

Court Square, HGGC to Merge Research Now and Survey Sampling

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HGGC and Court Square Capital Partners aim to build a market-research titan in an industry populated by a number of younger upstarts.

The two private-equity firms in a news release said they agreed to merge their respective portfolio companies, Survey Sampling International LLC and Research Now Group Inc.

Management will retain a stake in the combined company, which they will own with HGGC and Court Square, according to the release.

Terms of the deal weren't disclosed in the release; one person familiar with the deal said the firms secured a roughly \$1 billion financing package in connection with it.

The combined company, which will have more than 6,000 customers, would rank among the larger players in the market-research industry, which is characterized by a number of small, relatively recent entrants, particularly ones focused on individual consumers.

Survey Sampling and Research Now are "really focused on these big enterprise customers," said Rich Lawson, co-founder and chief executive of HGGC. "It's a different kind of research."

Shelton, Conn.-based Survey Sampling provides data and technology for consumer and business-to-business market research, with data from participants in more than 90 countries. The company, which was formed in 1977, offers services to more than 3,500 customers from 40 offices, according to the release.

Research Now, of Plano, Texas, offers online data sampling and research products and services to 3,000 clients.

HGGC acquired a majority stake in Survey Sampling in 2014 from fellow private-equity firms Providence Equity Partners and Sterling Investment Partners.

"We said, 'We're going to take this old company and we're going to reimagine it,'" Mr. Lawson said.

Since then, Survey Sampling has completed four add-on acquisitions, he added. In 2015, the company [purchased the majority of the assets of market-research company MRops Inc.](#), as well as the [assets of peer businesses MyOpinions Ltd. in Australia and SmileCity Ltd. in New Zealand](#), both of which were owned by the same parent company. Last year, Survey Sampling [acquired Instantly Inc.](#), another market-research business.

Court Square acquired Research Now in 2015 from a shareholder group that included TA Associates, Polaris Partners and Sutter Hill Ventures.

Goldman Sachs & Co. and Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP acted as advisers to Court Square on the merger, according to the release. Harris Williams & Co. and Kirkland & Ellis LLP advised HGGC.

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