

Dartmouth

Women in Private Equity Mid-market breakfast

Key learnings and insights

Introduction

It was a pleasure to welcome such an engaged group of professionals at the outset of their careers to discuss “What makes a successful career in the mid-market private equity industry?”

Our partnering firms delivered an informative keynote speaker and an open, honest panel discussion that explored the many pathways into private equity – and the diverse skill sets that will help you thrive once you’re there. Together, we looked beyond the traditional perception of PE as purely financial, concluding that strategy, collaboration, and people skills are just as essential as technical expertise.

Our speakers shared invaluable advice on how you can prepare for the transition into private equity, how to build confidence in the early years of your career, and how to sustain motivation and resilience in a demanding industry. The conversation highlighted that there is no single blueprint for success – private equity is a diverse ecosystem with space for all types of talent and ambition.

To help you reflect on the discussion and continue your development journey, we’ve compiled some of the key takeaways and actionable insights from the session – from building your professional foundations to finding your voice and navigating your next steps in the industry.





Key themes and insights

Across the morning's discussions, five key themes emerged that captured what it truly takes to build a fulfilling and successful career in private equity. The speakers emphasised the importance of establishing strong foundations early on – combining technical ability with commercial awareness and interpersonal skills that foster collaboration and trust.

1. Private Equity is a village

Private equity thrives on diversity of thought and collaboration. It's not just about investors and deal teams – it's a network of people across operations, value creation, fundraising, and portfolio support. You don't have to fit a single mould to succeed; identify where your strengths lie and how you can add value to the wider ecosystem.

2. Build strong foundations and stay curious

A successful transition into private equity starts with strong professional foundations. Develop your commercial awareness, financial fluency, and communication skills early. Curiosity is what sets great professionals apart – ask thoughtful questions, learn from those around you, and take every opportunity to understand each stage of the deal cycle.

3. Find the environment that fits you

The right firm will align with your working style and ambitions. Mid-market teams often offer greater exposure, broader responsibilities, and close collaboration with management. Culture matters: speak to people across firms, explore their fund trajectories, and consider where you'll learn and grow the most.

4. Confidence, balance, and boundaries

Early-career progression can be demanding, but managing your energy is essential. Be confident in your ideas and contribute to discussions – your perspective matters. Equally, know when to pause. Set boundaries, communicate clearly, and remember that success is built on consistency and motivation, not overextension.

“People care if you’re motivated and switched on – no one’s impressed by 4am emails anymore.”



5. Keep evolving – skills, technology and perspective

As your career develops, so will the skills that matter most. Attention to detail and technical execution will give way to leadership, prioritisation, and strategic vision. AI and data tools are already reshaping diligence, efficiency, and communication in PE – understanding them now will keep you ahead of the curve. This industry rewards those who stay adaptable and open to change.

In closing

Our mid-market Women in Private Equity breakfast reinforced that there is no single path to success in this industry. What matters most is curiosity, adaptability, and confidence – knowing your strengths, asking questions, and building a network of people who support and challenge you.

Private equity needs more voices like yours: people who think differently, collaborate deeply, and approach business with creativity and conviction.

We look forward to continuing the conversation at our future events focused on careers in private equity. If you want information on what we have coming up, speak with one of our Private Equity consultants.

A special thanks to our 2026 speakers and partnering firms for sharing their time to make the morning conversations such a success:

charterhouse 

inflexion 

eci  building
successful
businesses

TOWERBROOK

EMK Capital
Enterprise Management Knowledge


Oakley Capital

Breaking into Private Equity

Breaking into private equity can be competitive, but the presentation and panel discussion reinforced that it's achievable with the right preparation, mindset, and support. Below are a few key ways to focus your efforts as you take the next step.

Building your foundations

Start by strengthening the skills that will help you stand out. For those coming from banking, focus on developing commercial judgement and a deeper understanding of business operations beyond the numbers. If you're in consulting, build financial modelling experience and exposure to transactions. Above all, stay curious – ask questions, learn from peers, and connect with mentors who can guide your development.

Understanding the interview process

PE interviews go beyond technical knowledge – they're designed to test how you think. Firms want to see your commercial reasoning: how you evaluate investment opportunities, identify risks, and articulate where value can be created. Expect conversations that explore your perspective on deals, growth strategies, and the industries you know best. Confidence and curiosity are just as important as precision – communicate clearly, think logically, and don't be afraid to show your enthusiasm for the work.

How to prepare

Make use of resources like Case in Point and Peak Frameworks to sharpen your commercial thinking and case study approach. Review investment memorandums, even those outside your sector, and practise analysing them as if you were on the deal team. Research each firm's fund strategy, recent investments, and culture to show genuine interest and alignment.

Breaking into private equity is a journey built on persistence, preparation, and perspective. Keep refining your skills, expanding your network, and staying open to learning, and you'll be ready to take your next step with confidence.

How our Private Equity team can help your career

At Dartmouth, we're passionate about helping exceptional talent find their place in private equity. Whether you're just beginning to explore the space or ready to take your next step in the industry, our specialist team can guide you through each stage of the process.

We work with leading large cap, mid-market, and growth funds – giving you access to opportunities across investment, value creation, and investor relations roles. Our consultants bring a deep understanding of what firms look for, from the technical and commercial skills to the personal qualities that make a lasting impact in the industry.

For early career professionals, we act as both advisor and advocate. We'll help you refine your position, prepare for interviews, and support connecting you with the right firms for your ambitions and experience. Our goal is to demystify the private equity hiring process and help you approach it with confidence, insight, and clarity.

Private equity is a competitive space, but with the right preparation and guidance, it's open to a wide range of talent. We're here to help you make that move.

Interested in learning more?

We'd love to hear from you!

Whether you require support with existing processes, want more information about specific areas of our offering, or are interested in learning further about the PE industry, please contact us to schedule an introductory conversation.

privateequity@dartmouthpartners.com