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THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN MID-MARKET M&A

By Keith Button

Raquel Palmer has put together some of the more notable middle-market turnaround-company deals in recent years. She has been with KPS since 1994, buying distressed and underperforming manufacturing and industrial companies for what is now a \$3.5 billion private equity fund. The firm looks for businesses it can create and unique situations in which it can add value.

“What we look for is not the healthy growth businesses that other private equity funds are looking for,” Palmer says. “We’re looking for trouble, and problems that are fixable, that we’ve had experience working with, so that we can have the confidence to put a plan together to make the business better.”

In 2013, Palmer led the KPS investment in a newly formed company it created, Expera Specialty Solutions, which combined carved-out specialty paper businesses from Wausau Paper Corp. and Packaging Dynamics Corp. and their plants in Wisconsin. In addition to negotiating with the two sellers to close their deals on the same day, KPS had to negotiate labor contracts with United Steel Workers. In 2014, KPS completed a \$270 million recapitalization for Expera. Expera bought an Old Town Fuel & Fiber pulp mill in Maine out



Raquel Palmer

Sphere of Influence: Chairs the investment committee of the turnaround-focused PE firm and serves on the board of nine portfolio companies.

of bankruptcy at the end of 2014, and now KPS is looking for new businesses to add to the Expera platform.

Also in 2013, Palmer led KPS investments in Furniture Brands assets that were brought out of bankruptcy to create Heritage

Home Group. In 2014, she led the KPS investment in Electrical Components International, maker of electrical circuits that go into appliances or cars, where the firm saw unlocked value in expanding its business to new types of customers.