



Miami-Dade



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Investment bankers Scott Salpeter (left) and James Cassel say business owners aren't desperate to sell their businesses.

INVESTMENT BANKING

Deal Making

James Cassel and Scott Salpeter are two of south Florida's best-known investment bankers. Their Miami-based Cassel Salpeter & Co. specializes in midmarket firms.

Florida Trend: Is it harder for you to make the connections you need to private equity buyers or financing for deals because you're not based in New York?

Scott Salpeter: We used to have to go to New York to have relationships with these potential buyers that were in New York. (But) in today's environment, there are many sources of capital that are outside the money centers like New York ... and plenty of private equity/hedge funds throughout the United States. An example: We're selling a firm in Florida right now. It's selling to a private equity firm that's in Tennessee.

James Cassel: There is a growing community in Florida of financial firms. Today, we have a growing number of private equity firms that don't just have offices here, but have headquarters here. Two big examples are HIG and Sun Capital. Orlando and Tampa have growing private equity communities. And you look at Raymond James

— a major firm — headquartered in Florida.

FT: Do firms from elsewhere come to you?

Cassel: November through April, there is the pilgrimage of private equity people who come from (up north) to visit us on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. I'm up in New York at least once a month. Scott's traveling about the same, whether it's to Tampa or Philadelphia or Delaware — wherever we have relationships.

FT: What kind of M&A activity are you seeing from your Florida-based clients?

Salpeter: Anecdotally, we think that there's probably more activity than there was two years ago, but there's probably less activity than there was five years ago.

Cassel: There's no gold rush going on. People are holding their businesses. For the most part, we're not hearing from people that they're desperate like they were two years ago. We're hearing business is OK.

FT: Is this a good time to sell a business?

Salpeter: This is a good time to sell because the financial community has a lot of capital to deploy. (But) we're hearing high (valuation) numbers for healthy companies, and we're hearing low numbers for unhealthy or low-growth companies.

Cassel: I think there's plenty of bank money out there. The banks are making spreads that I don't think they have ever made because their cost of money is so low.

MEDICAL

Health Care Cost Leader

Annual total cost of health care for a typical family of four covered by an employer preferred provider plan (PPO):

\$24,965

Miami has the highest health care costs in the country for a family of four (120% of the U.S. average)

\$24,545

New York is the second-highest (118% of national average)

\$20,728

U.S. average health care costs, up 6.9% from 2011

Source: Milliman Medical Index; includes employer contribution for insurance premiums, employee payroll deductions and out-of-pocket costs



Pier Luigi Foschi

➤ Carnival Corp. named Costa Cruises Chairman **Pier Luigi Foschi** chairman and CEO of its new Carnival Asia unit. Foschi, who recently retired as CEO of Costa, will continue as the line's chairman and a managing director of the Costa group. ➤ In February, **Leslie Lunak** will replace Douglas Paul as CFO of BankUnited. Lunak is currently the company's executive vice president and chief accounting officer.