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Big-ticket sale showcases continued appeal of intelligence firms

Jonathan Klonowski analyses how private equity firms remain active in the data and market intelligence industry, following another blockbuster deal in the space.

In mid-October, US private equity house, Motive Partners, sold London-based private markets data and insights provider, With Intelligence, to S&P Global in a deal worth $1.8bn (£1.3bn). This follows Motive Partners' reported £400m majority investment in 2023. The firm expected to generate $130m in revenue in 2025, according to an announcement at the time of the deal.

Sponsors have long been attracted to the market intelligence space, given its revenue structure and the ability to scale. The latest in the long line of such transactions proves why capital continues to flock to the sector.

The deal demonstrates the potential ROI available for such assets, given the competitiveness for assets among both sponsors and trade players in the industry.

Such companies have proven to be critical given the vital data-driven decision-making across industries, which has been embedded into day-to-day workloads.

Despite the overall downturn in private equity activity in the UK this year, sponsor-backed investment in the sector has remained resilient. In total, four buyouts and seven bolt-ons of UK-based data and market intelligence firms have been recorded by Actum so far this year. With a month-and-a-half of the year to go, this already stands higher than the 2022 total and on par with the 2023 deal count.

The drivers behind the demand for such assets are clear. Importantly, the firms provide a recurring revenue model, which has been highly sought after in today's market environment. Market experts have continued to detail how private capital remains highly cautious given the macroeconomic volatility. Recurring revenues have been a key focus among dealmakers, as noted in Actum's most recent quarterly analysis.

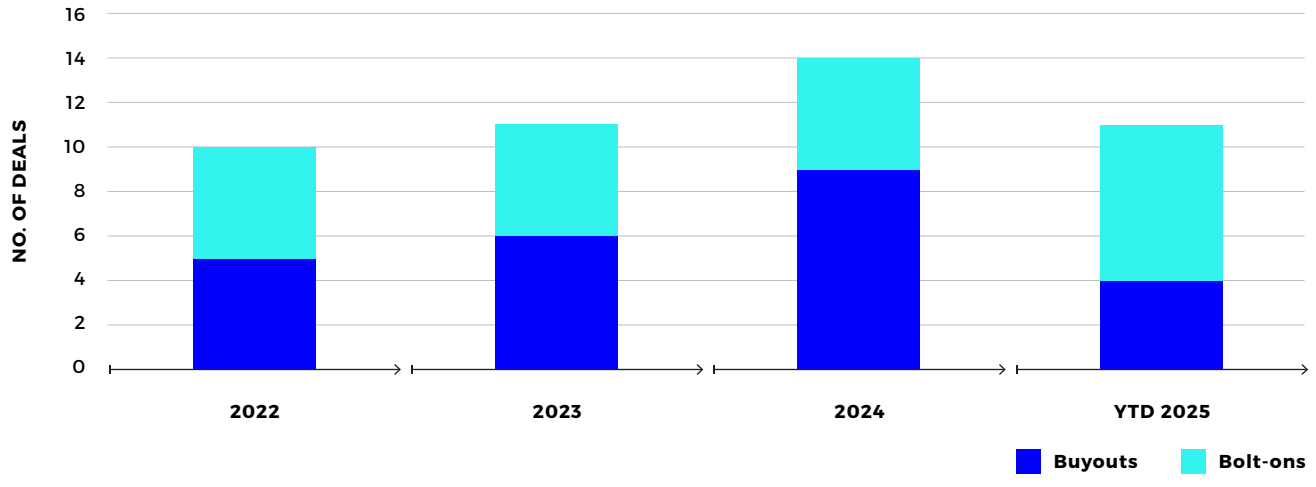
The sector is also highly scalable, primarily through M&A, which has once again been highly active in 2025. The seven bolt-on acquisitions of UK-based data and market intelligence firms has already surpassed each of the last three full-year totals.

The impact of tech also presents further ability to scale. AI and machine learning is already beginning to affect the industry, providing firms with opportunities for new growth tools and will offer the ability for companies to differentiate themselves in a fairly crowded market.

The advancements offer the possibility of deeper predictive analytics and the opportunity to present insights from vast datasets, as well as being able to accelerate time-consuming processes.

The continued consolidation, meanwhile, continues to provide an obvious exit route for sponsors, as seen with Motive Partner's sale of With Intelligence.

The resilience of such firms, and the prospect of continued innovation through AI, means the sector is likely to remain highly contested by both sponsors and trade players.



Private equity investment into UK market and data intelligence firms (Source: Actum data)

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