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Investment bank co-founder has overseen more than \$2B in M&A

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Matt Culbertson](#)

In 2005, Guy Downing saw a great opportunity to open a financial advisory and investment banking firm in Phoenix. The city had a vibrant business community, but there were no large investment banks indigenous to the state at the time, he said.

With 15 years of major-market investment banking and related financial experience, Downing co-founded **Columbia West Capital** with the goal of establishing a top-notch financial services firm in the Valley.

“We (pulled) together a group of guys with major-market banking experience (to) deliver that same level of service that you would get at Goldman Sachs or Merrill Lynch,” he said. “Our bread and butter is here in Arizona.”

Columbia West Capital’s financial team has more than 100 years of combined financial advisory and operating experience and has been involved in mergers and acquisitions totaling more than \$2 billion in transaction value. This month, the firm is opening an office in Los Angeles.

In today’s economic situation, CWC sees much of its business from midlevel mergers and acquisitions. More companies are seeking expert financial advice on deals — a trend that often accompanies rough economies, Downing said.

“We’re finding our business to be focused on mergers and acquisitions,” he said. “In the heydeys, folks were able to put deals together relatively easily. (Businesses) are more inclined to reach out for financial advisory and expertise when it’s a little tougher.”

CWC recently closed a deal as the exclusive financial adviser to **Nutri-Health Supplements LLC** in Cottonwood, which was sold to **Atrium Innovations Inc. of Quebec** for \$23.9 million plus two future payments based on growth.

Numerous moving parts were involved in the deal, as NHS had seen rapid growth and wanted the transaction completed by the end of 2008 for tax reasons.



Guy Downing

“They were just able to really turn the growth spigots on, if you will, and triple the size of the company in a very short time frame,” Downing said. “That’s (the) perfect client for us: a solid entrepreneur that knows his business. All his shareholders are making money, and the buyer is a sophisticated company and able to execute the transaction.”

The NHS purchase is similar to many of the types of deals that CWC is involved with, he said.

“That’s a pretty typical transaction for us, \$20 million to \$30 million,” Downing said. “Our sweet spot is \$10 million to \$100 million.”

Guy Downing

Title: Managing director, co-founder

Company: Columbia West Capital

Financial Experience: 15 years

Education: Bachelor’s degree in finance, Arizona State University; MBA, Stanford

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