



RAPTOR TAKES FLIGHT TEQ MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2006



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In the business world, the stakes don't get any higher than corporate mergers and acquisitions. The cut-throat competition, opposing executive teams and the inherent lack of transparency makes for quite a hostile environment when attempting to sell your business or build it.

Deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars usually don't happen overnight, but tend to go much smoother when financial advisors with vision and experience are involved.

Downtown investment banking firm, Raptor LLC, attacks mergers and acquisitions as its name suggests; with foresight and tenacity. "Raptors are well-known for their outstanding vision from long distances and, by nature, are quite hands on. In choosing the raptor as our image, it represents the insight to identify and value compelling merger and acquisition opportunities with the client's global vision in mind," said Craig Wolfanger, President and Senior Managing Director of Raptor.

"Coupled with our strategic approach is our experience and expertise in tearing into the details that are necessary to making business combinations that work for our clients. It is both vision and delivery of the objectives that are our hallmarks."

The boutique firm is six strong and nearly two years into flight; however, those numbers are deceiving. Wolfanger brings more than two decades worth of mergers and acquisitions experience to the table and an impressive client list, including local mainstays such as Respi-ronics, ANSYS, Giant Eagle and MEDRAD. The firm pays the bills by providing conflict-free financial advice to the boards of directors and executive management teams of both private and public companies.

At the age of 23, Wolfanger embarked upon the investment banking world at the highest level in the early 1980s, beginning his career with the New York investment firm Kidder, Peabody & Co. Incorporated. Success found him quickly as he became the youngest to make Partner in the firm's history at the age of 27. Soon after, the New York division of the Baltimore-based firm, Alex. Brown & Sons Incorporated brought Wolfanger on as a Partner to manage its New York City investment banking unit.

"After spending over a decade in New York, I was fortunate to learn mergers, acquisitions and corporate finance from the best practitioners in the field and gained experience that is substantially greater than the time I spent working on Wall Street," Wolfanger explained.

Wolfanger came to Pittsburgh in 1991 when PNC Securities Corp. recruited him as the Senior Managing Director of its investment banking division. This wasn't Wolfanger's first taste of the Steel City. He had interned with the mergers and acquisitions group at Mellon Financial Corp. while completing his MBA in Finance and Accounting at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

Although Wall Street had baptized Wolfanger by fire, Pittsburgh's intimacy and sense of community incited him to migrate west to build more than just his career.

"In Pittsburgh, I was fortunate to find a wonderful place to live and raise a family while continuing to advise public and private companies on creating wealth for their shareholders," Wolfanger said.

Before Raptor perched on the 20th Floor of One Mellon Center in 2005, Wolfanger and his team honed their vision and skills at Parker/Hunter, now a division of Janney Montgomery and Scott LLC. Wolfanger left Parker/Hunter after 10 years as the Senior Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking at the regional brokerage firm. Experience and a thorough understanding of the divestitures market enabled Wolfanger to see the benefit of a sole focus on corporate clients rather than the retail or institutional sectors of the investment banking world.



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"In most Wall Street firms, there can be a variety of potential and perceived conflicts amongst various groups of clients within an investment banking firm, including retail, institutional and hedge funds," Wolfanger said. "[Raptor], from top to bottom, is singular in focus and has only one objective... providing unvarnished, straightforward advice to our client's executive management and board of directors."

Operating without outside influence allows the firm to focus solely on what is best for its client. The breadth of experience Raptor brings to the table is substantial to say the least. Proficiency in divestitures and exclusive sales, acquisitions, valuations, fairness options, as well as management buyouts, sharpens the company's bite.

"As a counselor to both acquiring companies and companies contemplating the sale of their company, we have broad and deep experience in understanding both buyer and seller perspectives and advising our clients what is in their best interests," pointed out Wolfanger. "By our definition, our advice is tailored to the specific needs and objectives of our clients and their unique situation."

This understanding of complex corporate finance issues has been leveraged for the benefit of companies in a variety of industries, including business services, consumer products, healthcare, industrial manufacturing, metals, plastics and packaging, as well as numerous technology markets.

The firm's effectiveness and international proficiency in the investment banking practice is a positive harbinger for transactions to come. Companies, domestic and abroad, continue to look to Raptor for sound and unbiased financial advice as Wolfanger explained. "As specialists in mergers and acquisitions and having worked with acquirors across the globe on nearly 400 transactions, we have the resources, contacts and creativity to negotiate transactions which meet our client's objectives."

Looking forward, the firm will continue to work with companies' executive management teams and boards of directors to advance business in an array of industries. Raptor's stellar reputation and extensive experience should provide the lift this bird needs to stay above the rest.

"In real estate, it may be 'location, location, location.' In our industry it is 'experience, experience, experience,'" Wolfanger said.