



SPOTLIGHTING THE ENTREPRENEURS

Monitor Top Private Independents Approach \$6 Billion Threshold

After passing the \$5 billion milestone last year, the *Monitor Top Private Independents* continued their trajectory of growth with \$5.83 billion in 2014 new business volume. With a forecast of 16.6% growth in 2015, these entrepreneurs are on the fast track toward the \$7 billion mark, which is now on the horizon. > >

2015 MONITOR TOP PRIVATE INDEPENDENTS

“We saw a more competitive marketplace in our space with new entrants and pricing pressures. Best-in-Class service and on-line finance offerings continue to be the difference makers in this space.”

— 2014 retrospective from a survey participant

Monitor Top Private Independents

RANKED BY FUNDED NEW BUSINESS VOLUME

(\$ IN MILLIONS)

RANK		COMPANY	NEW BUSINESS VOLUME			
'14	'13		2014	2013	VARIANCE +/-	% +/-
1	1	CSI Leasing ¹	984.2	858.1	126.1	14.7%
2	2	GreatAmerica Financial Services	737.7	697.7	40.0	5.7%
3	5	Ascentium Capital	440.0	275.4	164.6	59.8%
4	3	ICON Capital	358.5	441.8	-83.3	-18.9%
5	--	LEAF Commercial Capital	321.1	325.0	-3.9	-1.2%
6	8	First National Capital	242.3	212.2	30.1	14.2%
7	7	Nations Equipment Finance	238.1	228.4	9.7	4.2%
8	--	Fleet Advantage	232.6	81.7	150.9	184.7%
9	9	Somerset Capital Group	214.6	179.2	35.4	19.8%
10	--	ENGS Commerical Finance	206.0	144.5	61.5	42.6%
11	6	Kingsbridge Holdings	180.2	229.8	-49.6	-21.6%
12	16	Crossroads Equipment Lease & Finance	166.5	110.9	55.6	50.1%
13	11	Trans Lease	157.7	148.6	9.1	6.1%
14	13	Wallwork Financial	144.0	128.2	15.8	12.3%
15	14	Axis Capital	137.2	118.8	18.4	15.5%
16	--	Med One Capital	132.6	103.0	29.6	28.7%
17	15	United Leasing (Indiana)	125.0	116.0	9.0	7.8%
18	17	Jules and Associates	117.8	109.4	8.4	7.7%
19	23	Lease Corporation of America ²	117.7	74.6	43.1	57.8%
20	19	Northland Capital Financial ³	115.3	92.3	23.0	24.9%
21	22	First Financial Corporate	114.5	74.7	39.8	53.3%
22	18	CCA Financial	106.7	94.8	11.9	12.6%
23	21	Forsythe Technology	100.0	75.0	25.0	33.3%
24	20	Great Atlantic Capital	81.0	76.9	4.1	5.3%
25	25	Vision Financial Group	62.7	49.9	12.8	25.7%
See footnotes on page 29.			5,834.0	5,046.9	787.1	15.6%

The *Monitor Top Private Independents* scored big in 2014 with new business volume of \$5.83 billion, up 15.6% from \$5.05 billion a year earlier. Increases were broadly based as 88% or 22 of the participants reported increases versus three or 12% that registered net declines.

TOP FIVE

The top five volume producers in the aggregate reported \$2.84 billion of originations in 2014 — as a group these companies represented about a 49% share of the total for the top 25 Independents. However, when viewed from the perspective of having a meaningful impact on this year's outcome, the top five only accounted for 30.9%, or \$243.5 million, of the overall net increase of \$787.1 million. So in effect, we have a much more broadly based foundation upon which to judge the current and future viability of this group of market participants.

THE RANKINGS — TOP FIVE

Heading up this year's rankings, **CSI Leasing** once again occupies the #1 spot with \$984.2 million of 2014 new business volume, up 14.7%, or \$126.1 million, from \$858.1 million a year earlier. Solidly in the #2 position, **GreatAmerica Financial Services'** origination total of \$737.7 million was up 5.7% from \$697.7 million in 2013. **GreatAmerica's** vendor/dealer activity accounted for 97% of its total 2014 volume with the balance, or 3% (\$24.3 million), coming through the broker/indirect channel.

Ascentium Capital jumped two slots to land in the #3 spot on the strength of a 60% year-over-year increase in activity. **Ascentium** noted that increased customer demand for equipment and brand recognition provided the impetus to close the year with \$440.0 million in new business volume, up from \$275.4 million a year earlier. The vendor/dealer channel accounted for about 80% of the company's 2014 volume with the balance — or 20% — emanating from broker/indirect (13%) and direct (7%) sources.

ICON Capital's \$358.5 million in 2014 volume was 19% lower than the prior year, resulting in a drop of one slot to the #4 rank. New to the *Top Private Independents* rankings and rounding out the top five is #5-ranked **LEAF Commercial Capital**. In 2014, **LEAF** delivered \$321.1 million in funded originations, a tad less than the previous year.

TOP PERCENTAGE GAINERS

This year's top five percentage gainers as a group accounted for about

58% of the overall net increase in originations reported by all of this year's participants. The top percentage gainer, by far, was **Fleet Advantage** with an increase of 184.7% on the strength of a robust comeback in the Class 8 truck market in 2014. The folks at **Fleet Advantage** noted the "economic advantages offered by new technology, improving fuel efficiency and data analytics are driving significant growth." (See related article on page 46.)

With year-over-year growth of almost 60%, **Ascentium Capital's** increase of \$164.6 million was the largest absolute dollar increase posted by any of this year's *Top Private Independents*. **Ascentium's** record new business volume of \$440.0 million in 2014 was up from \$275.4 million the previous year.

Others that reported an overall increase of 50% or better included **Lease Corporation of America** (57.8%), **First Financial Corporate** (53.3%) and **Crossroads Equipment Lease & Finance** (50.1%).

NEW ARRIVALS

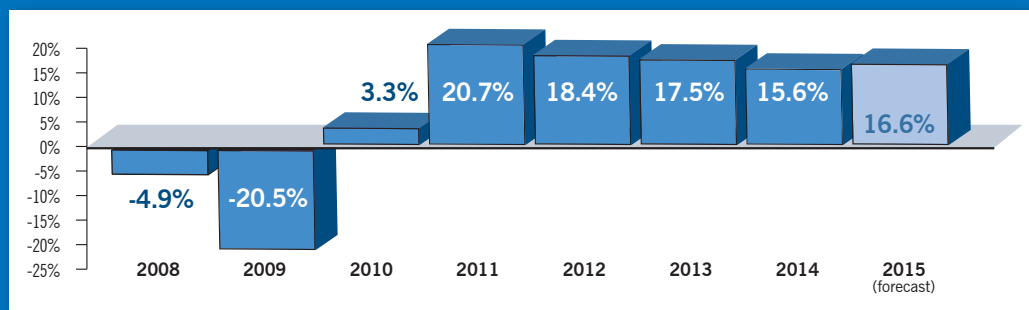
New to the *Top Private Independents* rankings this year were **LEAF Commercial Capital**, **Fleet Advantage**, **ENG Commercial Finance** and **Med One Capital**. Philadelphia-based **LEAF Commercial Capital** has been a perennial member of the *Monitor 100* as a NEC-classified commercial finance subsidiary of **Resource America**. In 2011, **LEAF** was "deconsolidated" by its parent (which retained a 15.7% interest) and became a joint venture that includes private investment firm **Eos Partners** and **Guggenheim Securities**. As a result of the foregoing, **LEAF** became eligible for inclusion in this report a year earlier than the *Monitor* acknowledged.

Fleet Advantage and **Med One Capital** each took a one-year hiatus and decided to return for this year's report. The former, ranked #8 on the strength of a vibrant year in the trucking space, posted 2014 volume that was almost three-times higher than the previous year. The latter, ranked #16 with \$132.6 million in volume, was up 29% from \$103 million in 2013.

ENG Commercial Finance joins the *Top Private Independents* for the first time and earned the #10 spot on the wings of a \$206 million year, up 42.6%, or \$144.5 million higher than a year earlier. Noteworthy was the recent announcement that NY-based private equity firm **Aquiline Capital Partners** decided to become a majority investor in **ECF**. **Aquiline** CEO Jeff Greenberg was quoted as saying, "With the growing demand for truck equipment financing, **ECF** is well-positioned to continue to serve the growth in this specialized market."

Historic Volume Trend

YEAR/YEAR NEW BUSINESS VOLUME % CHANGE FROM 2008 TO 2015 FORECAST



Volume/Employee Productivity

RANKED BY VOLUME/AVERAGE EMPLOYEE RATIO

(\$ IN MILLIONS)

COMPANY	EMPLOYEES (#)			VOLUME (\$)	
	YE 2014	YE 2013	AVERAGE '14/'13	NEW BUSINESS VOLUME '14	PER EMPLOYEE
Great Atlantic Capital	7	7	7.0	81.0	11.57
Forsythe Technology	12	12	12.0	100.0	8.33
Nations Equipment Finance	37	34	35.5	238.1	6.71
Fleet Advantage	39	31	35.0	232.6	6.65
Wallwork Financial	23	23	23.0	144.0	6.26
First National Capital	40	43	41.5	242.3	5.84
Vision Financial Group	17	17	17.0	62.7	3.69
ICON Capital	89	106	97.5	358.5	3.68
Trans Lease	46	42	44.0	157.7	3.58
Northland Capital Financial ³	35	35	35.0	115.3	3.29
Ascentium Capital	156	134	145.0	440.0	3.03
First Financial Corporate	39	38	38.5	114.5	2.97
CCA Financial	37	35	36.0	106.7	2.96
ENGS Commerical Finance	76	65	70.5	206.0	2.92
Somerset Capital Group	82	73	77.5	214.6	2.77
Crossroads Equipment Lease & Finance	60	62	61.0	166.5	2.73
Jules and Associates	45	43	44.0	117.8	2.68
Med One Capital	50	50	50.0	132.6	2.65
Kingsbridge Holdings	69	71	70.0	180.2	2.57
Axis Capital	61	52	56.5	137.2	2.43
United Leasing (Indiana)	58	55	56.5	125.0	2.21
GreatAmerica Financial Services	386	396	391.0	737.7	1.89
Lease Corporation of America ²	85	76	80.5	117.7	1.46
LEAF Commercial Capital	235	228	231.5	321.1	1.39
CSI Leasing ¹	880	844	862.0	984.2	1.14
See footnotes on page 29.	2,664	2,572	2,618.0	5,834.0	2.23

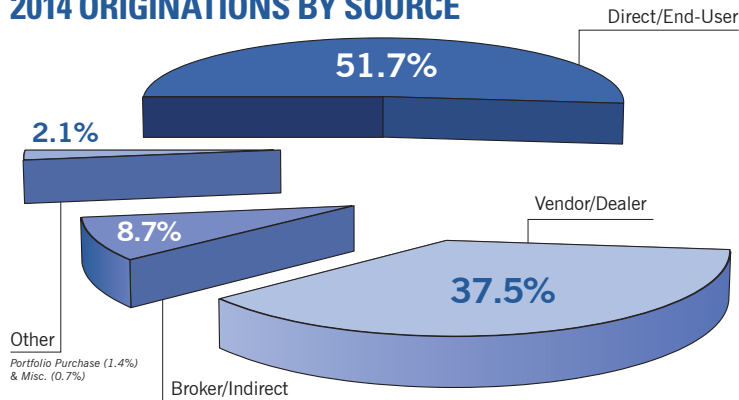
2014 RETROSPECTIVES

Each year we ask our participants to share their views and insights into the challenges and opportunities of the past year.

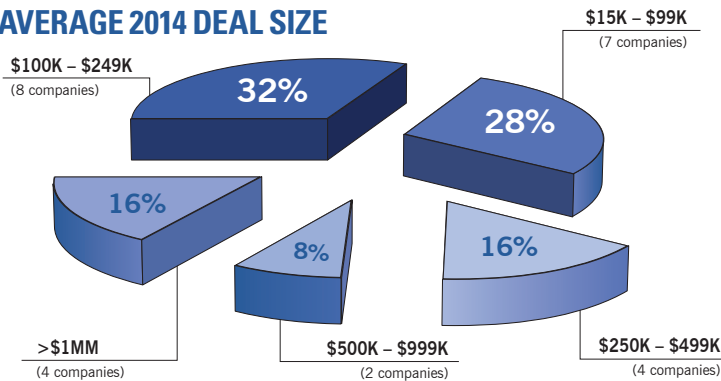
Much like one year ago, many of the *Top Private Independents* commented on the breadth and depth of competition present in the industry. Several noted that finding qualified staff members was also becoming increasingly difficult. The following noteworthy comments

are representative of the environment that existed for many during 2014. One said, "As the economy has improved, competition has continued to increase with more lenders and banks entering [back] into the transportation industry. This has included competition and demand for skilled talent." Another noted, "We saw a more competitive marketplace in our space with new entrants and pricing pressures. Also, finding qualified applicants to fill job openings has been a challenge."

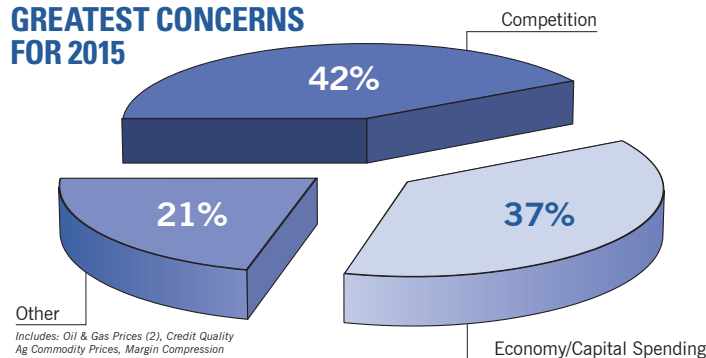
2014 ORIGINATIONS BY SOURCE



AVERAGE 2014 DEAL SIZE



GREATEST CONCERNS FOR 2015



FOCUS IN 2015

The need to attract and retain high-quality people is evidenced by the following insights provided by several who commented on this particular subject in their feedback. A top 10 respondent noted that the company's focus for 2015 would be "hiring effective salespeople to help grow our business." Another elaborated on this challenge by saying, "Our biggest need is to find the right people and retain those with us. There is a great deal of competition for quality people. An inability to find and retain the right caliber individuals will affect our business both short and long term."

2015 FORECAST

Indicative of what lies ahead was the positive nature of the forecasts that were provided by all of this year's *Top Private Independents*. With the exception of two participants that did not respond to this question, the remaining 23, or 92%, all said they anticipate volume growth in the current year. Anticipated volume growth forecasted ranged from a low of 4% all the way up to a high of 42%.

On an average-weighted basis, the outcome for an overall increase of 16.6% growth would translate into about \$968 million of new business volume in 2015. As an aside, last year's forecast called for an increase of 14.9%, or \$755 million, which was exceeded by a tad more than \$32 million. Assuming some semblance of a repeat performance in 2015, we have the real possibility that next year's *Top Private Independents* will surpass the \$7 billion threshold.

SUMMARY

Given the competitive nature of the environment, we can't help but be impressed by the overall performance of this year's *Top Private Independents*. In some ways, perhaps disadvantaged, the large majority of this year's participants held their own against formidable competition, i.e., the banks that are hustling to build earning assets. Evidence of this trend continuing is shown by the overall forecast for 2015, which, if realized, will bring this group of entrepreneurs to a new level of achievement. We can only watch and listen from the sidelines as the reality of 2015 unfolds and we get to revisit the outcome in next year's salute to the *Top Private Independents*.

We extend a sincere note of thanks for all those who once again participated in this annual event. To those who are new to the rankings, we welcome your interest. And we'd be remiss if we didn't recognize the loss of **Direct Capital**, last year's #4-ranked independent, who was acquired by **CIT Group** in late 2014. We end on a related subject by suggesting you turn to page 44 to read **The Alta Group's** Bruce Kropschot's latest take on what's happening in the world of M&A. ■

ABOUT THE SURVEY: BASIS FOR RANKING

To meet the criteria for selection, companies that qualify must be privately owned with equity provided by the individual owners and/or private investors.

Participants were asked to provide full-year data relating to funded new business volume, which was to include information pertaining to equipment-related loans and leases only.

We also collect information such as staffing levels, origination and funding sources, average deal size, etc. Once received, the data was compiled, checked for accuracy and formatted for this report.

A company's position in the **Monitor's Top Private Independents** ranking is based solely on its funded new business volume.

Questions/Participation Inquiries:

Please contact Rita Garwood at rgarwood@monitordaily.com.

2015 Top Private Independents Index

ALPHABETICAL BY COMPANY NAME

COMPANY BUSINESS HEAD	RANK		VOLUME	DEAL SIZE	EMPLOYEES YE/14	ORIGINATION DATA	LOCATION/URL
	2014	ESTABLISHED & SCOPE	2014 (\$=MILLIONS)	AVG 2014 (\$=THOUSANDS)		SOURCE MIX % (VNR/DIR/BRKR-INDIR/OTHER) TOP ASSET CLASSES	HEADQUARTERS (city, st) WEBSITE
Ascentium Capital Tom Depping	3	2011 National	440.0	56.0	156	80/7/14/0 Medical, Furniture/Fixtures, IT	Kingwood, TX ascentiumcapital.com
Axis Capital Gordon Glade	15	1996 National	137.2	84.9	61	92/0/0/8 Mfg, Construction, Truck/Trailer	Grand Island, NE axiscapitalinc.com
CCA Financial Kim Albers	22	1972 National	106.7	108.0	37	7/58/18/17 IT, Mats Handling, Furniture	Richmond, VA ccafinancial.com
Crossroads Equip Lse & Fin Jeffrey Macartney	12	2006 National	166.5	115.5	60	38/30/32/0 Truck/Trailer, Construction	Rancho Cucamonga, CA crlease.com
CSI Leasing¹ Kenneth B. Steinback	1	1972 International	984.2	250.0	880	0/96/0/4 IT, Telecom	St. Louis, MO csileasing.com
ENGS Commercial Finance Craig Weinenuth	10	1952 National	206.0	80.0	76	83/11/2/4 Truck/Trailer, Const, Mach Tools/Plastics	Lisle, IL engsfinance.com
First Financial Corporate Tom Stevin / Richard Stebbins	21	2000 National	114.5	354.0	39	24/60/16/0 Medical, Mats Handling, IT	Placenta, CA ffcsi.com
First National Capital Keith Duggan	6	2005 National	242.3	1781.8	40	5/95/0/0 Energy Related, Air (Corp), Construction	Foothill Ranch, CA firstncc.com
Fleet Advantage John J. Flynn	8	2008 National	232.6	2236.5	39	0/100/0/0 Truck/Trailer	Ft. Lauderdale, FL fleetadvantage.net
Forsythe Technology William P. Brennan	23	1971 National	100.0	800.0	12	0/100/0/0 IT	Skokie, IL forsythe.com
Great Atlantic Capital Jeff Shaner	24	2000 National	81.0	608.8	7	22/78/0/0 Printing, Plastic Packaging, Mfg	Hackensack, NJ greatatlanticcapital.com
GreatAmerica Financial Tony Golobic	2	1994 National	737.7	15.6	386	97/0/3/0 Office Related, Telecom, Medical	Cedar Rapids, IA greatamerica.com
ICON Capital Michael Reisner	4	1985 International	358.5	59745.0	89	0/71/29/0 Marine, Manufacturing, Truck/Trailer	New York, NY iconinvestments.com
Jules and Associates Jules Buenabenta	18	1989 National	117.8	250.0	45	0/100/0/0 Mfg, Truck/Trailer, Mach Tools/Plastics	Los Angeles, CA julesandassociates.com
Kingsbridge Holdings Dan Flagstad	11	2006 National	180.2	111.6	69	7/84/9/0 IT, Mats Handling, Medical	Lake Forest, IL kingsbridgeholdings.com
LEAF Commercial Capital Crit DeMent	5	2011 National	321.1	17.9	235	100/0/0/0 Office Related, Telecom, IT	Philadelphia, PA leafnow.com
Lease Corporation of America² John B. Kemp	19	1988 National	117.7	28.8	85	72/0/21/7 Telecom, Office Related, POS	Troy, MI leasecorp.com
Med One Capital Larry Stevens	16	1991 National	132.6	200.0	50	85/15/0/0 Medical	Sandy, UT medonecapital.com
Nations Equipment Finance Phil Carlson	7	2010 International	238.1	1350.0	37	0/77/23/0 Truck/Trailer, Const, Energy Related	Norwalk, CT nationsequipmentfinance.com
Northland Capital Financial³ Willis Kleinjan	20	1996 National	115.3	61.3	35	37/48/15/0 Agriculture, Truck/Trailer, Construction	Saint Cloud, MN northlandcapital.com
Somerset Capital Group Evan Bokor	9	1984 International	214.6	490.0	82	4/70/26/0 Semiconductor Mfg, Mats Handling, IT	Milford, CT somersetcapital.com
Trans Lease Brian Eschmann	13	1993 National	157.7	120.7	46	39/61/0/0 Truck/Trailer, Energy Related, Const	Commerce City, CO transleaseinc.com
United Leasing (Indiana) Ronald D. Romain	17	1964 National	125.0	130.0	58	16/66/18/0 Transportation, Fitness, Medical	Evansville, IN unitedevv.com
Vision Financial Group Fred Summers	25	1991 National	62.7	150.0	17	15/83/0/2 Mats Handling, IT, Manufacturing	Pittsburgh, PA vfgusa.com
Wallwork Financial William Wallwork III	14	1952 National	144.0	180.5	23	18/33/22/26 Truck/Trailer, Const, Energy Related	Fargo, ND wallworkfinancial.com
			5,834.0	2,773.1	2,664		

FOOTNOTES:

¹ CSI Leasing
YE 6/30/2014

² Lease Corporation of America
YE 11/30/2014

³ Northland Capital Financial
YE 8/31/2014