By: Obey Martin Manayiti
PUBLISHED: 28 July, 2026

NEWS & ANALYSIS

Uplift Investors collects $670m for debut fund

'Sector expertise is important, but we don't believe it's enough,' says one of the firm's managing partners

Uplift Investors closed its debut fund on its hard-cap of $670 million, the latest sign that some LPs are still giving a thumbs up to lower mid-market strategies even in a tough fundraising market.

"Demand exceeded the size of the fund, which meant we had to make some difficult allocation decisions," said Will Hausberg, a managing partner at the firm, saying the team was "humbled" by the vote of confidence from investors.

Emerging managers – generally understood as firms having raised three funds or fewer – saw their fundraising peak in 2021 at $159 billion, as Buyouts previously reported. But recent fundraises seem to point to strength in the sector.

Uplift was founded in March 2025 by a trio of Gridiron Capital alumni: Hausberg, Doug Rosenstein and Brad Skaf.

"The three of us have invested together for more than a decade," said Hausberg. "Uplift gave us the opportunity to build a firm around the investment philosophy we've been developing together over that time."

5-5-5 framework

Uplift believes that LPs were sold on the firm's investment philosophy, which is built around its "5-5-5 framework," comprising:

- Five business models (dual-sided networks, functional outsourcing, professional services, route-based services and information services);
- Five service sectors (knowledge and talent solutions, legal services, technical trades, financial services and industrial services);
- Five value creation drivers that are applied post-acquisition (organizational design and team development; sales and marketing; talent recruitment and management; technology, data and AI; and acquisitions/integration)

"Sector expertise is important, but we don't believe it's enough," Hausberg said. "Our 5-5-5 framework narrows the opportunity set to specific business model and services sector intersections, where we can identify opportunities that conventional underwriting often overlooks."

More opportunities in lower mid-market

"The lower middle market is where we believe thoughtful operating strategies can still reshape competitive positioning. Markets are less consolidated, management teams and founders remain deeply engaged and there is real opportunity to build businesses that look fundamentally different five years later than they do today," Hausberg noted.

To empower executives at its portfolio companies, Uplift hired a chief leadership officer dedicated to executive coaching and organizational development across both the firm and portfolio companies.

The firm evaluates the service sector of the target asset to determine whether AI is an enabler or a disruptor of the underlying business model before investing, Hausberg said. "That thinking informs how we underwrite opportunities and where we believe technology, data, and AI can create value after investment," he explained.

The firm has started investing from the fund. In April, Uplift acquired IMS Legal Strategies, a provider of specialized services to law firms.

Recent examples of emerging managers that are navigating the difficult fundraising environment include Maple Park Capital, led by former RedBird Capital Partners executives, which recently raised $200 million for its debut consumer-oriented fund, according to sources with knowledge of the fundraising who briefed Buyouts; and Dallas-headquartered Citation Capital, which closed its inaugural fund with $1.2 billion.

© PEI Group. All rights reserved. Content in this article may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of PEI Group or in the case of third party content, the owner of that content. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of the content. You may download material from this site (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal, non-commercial use only.