

19 February 2020

## WHAT FUNDING IS RIGHT FOR MY BUSINESS?



Jeremy Cole, front row, left

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 Insider magazine brought together dealmakers and funders, including Jeremy Cole of Cole Associates at Arbutnot Latham's offices in Manchester to shed light on the options and landscape of our region. From corporate financiers, to private equity houses to deal-making lawyers this round table debated and explained the funding landscape as it is now and as it will be in the years to come.

For businesses at different stages of their journey, there are many different options for funding, but it's hard to know what options there are, how to access it and when.

Whether your company is trying to scale up, grow through acquisition, seek investment or even buy new machinery, there are a wealth of options and funders.

Jeremy Cole spoke at the Roundtable:

### Jeremy Cole, Cole Associates

My background was PwC. In 2002 I decided to set up my own shop, mainly because I like working in the Owner Managed Business Sector whereas the large international accountancy firms focus on the mega deals. Since then it's been great. We have three professional staff, 12-16 transactions on the go at any one time. It's a mixture of advising, selling shareholders on selling mandates, advising on acquisitions, so that might be management buyouts or buy-ins, or corporate acquisitions. The other area is growth capital where businesses are looking to raise capital in anticipation of the growth of the business.

We are chartered accountants but it's all corporate finance work. One sector that we look at that banks shy away from is companies servicing the construction sector. With the mainstream banks if you mention the construction sector you are immediately in the wrong side of the discussion with them. Yet we have worked with a large number of really successful businesses providing services into the construction sector.

We don't work necessarily with construction companies but people putting in for example mechanical and electrical engineering into a new building. It comes to, if you have a really good management team and a well-run business that almost rides above the sector they are in.

Other sectors include online retail. We have done a few transactions in the bathroom retail sector, both online and bricks and mortar. There's a wall of money out there so our job is to look at the specific client's circumstances and match the right jigsaw piece of funding with that situation. We have to deal with misconceptions, for example venture capital and private equity often clients have preconceptions. You have to deal with those, similarly with debt funds. The media often portray private equity as overly controlling investors who will go in and bulldoze and company's culture, which is inappropriate. It may have applied in the 1980s but it's nothing like that now.

