equity firms to build a strong brand is:

- Achieving consistently strong portfolio company performance/returns (82%)
- Having investment discipline (54%)
- Building a cohesive firm culture (47%)

What are the Most Effective Ways for PE Firms to Build a Strong Brand?



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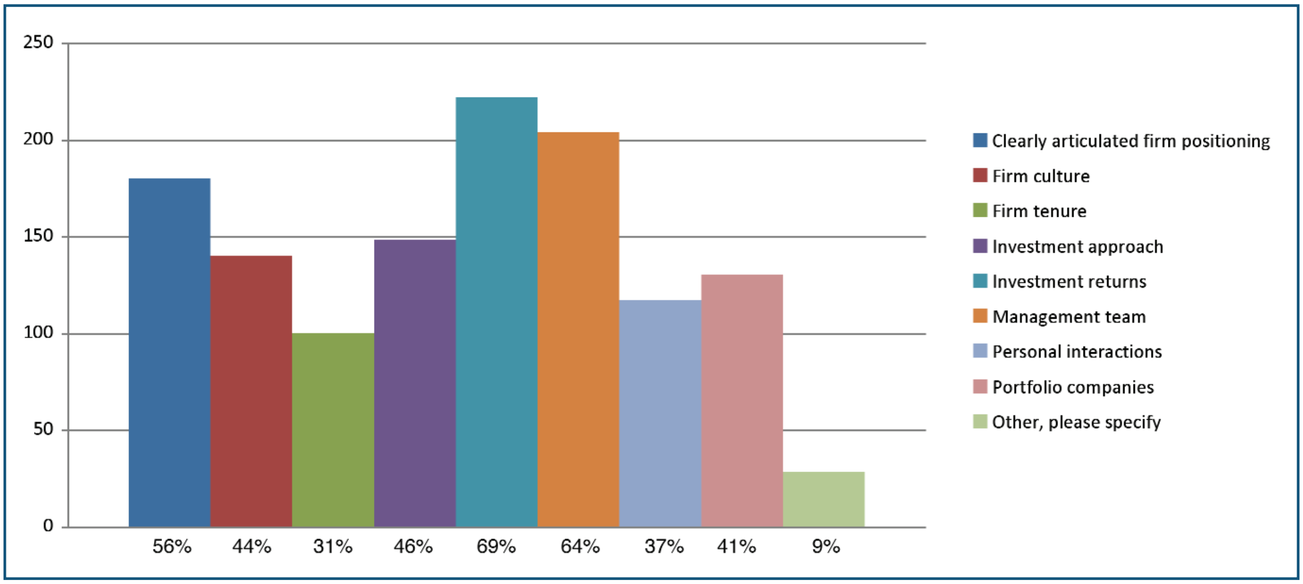
Private equity firm attributes that contribute the most to a strong brand are:

- Good investment returns (69%)
- Proven management team (64%)
- Clearly articulated firm positioning (56%)

Which PE Firm Attributes Contribute Most to a Strong Brand?



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"TA Associates developed its brand over more than 40 years. It stands for integrity, partnership and excellence," said Marcia O'Carroll, VP of Marketing, TA Associates. "In everything we do internally and externally – the way we communicate with LPs and entrepreneurs, the people we hire, the investments we make, the top-quartile returns we achieve, and the way we conduct our business – we aim to adhere to the high standards that have led to our success."

The Sweet Sixteen

According to survey respondents, the 16 private equity firms with the strongest brands are, in alphabetical order:

- 3i Group
- Apollo
- Audax Group
- Bain Capital
- Berkshire Partners
- Blackstone Group
- Carlyle Group
- Goldman Sachs Capital Partners
- Kleiner Perkins
- KKR
- The Riverside Company
- Sequoia Capital
- Summit Partners
- TA Associates
- TPG
- Warburg Pincus

According to data from PitchBook, with a few exceptions, the leading private equity brands are primarily large global firms, managing at least $3 billion, having 100 or more employees, which have been in business for at least 20 years, and have made 100 or more investments. Survey respondents said it was these firms' large size, strong returns, management strength, consistent visibility, and clear messaging that has built their reputations and keeps them top of mind.

In general, the Sweet Sixteen, according to PitchBook, outperformed the industry as a whole:

- Their mature funds (raised before 2006) outperformed the industry as a whole in nine of 10 vintage years (1996-2005).
- For these 10 vintages, the firms outperformed the industry by an average of 5%.

"These private equity firms have the strongest brands for a reason," said John Gabbert, CEO, PitchBook. "They are mature firms with proven management teams and consistently strong portfolio performance over time. They grew from very small firms to the size they are today by building and managing a reputation for high performance through market cycles."

"These private equity firms have a strong brand for a reason. They are mature firms with proven management teams and consistently strong portfolio performance over time. They grew from very small firms to the size they are today by building and managing a reputation for high performance through market cycles."

– John Gabbert
PitchBook

The Riverside Company is convinced there are clear returns to be had from building a recognizable brand. Simply put, it drives people to want to do business with the firm. The Riverside Company said its reputation helps it see more transactions, win more deals, garner more investors, attract and retain excellent employees, and broaden its pool of partner lenders.

"The Riverside Company began consciously investing in building a distinctive brand about eight years ago," said Christine Croissant, Managing Director, Marketing & Investor Relations for The Riverside Company. "When I started with Riverside, our brand reflected our work style: informal but professional. As we have grown into an international firm attracting leading institutional investors, our brand has evolved to emphasize the firm's focus on the smaller end of the middle market, global presence and operational expertise, even as we continue to be known for our friendliness and principled approach."

"When Audax was founded in 1999, we were a new name in a very crowded field," said Jay Jester, Managing Director, Audax Group. "The highest compliment anyone ever paid us at the time was to say, 'I know you guys have been around for a long time and I can't believe we haven't done a deal together'. That was the power of the brand we set out to build and also reflected the effort we devoted to deal sourcing. Now there is a body of work to stand on, but 10 years ago the challenge was to have someone show you a deal when you didn't have an institutional track record."

Fund size and marketing dollars are only two parts of the brand development equation and arguably not the most important components. A PE firm can build its brand by focusing on a few industry verticals or investment strategies. PE funds with successful brands also generally have a track record of consistent early and open communication of both positive and negative news with employees, LPs, deal sources and lenders.

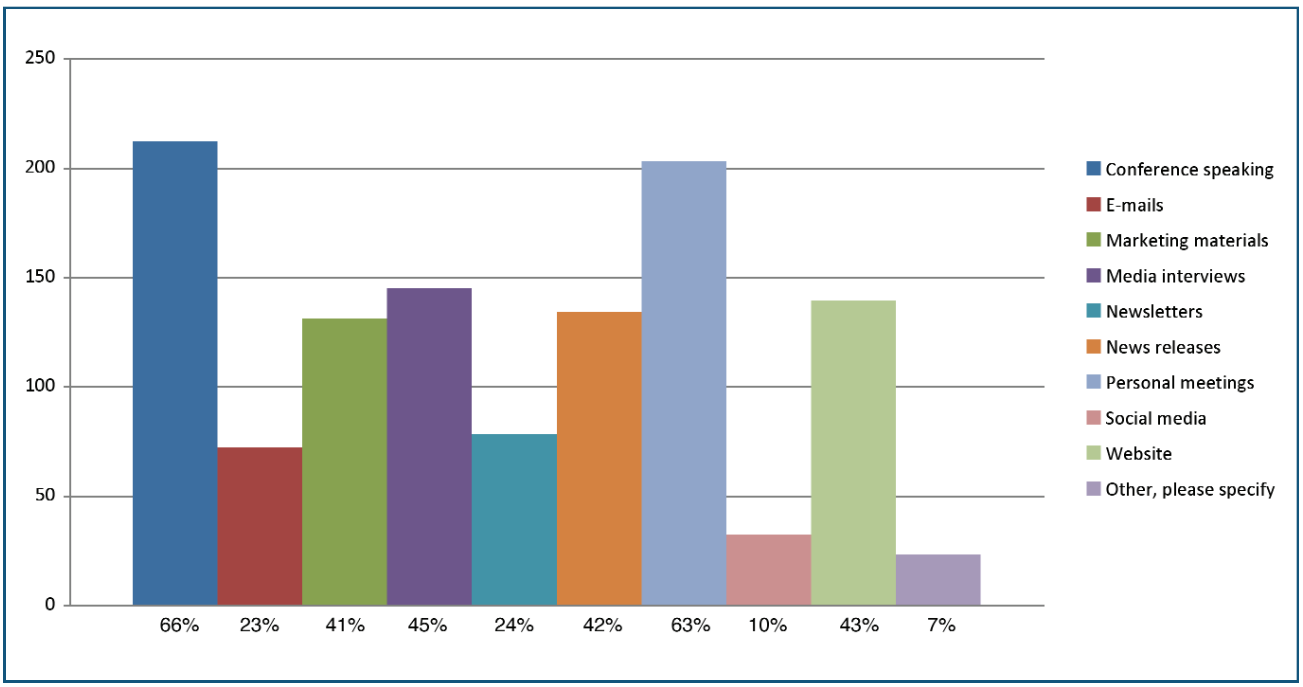
Leveraging/Reinforcing a Private Equity Brand

Private equity firms can help build and reinforce their brands by sharing their insights and expertise – in media interviews and conference panels – on trends in the private equity business as well as in financing issues in the sectors they focus on.

According to survey respondents, the best way for firms to leverage/reinforce their brands is through:

- Conference speaking (66%)
- Personal meetings (63%)
- Media interviews (45%)

What are the Best Ways to Leverage/Reinforce a Strong Brand?



BackBay Communications Private Equity Brand Survey

"There is no magic bullet to getting your brand out there," said Audax's Mr. Jester. "A lot of it is internal training. We teach people what a long tail your actions have in the community. The best marketing in the world is a happy customer with a big mouth. And the opposite is also true. It is important to treat people with dignity and respect. We see our deal sources as our lifeblood, and we try to cultivate them and make sure we have the infrastructure in place to respond to deal opportunities."

"The best marketing in the world is a happy customer with a big mouth. And the opposite is also true. It is important to treat people with dignity and respect."

– Jay Jester
Audax Group

Mr. Jester cites sponsorship of ACG's annual InterGrowth conference and ACG regional chapter events as key to building Audax's brand in the middle market. "ACG has done a wonderful job of being the gathering place and directory of the middle market. The dollars we spend on their events are invaluable – they have been very worthwhile from a brand-building standpoint."

The Riverside Company also works to ensure the firm's brand is reflected in the experiences its constituencies have with the firm, such as being true to its principles and devotion to the smaller end of the middle market. It is reinforced consistently by employees living the brand every day when they meet with current and prospective limited partners, or speak at industry events, appear in print, or pen articles that offer an insight into the industry. These initiatives build trust and confidence with The Riverside Company's audience while positioning the firm as a thought leader in the industry.

PE Industry Reputation

Private equity has been the subject of recent negative media attention. Individual private equity firms' decisions and troubles can reflect poorly on the industry, just as efforts to build their brand reputations can indirectly help the industry gain more goodwill. The private equity industry can and should do more to encourage best practices that will help build a positive reputation for the industry.

"I shouldn't have to spend so much time 'selling' private equity to business owners," said Grant Thornton's Mr. McGee. "For certain companies, private equity is clearly the best solution. But it is still a hard sell. Business owners seem inherently afraid a private equity firm will load up their company with debt, and look to control the day-to-day decision making the owner is so used to having control of."

"As a PE firm becomes better known, it can serve as an ambassador for the industry."

– Christine Croissant
The Riverside Company

Some firms are taking steps to build their own brand and that of the industry.

"As a PE firm becomes better known it can serve as an ambassador for the industry," said Ms. Croissant of The Riverside Company. "We believe private equity's negative reputation is undeserved. We have become an emissary of sorts, speaking before Congress about the benefits of private equity ownership, and providing examples of companies that have grown through private equity investments. We believe this has helped the companies, their employees and their regions."

"Although private equity is often thought of as a few large LBO firms, the private equity industry includes thousands of firms that serve the middle-market," said Gary LaBranche, President and CEO of ACG (Association for Corporate Growth). "These firms provide the capital that companies need to grow, and allow small business owners to sell their companies and realize a gain from a lifetime of work and risk. The industry needs to do more to improve its brand. Working together through organizations like ACG, middle market private equity firms can improve their collective brand as generators of jobs and creators of value."

Comments by Ian Larkin, Managing Director, Maranon Capital apply both to individual private equity firms as well as the industry as a whole: "A firm will have a reputation in the marketplace regardless of an affirmative decision on brand management, so it's important for a firm to actively manage and promote its image."

Appendix

Verbatims

Has the market downturn affected your view of the importance of a PE firm's brand? If so, how?

A strong brand will attract the best talent; it will incentivize lenders to invest and cooperate on existing investments; it can improve your market positioning on exit; and it will certainly help in fundraising when LPs are more stringent than ever with their capital.

Affirmed it is important to have a strong brand, BUT even the strongest brands haven't escaped unscathed - in fact, they have had more to lose due to their generally higher profiles.

Big mistakes and losses by some well recognized firms recently have tarnished their image.

Brand has made less of a difference than performance. Many 'branded' firms ran from the market.

Brand=reputation. No need to finance marginal deals with marginal firms.

Branding has become even more important for fund raising and obtaining financing. Also, for winning trust of the target company.

Brands reinforce decision.

Companies are focusing now, more than ever, on the non-tangible assets a PE firm can offer. Providing capital is only half the battle – effecting true commercial development, management discipline and market connections create success even in the most stringent markets.

Consistency and longevity appear to be defining characteristics.

Cream rises to the top.

Brand is even more important. Particularly post-Madoff, LPs want to see that independent funds are associated with the skills of a major independent fund administrator such as a global bank / custodian.

It is even more critical to maintain presence and brand in the marketplace in such a competitive environment.

Fund raising is more difficult and success is going to stronger brands, however, returns continue to be a factor.

Good companies know the importance of differentiating themselves from the competitors.

Brand has never been more important

I believe that it is even more important now than prior to the market downturn as capital is scarce and lenders are seeking to loan to only the best partners.

I believe that the branding of these megafunds have been tarnished, and that future fundraising will be met with more cautious due diligence than before.

I don't think brand per se is important; personal relationships are most important.

I see an increased need for branding for PE firms.

In bad times brand adds credibility - wrongly so - and favors the known over the better.

In such a low liquidity environment, LPs have less money to invest in PE funds. With supply of investments down, it has become more important for PE firms to differentiate themselves to investors and prove that they have the resources, team, investment strategy, and history of positive performance in place to give an LP the greatest ROI. A PE firm's brand, therefore, must be extremely strong if it wishes to compete against other firms for LP investment.

It has made it more important given a flight to quality.

It is more important for securing loans.

It's important in strong and weak economies.

It's more difficult for owners to pull the trigger on getting PE capital so I think the relationship, culture and brand that a given firm has with potential investees is critical.

It's more important than ever to send a clear message, be consistent, differentiate and lead with strengths, maintain good media relations, present your firm professionally and with high standards - in all areas including communications, design, collateral, interviews, etc.

It's more important. I would suggest to those looking for any funding to seek out PE with strong brands due to the failure of other firms.

Long tenured, successful firms will have an easier time fund-raising

Brand may provide edge in access to capital and deals.

It's more important now than before to have a strong brand identity to attract dwindling number of investors and deal opportunities.

More than ever it's needed now to stand out from the firms struggling.

Most PE firms are viewed negatively since they borrow a lot of money and reduce costs proactively during downturns (i.e., fire people).

Particularly as it relates to fundraising, the importance of a firm's brand has grown.

Some big firms aren't hitting homeruns and LPs are looking for new players.

Superior branding will give your firm the benefit of the doubt AND allow you to weather a period of bad market return.

The bigger firms are going to be more dominant coming out of this.

The carnage experienced in the downturn means reputation is a more important part of your brand.

The downturn has made clear that there is low correlation between brand name and good returns.

The more you are known and recognized as a smart investor, the more difficult it gets to get good deals done. There is a balance between being low-profile but known and respected.

The PE firm model is broken in this environment. Only those firms who can leverage their brand with creativity will be successful in the future.

There is a flight to quality with LPs and so there is a struggle for smaller PE shops to get funds.

Brands have become more important because if you're not branded well, which is most often associated with prior successes, you're going to have serious issues raising your next fund especially in this environment.

Those with strong brands are clearly standing out, surviving better than the ones without.

We have always held the firm's brand of the utmost importance.

When times are difficult, a strong brand will help fundraising as well as investments.

Firms need to be as specific as possible in articulating what they look for to the market. LPs want to clearly understand your strategy and know which bucket to put you into.

Some brands have been hurt by the economy and need 'fixing'. Some funds have acquired a reputation as being opportunistic or vulture driven and need to repair that image for when times change.

Yes. More than ever PE brand has become important to raise capital, get deal flow and get financing.