



Outsourced Custom Software Development Market Report

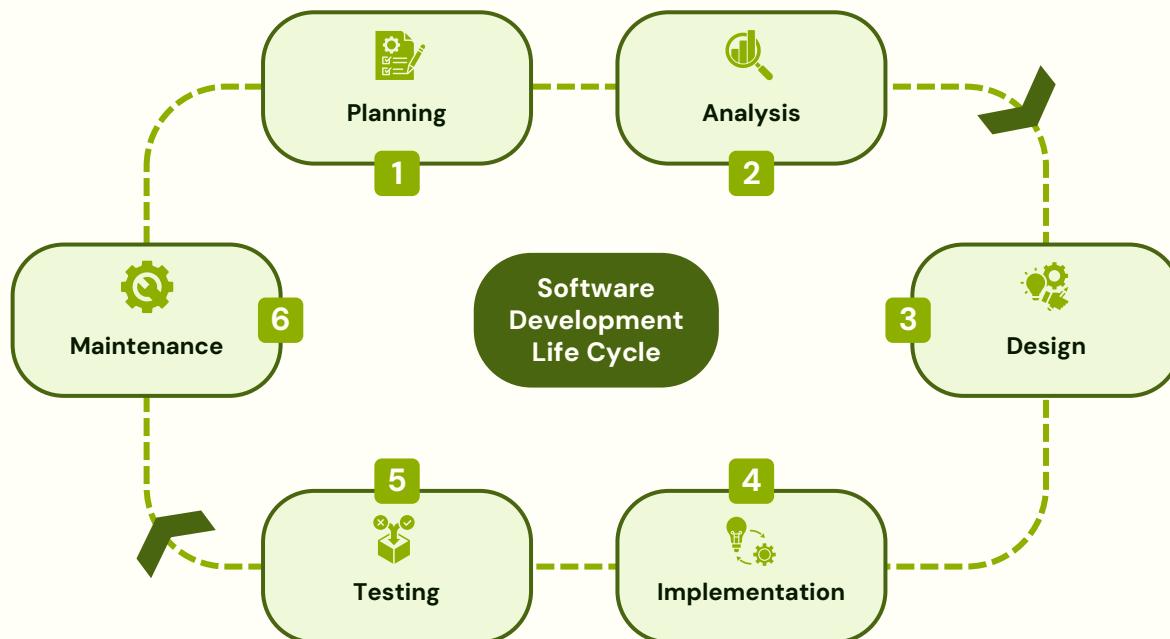
February 2026

Custom software development spans the full software lifecycle and over the last three decades, has evolved rapidly to address increasingly complex business needs



What is Custom Software Development?

- Custom software development involves the creation of purpose-built software designed to support the specific requirements of an organisation encompassing a range of capabilities across the software development life cycle
- Unlike standardised, off-the-shelf products, these are developed or materially customised to align closely with the organisation's processes and objectives



Custom software development has evolved from narrowly scoped, internally built systems into highly scalable, cloud-enabled platforms, shaped by advances in infrastructure, development methodologies, and intelligent technologies that increasingly support complex, data-driven business models

1980s to 1990s

Predominantly in-house or vendor-built solutions, focused on core functionality with limited scalability and flexibility

2000s

Web technologies and open-source frameworks expand scalability and lower development costs, supporting broader enterprise adoption

2010s

Cloud infrastructure, mobile platforms, and agile delivery models enable rapid development cycles, continuous releases, and closer business alignment.

2020s

Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, and connected technologies drive more intelligent, automated, and industry-specific custom software solutions

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Market Overview
- III. Recent M&A Activity
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Executive Summary



Companies are increasing spend on custom software development as digital transformation is accelerating in all sectors



Software outsourcing is led by the US and India, supported by widespread industry use and more affordable pricing in offshore regions



Deal volumes have softened, with trade and PE⁽¹⁾ buyers being more selective for custom software development companies



CEE⁽²⁾ remains a highly active M&A market, led by strong local acquirers and sustained foreign buyer interest



c.23%

Global custom software development market CAGR⁽³⁾ 2025 – 2030



\$6.1 trillion

Global IT spend expected in 2026 – an increase of c.10% from 2025 levels



c.46%

CIOs⁽⁴⁾ identify automation and AI as their top priorities for the next five-years



600+

Number of deals in the custom software development space since 2021

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Global custom software development market is expected to grow at a c.23% CAGR⁽¹⁾ to 2030 driven by digital transformation and AI⁽²⁾ adoption trends

1 North America, Europe and Asia are major OCSD⁽³⁾ markets with many sub-50-employee firms, reflecting a fragmented global landscape



- NA and Europe account for c.60% of the global market with roughly equal shares
- 76% of all global firms have headcount fewer than 50 people

2 Software outsourcing is led by the US and India, supported by widespread industry use and more affordable pricing in offshore regions



- USA leads globally followed by India while Ukraine, Poland and UK lead in Europe
- India tops the list of most cost-effective tech talent markets while Poland, Romania and Ukraine follow

3 Global IT spend is forecast to reach \$6.1 trillion by 2026, rising c.10% from 2025 driven by investment into AI, cloud-based tech & digital infrastructure



- Data centre systems are growing fastest as companies race to build AI infrastructure
- Software spend is growing fast, driven by AI upgrades and higher-priced features

4 Accelerating AI spend is driving demand for custom software development, as enterprises seek clarity of returns amid talent and execution constraints



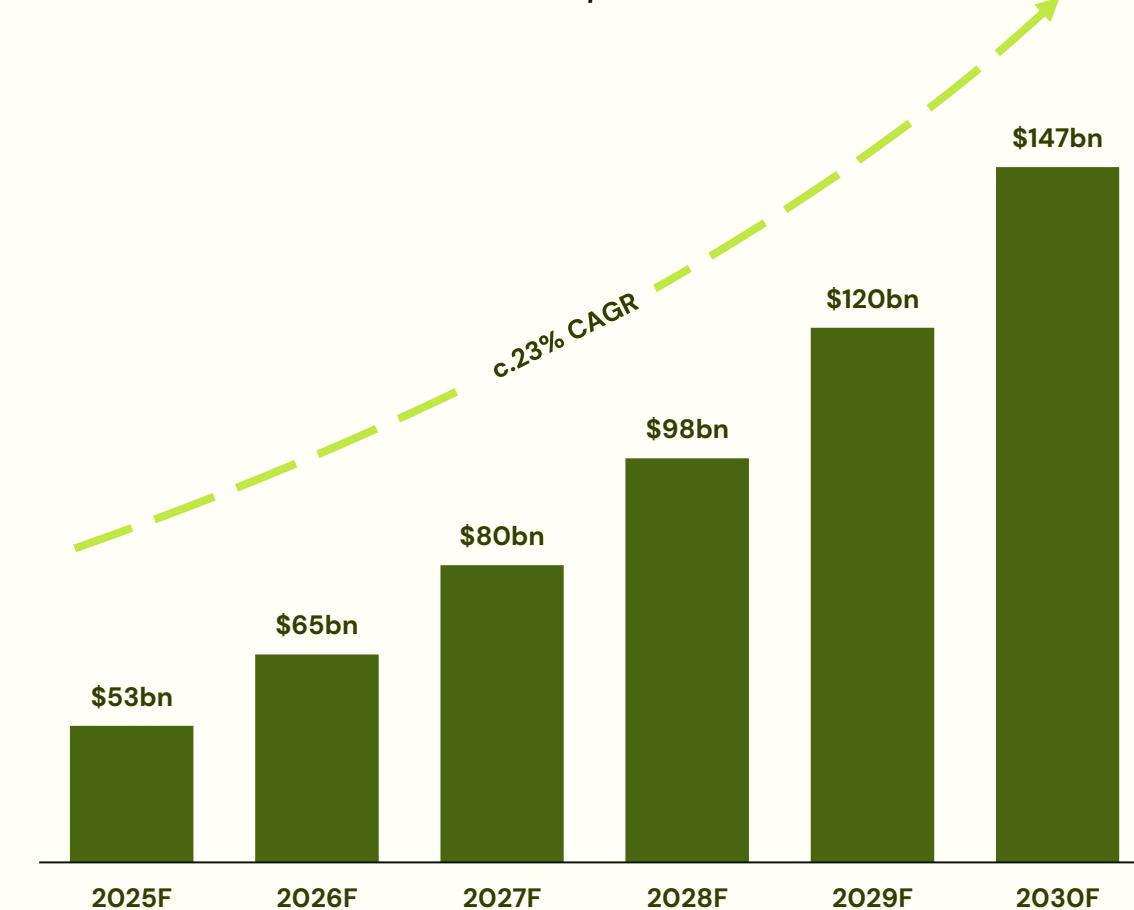
- AI spending continues to accelerate and is expected to double in 2026 from 2024 levels, driven by sustained investment in AI infrastructure
- AI and automation are top priority for C-suite leaders along with return on investment

5 Recent industry transactions reveal buyer priorities, with a strong focus on enhancing delivery capabilities and strengthening existing platforms



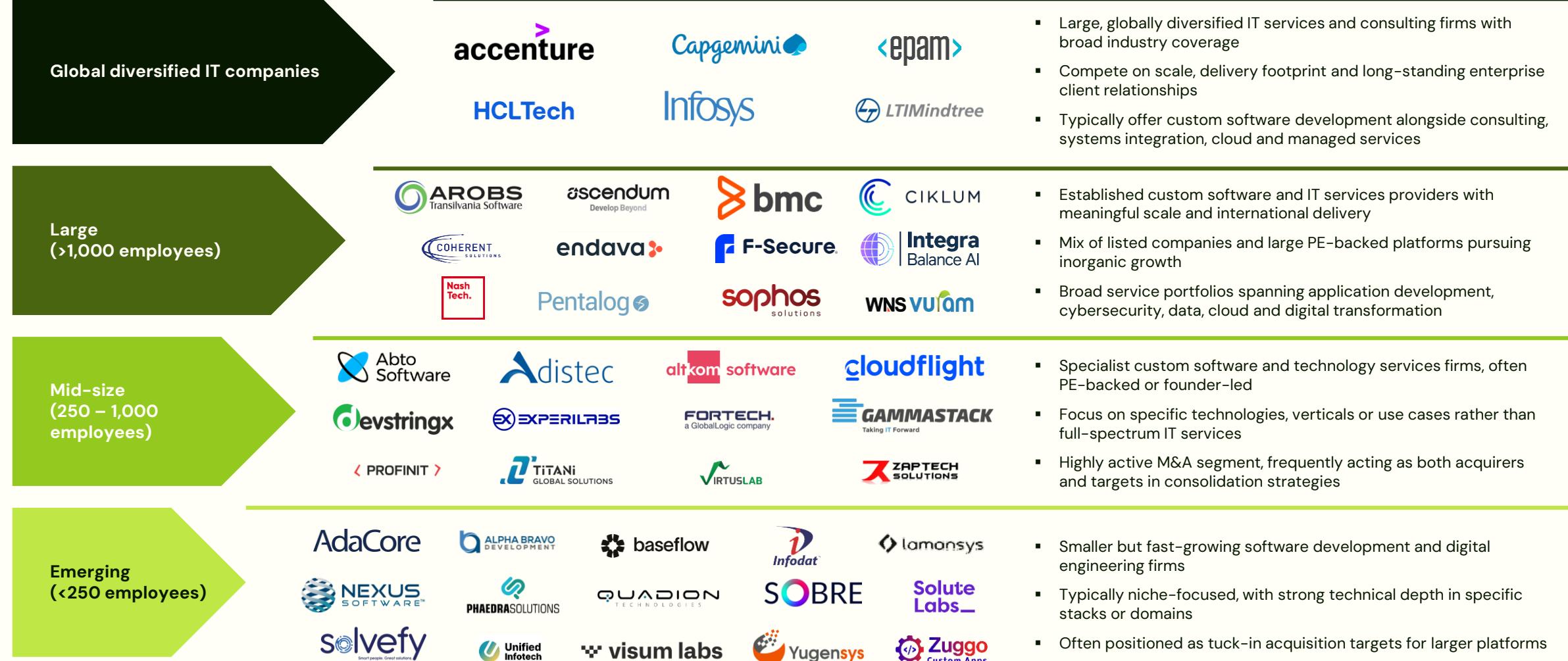
- Buyers have prioritised assets with stable revenues and clear growth potential
- Favourable sector dynamics and a highly fragmented landscape continue to draw investors seeking scalable consolidation platforms

Global Outsourced Custom Software Development market



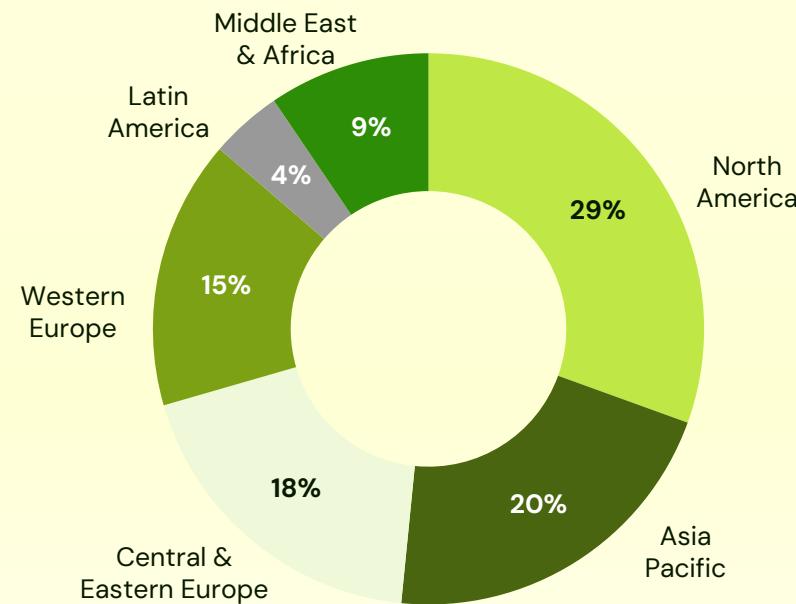
The global OCSD is fragmented, ranging from large, multinational generalists to small regional specialists

Sample of ecosystem players



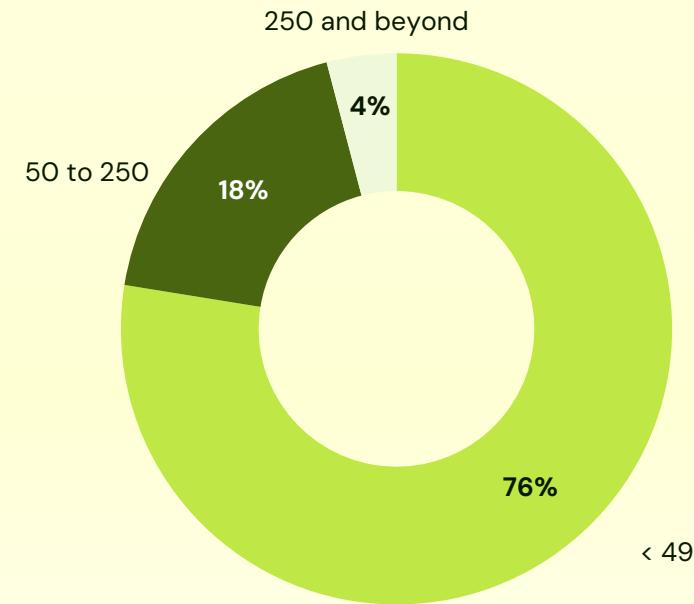
North America, Europe and Asia represent major OCSD markets, each characterised by a large number of firms with fewer than 50 employees

Breakdown by Custom Software Development company headquarters



The market is globally fragmented, led by Europe and North America, while Asia Pacific has established itself as an important third centre rather than a purely offshore base

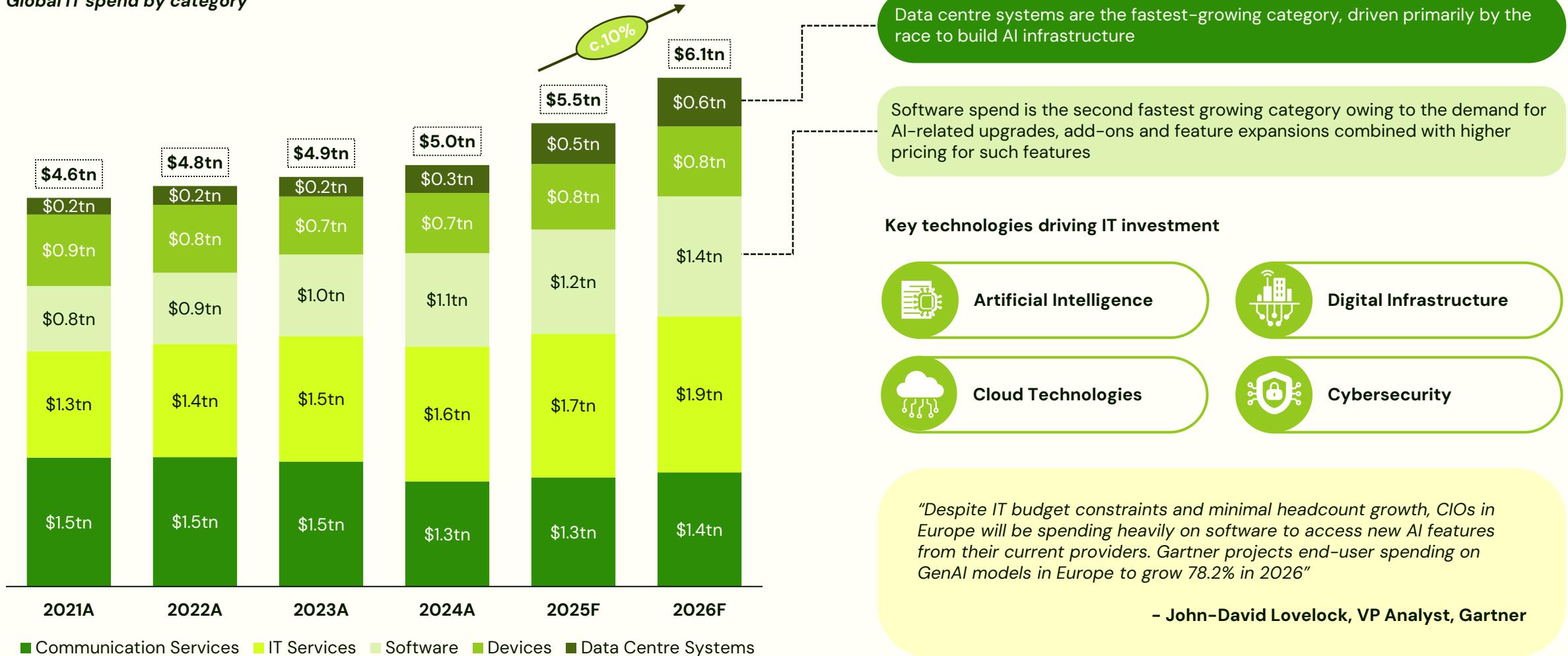
Breakdown by Custom Software Development company headcount



Based on size, the landscape is dominated by firms consisting of fewer than 50 people, highlighting low barriers to entry and competitive pressure on pricing and talent retention

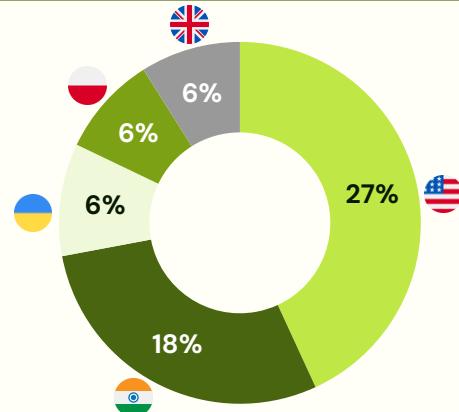
Global IT spend is forecast to reach \$6.1 trillion by 2026, rising c.10% from 2025 driven by investment into AI, cloud-based tech & digital infrastructure

Global IT spend by category



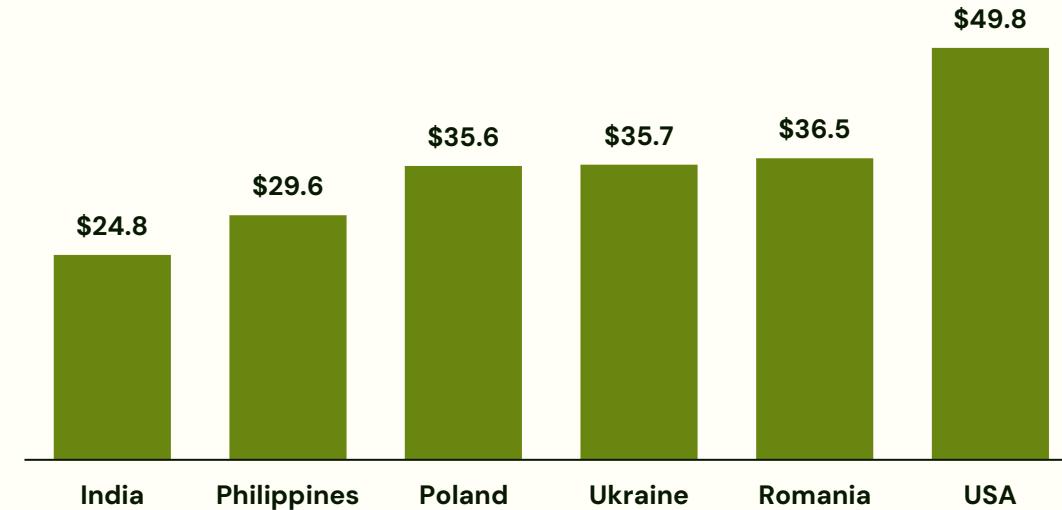
Software outsourcing is led by the US and India, supported by widespread industry use and more affordable pricing in offshore regions

Global share of Top 5 software development destinations by number of firms

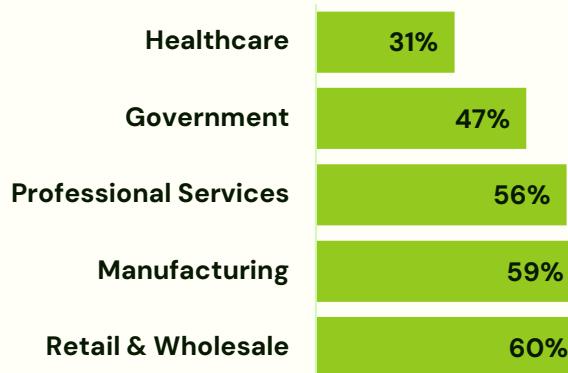


- USA leads globally, reflecting the strength of its startup ecosystem and access to capital
- India is second supported by a large, cost-effective talent pool
- Ukraine, Poland and UK dominate the European markets

Average hourly rates by region (US\$)



Software development outsourcing proportion by Industry



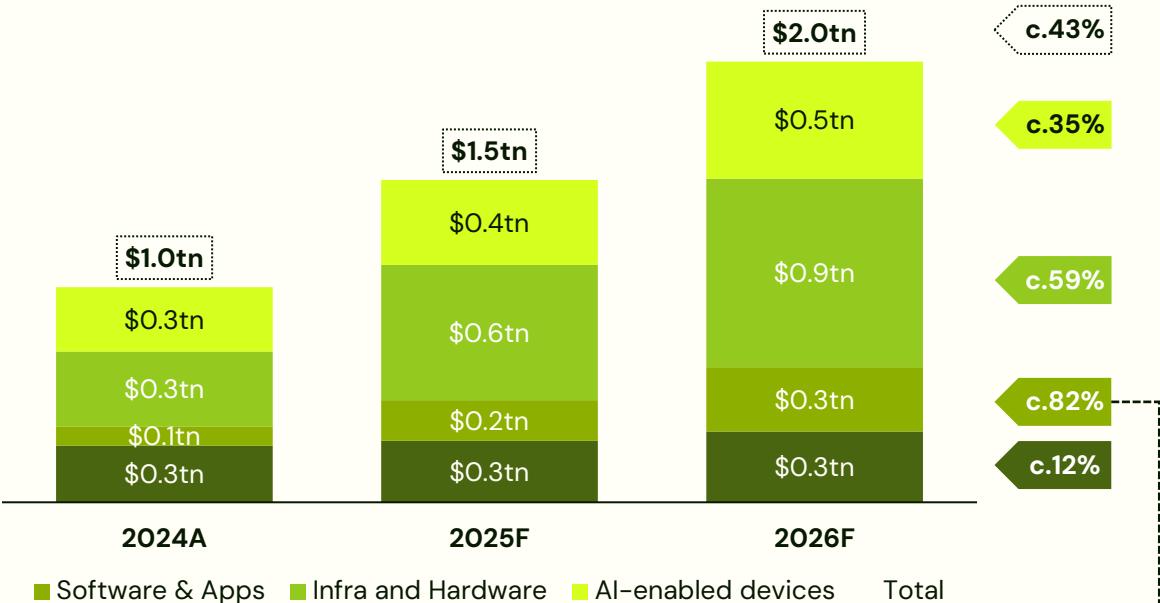
Application development outsourcing is already mainstream in commercial sectors like retail and manufacturing, while lower penetration in government and healthcare highlights longer-term growth potential for custom software developers

- India tops the list of most cost-effective tech talent markets in 2025
- 36% of all firms charge less than \$35/hour and only the top 25% of firms charge above \$50/hour, meaning premium pricing is the exception, not the rule
- This pricing spread shows that affordable development is widely accessible, especially in leading cost-efficient markets like India, the Philippines, and Poland
- Meanwhile, firms in the US and UK charge premium pricing rates being closer to market demand and relatively higher labour costs

Accelerating AI spend is driving demand for custom software development, as enterprises seek clarity of returns amid talent and execution constraints

AI spending continues to accelerate and is expected to double in 2026 from 2024 levels, driven by sustained investment in AI infrastructure and growing integration of AI into devices such as PCs⁽¹⁾ and smartphones

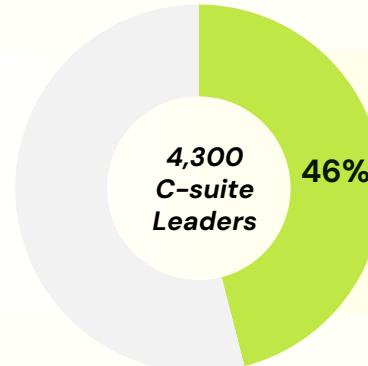
Global AI spending



AI software is the fastest growing area of investment under AI spend, clearly demonstrating the demand for custom software developers to build and integrate bespoke AI applications

While AI and automation are top priority for C-suite leaders, uncertainty of return on investment from AI, and talent shortages continue to persist

% of CIOs prioritising AI in the next 5 years



46% of CIOs⁽²⁾ and 43% of CEOs identify automation and AI as their top priority for the next five-years..

...but are placing sharper scrutiny on investment results, identifying benefits realisation as their primary measure of ROI⁽³⁾

% of C-suite executives highlighting IT talent shortages



98% of executives say IT talent shortages are hindering their technology goals...

...with most reporting a significant impact, driving nearly all organisations to increase outsourcing of key IT services

Recent industry transactions reveal buyer priorities, with a strong focus on enhancing delivery capabilities and strengthening existing platforms

Oct-25



Vitec acquired 80% of NMG, Poland's market-leading provider of mission-critical energy management software. The deal expands Vitec into Poland and strengthens its position in vertical market software, with full ownership planned by 2028



Feb-25



Amdocs acquired Profinit, a Czech-based data science and software engineering firm, to strengthen its European delivery capabilities and expand its custom software, data management, and AI offering across CEE⁽¹⁾. In 2023 Profinit had 500+ engineers and €37m revenue

Apr-24



Infosys agreed to acquire in-tech, a Germany-based engineering R&D⁽²⁾ services provider focused on the automotive sector, to strengthen its mobility engineering capabilities and deepen its presence with German OEMs⁽³⁾. The company was acquired for ~€450m (~\$480m)

Feb-24



KKCG agreed to acquire Avenga, an end-to-end software engineering and consulting platform, to build a leading European digital transformation group alongside Qinshift and expand its presence in Europe and North America, particularly in healthcare & pharma and custom software development



Aug-23



Insight Enterprises acquired Amdaris, a UK-based software development and digital consulting firm with Eastern European delivery centres, to scale its application solutions business and broaden its software development, managed services and digital consulting capabilities across EMEA⁽⁴⁾

Jul-23



HCLTech acquired ASAP Group, a German automotive engineering services provider, to strengthen its Engineering R&D⁽²⁾ offering in future-mobility areas. The company was acquired for ~€250m (~\$280m)

Jan-23



Cognizant acquired Mobica, a UK-based IoT⁽⁴⁾ and embedded-software engineering services provider with a large Polish delivery footprint, to expand its embedded software capabilities and deepen its presence in technology and automotive verticals. The company was acquired for ~£250m (~\$335m)



Sep-22



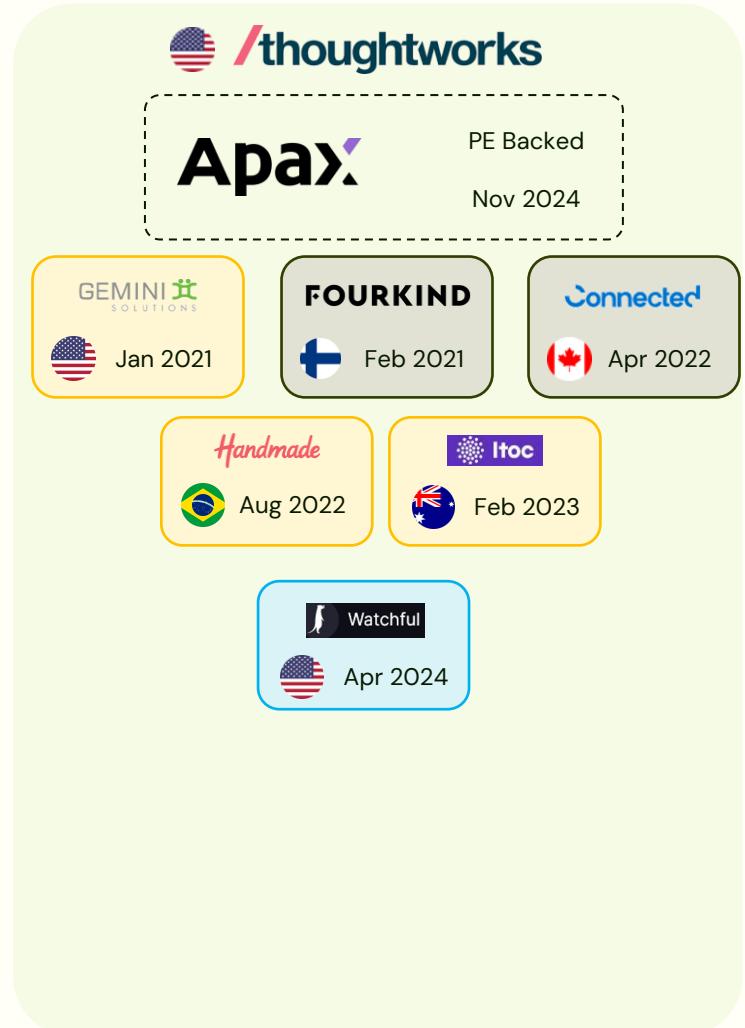
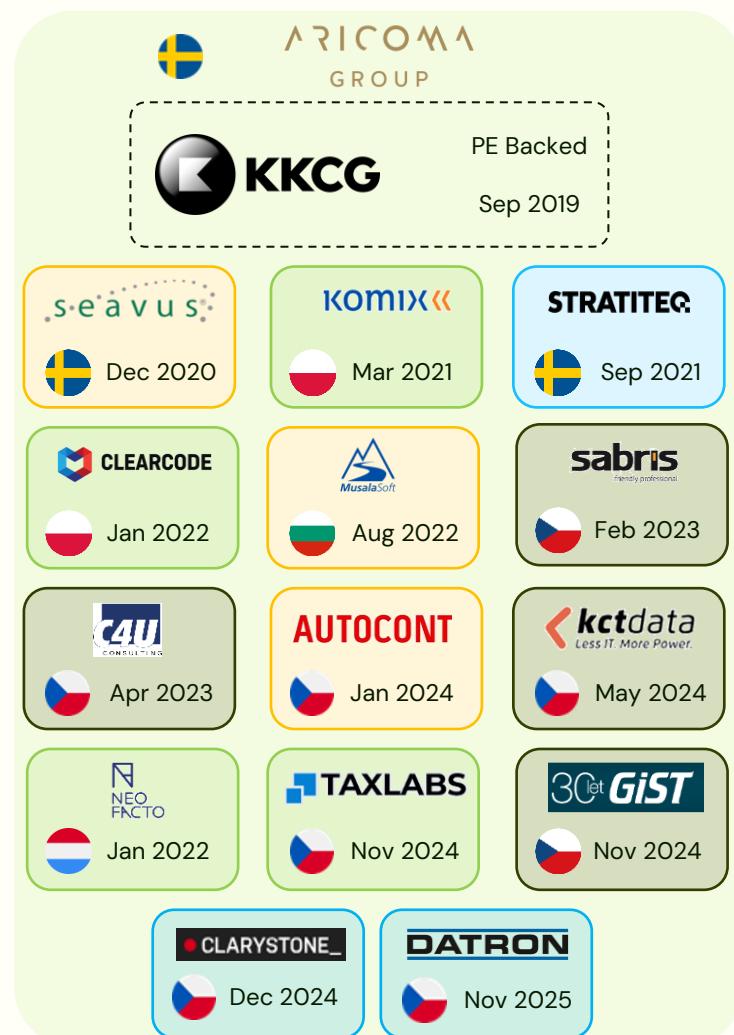
GlobalLogic acquired Fortech, a Romanian digital engineering firm with ~1100 engineers, to bolster its European footprint, access Romania's engineering talent pool, and meet growing demand for digital transformation services

Apr-22



Partners Group agreed to acquire a majority stake in Version 1, an Irish IT services and digital transformation provider, to support its next phase of organic and inorganic growth, in a transaction valuing the company at ~€800m

Favourable sector dynamics and a highly fragmented landscape continue to draw investors seeking scalable consolidation platforms (1/3)



Favourable sector dynamics and a highly fragmented landscape continue to draw investors seeking scalable consolidation platforms (2/3)



MidEuropa

PE Backed
Feb 2019



May 2021



Nov 2021



Nov 2021



EQT

PE Backed
Oct 2024

TALOS

Sept 2021

Overactive

Oct 2021

Inflection Point

Sep 2022

Ameex

Oct 2022

SMEDIX

Jan 2024

Kelley Austin

Oct 2025



EQT

PE Backed
Feb 2021

chojuu

Oct 2022



Jul 2023

BRIGHT

Feb 2024



Apr 2024

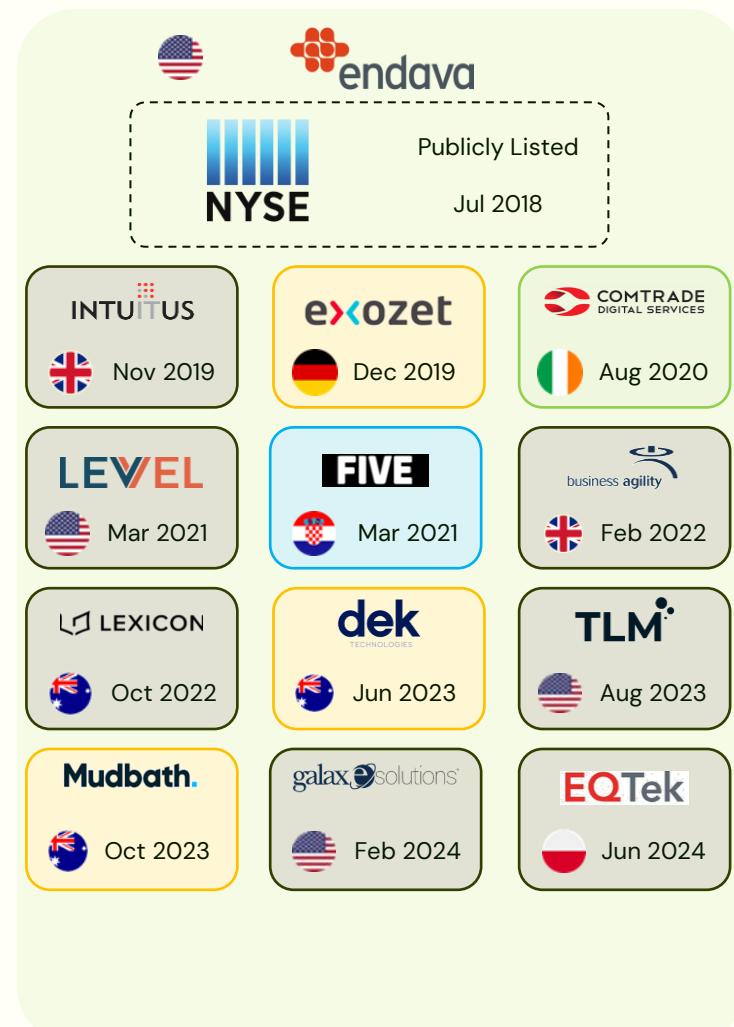
MAV3RIK

May 2025



Jul 2025

Favourable sector dynamics and a highly fragmented landscape continue to draw investors seeking scalable consolidation platforms (3/3)



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Global deal activity is led by the US and Western Europe as buyers focus on scaling through acquisition of high-quality assets and local platforms

1

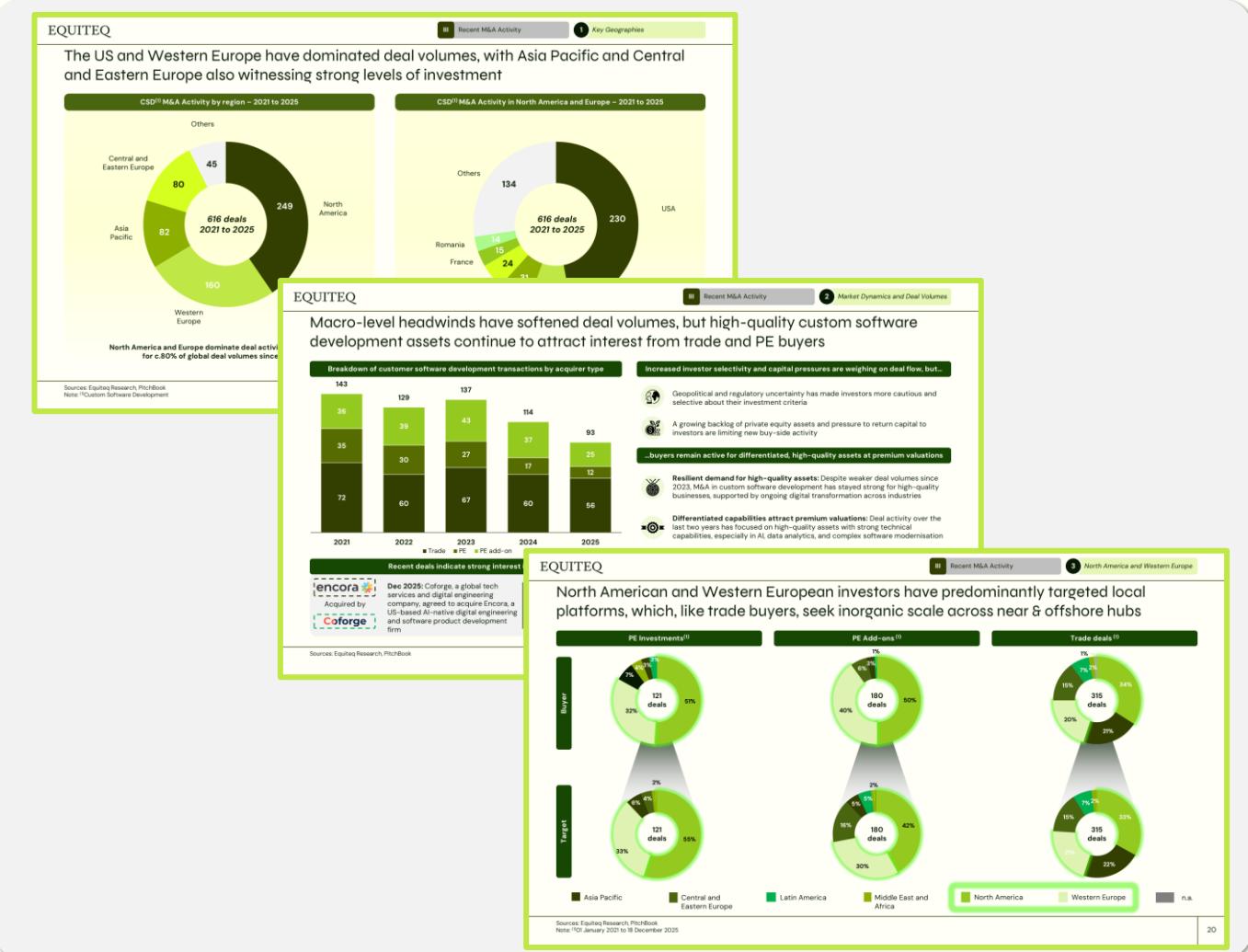
The US and Western Europe have dominated deal volumes, with Asia Pacific and Central and Eastern Europe also witnessing strong levels of investment

2

Macro-level headwinds have softened deal volumes, but high-quality custom software development assets continue to attract interest from trade and PE buyers

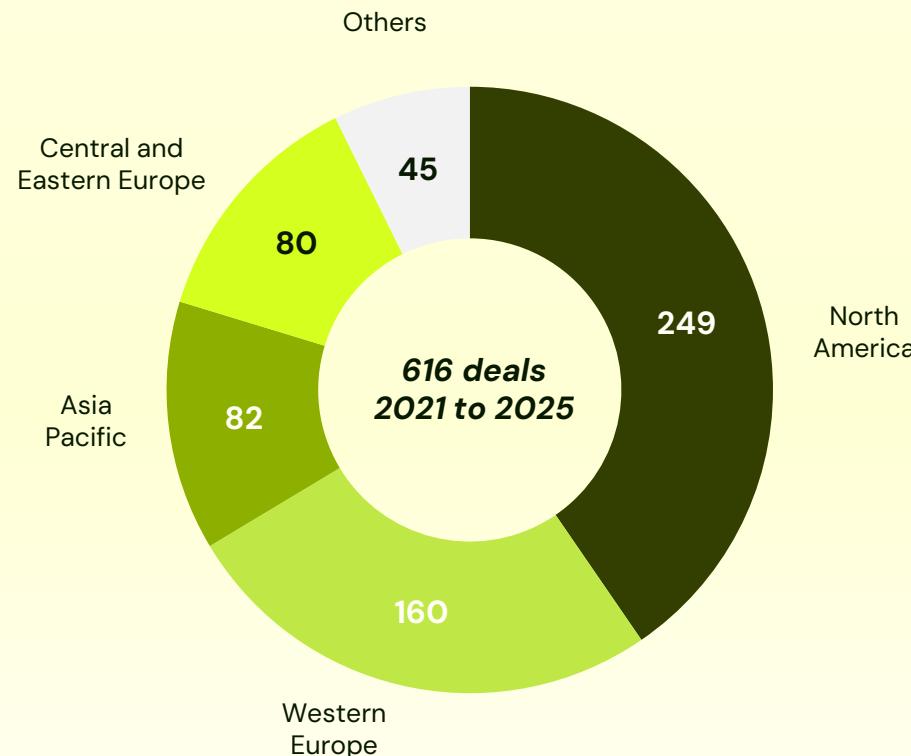
3

North American and Western European investors have predominantly targeted local platforms, which, like trade buyers, seek inorganic scale across near & offshore hubs



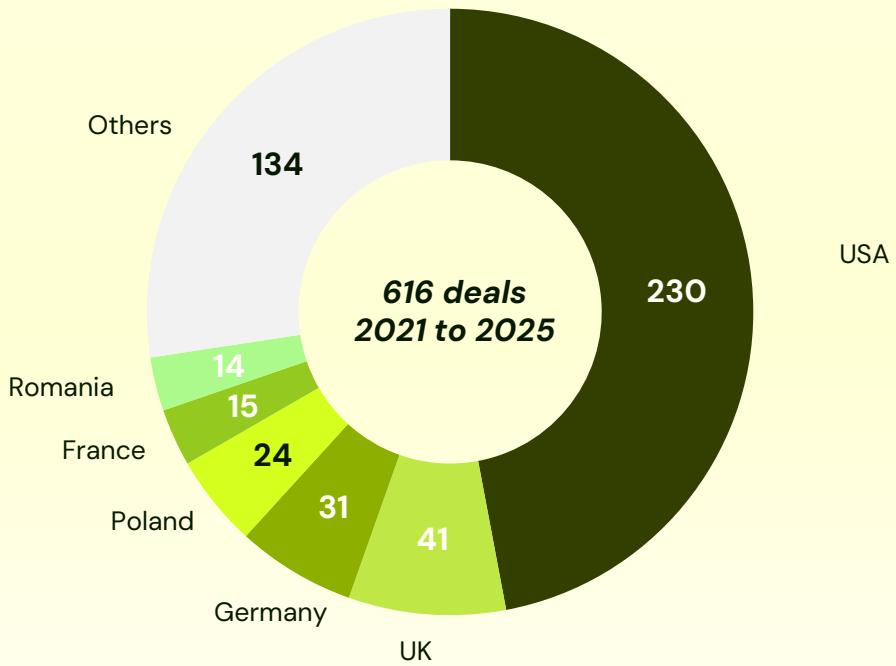
The US and Western Europe have dominated deal volumes, with Asia Pacific and Central and Eastern Europe also witnessing strong levels of investment

CSD⁽¹⁾ M&A Activity by region – 2021 to 2025



North America and Europe dominate deal activity, accounting for c.80% of global deal volumes since 2021

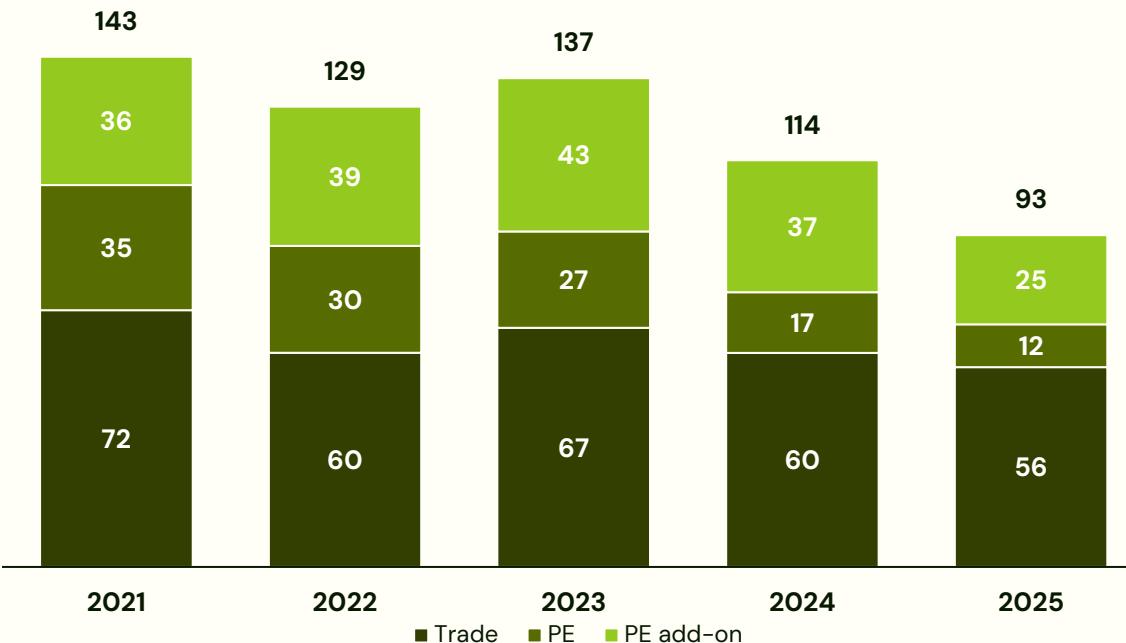
CSD⁽¹⁾ M&A Activity in North America and Europe – 2021 to 2025



USA is the most active M&A market in the space with a significant margin, with the rest of the deal activity spread across a number of European countries

Macro-level headwinds have softened deal volumes, but high-quality custom software development assets continue to attract interest from trade and PE buyers

Breakdown of customer software development transactions by acquirer type



Increased investor selectivity and capital pressures are weighing on deal flow, but...



Geopolitical and regulatory uncertainty has made investors more cautious and selective about their investment criteria



A growing backlog of private equity assets and pressure to return capital to investors are limiting new buy-side activity

...buyers remain active for differentiated, high-quality assets at premium valuations



Resilient demand for high-quality assets: Despite weaker deal volumes since 2023, M&A in custom software development has stayed strong for high-quality businesses, supported by ongoing digital transformation across industries



Differentiated capabilities attract premium valuations: Deal activity over the last two years has focused on high-quality assets with strong technical capabilities, especially in AI, data analytics, and complex software modernisation

Recent deals indicate strong interest in high-quality custom software development assets from global strategic and PE-backed players



Dec 2025: Coforge, a global tech services and digital engineering company, agreed to acquire Encora, a US-based AI-native digital engineering and software product development firm

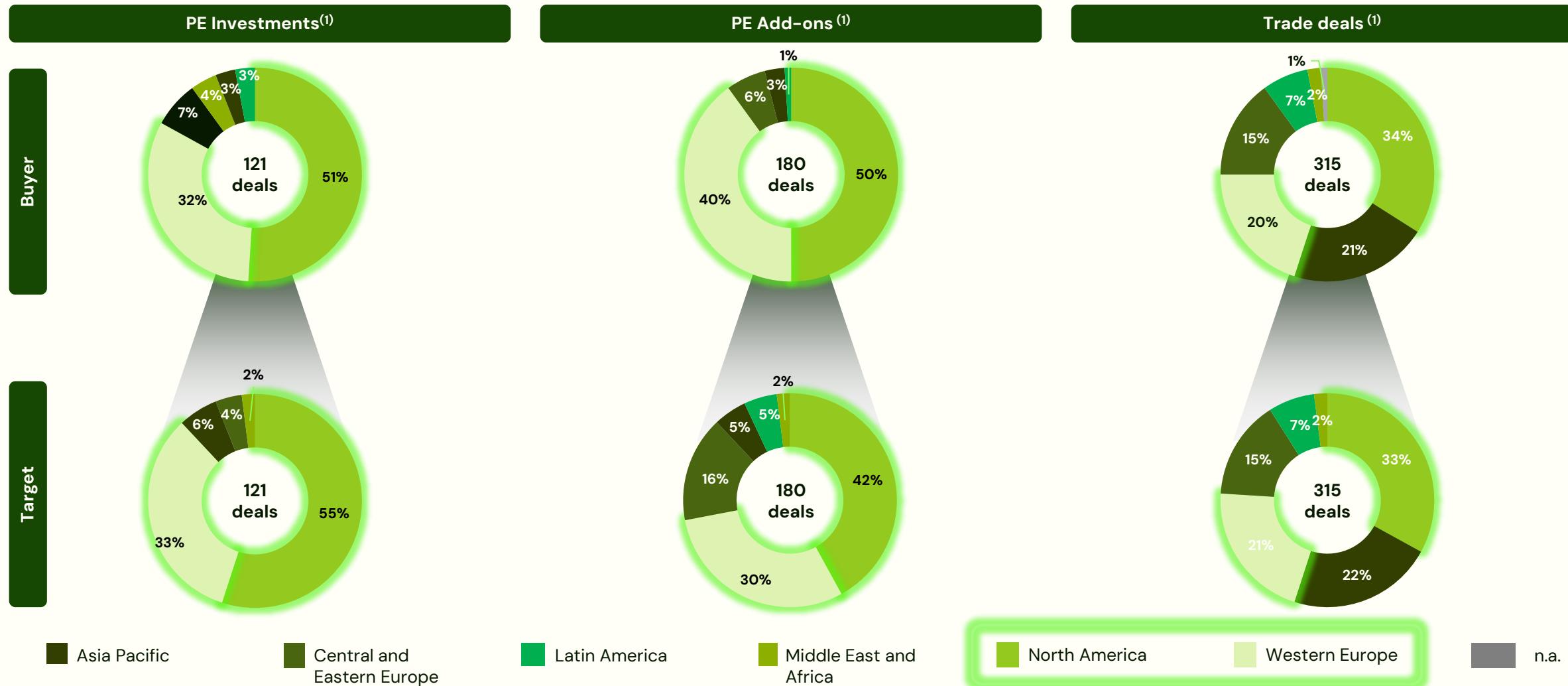


Sept 2025: Improving, a US-based PE-backed digital services company acquired MangoChango, a US-based tech consulting and custom software development firm with a primary workforce based in Guatemala



Jul 2025: Virtusa, a US-based PE-backed company specialising in digital engineering and enterprise transformation, acquired Sincera Technologies, an AI-driven software development business

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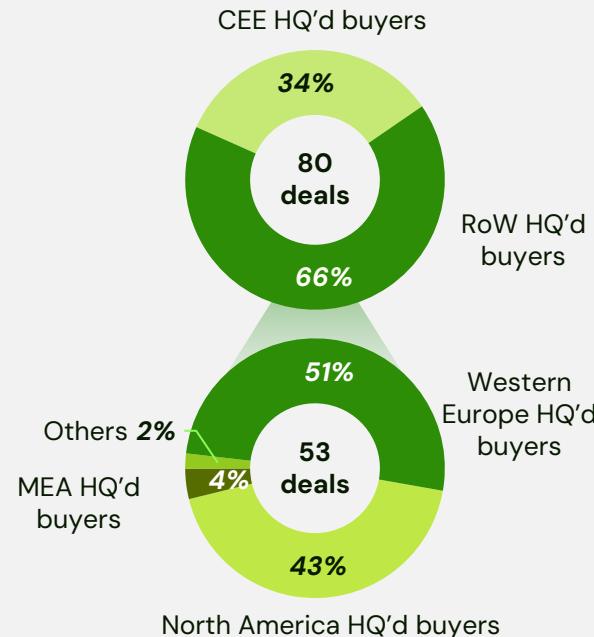


CEE remains a highly active M&A market, led by strong local acquirers and sustained foreign buyer interest

Poland has been the #1 country for buyers



Foreign buyers have invested significantly in CEE



Trade deals dominate despite PE consolidation



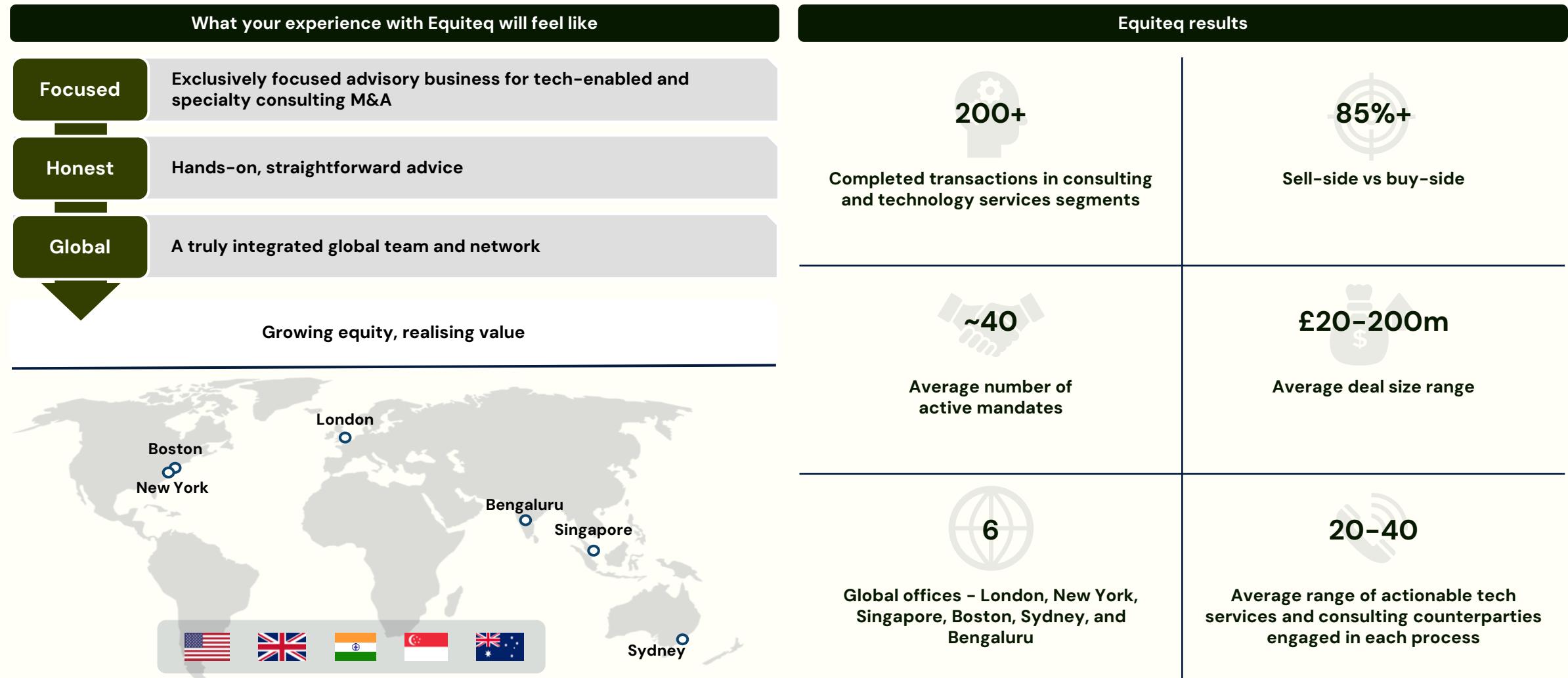
Local buyers have been serial acquirers in CEE, with foreign buyers making more ad-hoc investments



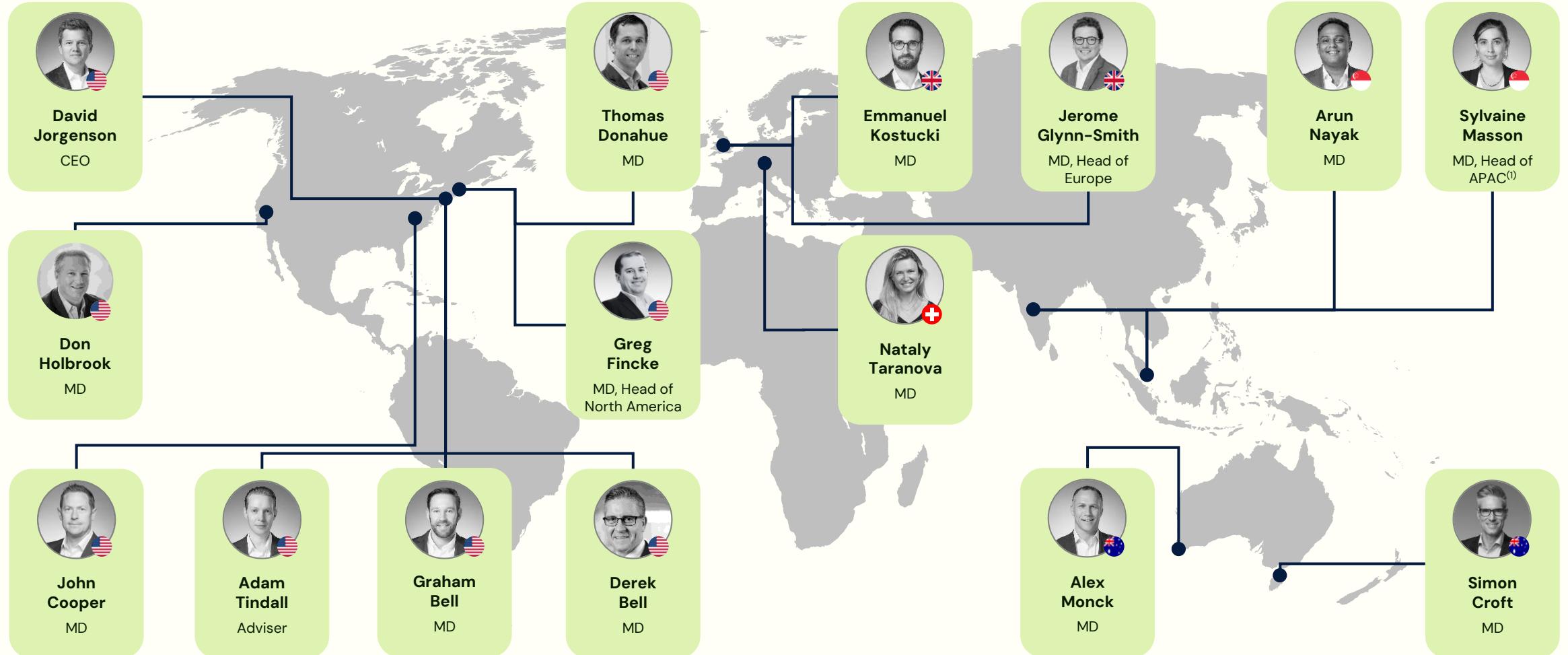
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We are custom-built to deliver optimised transaction outcomes for founder-led businesses in the tech-enabled and specialty consulting sector



We deploy highly experienced deal teams locally supported by senior advisors globally with deep expertise



Note: ⁽ⁱ⁾Asia-Pacific, including India, Australia and New Zealand

We are the most active M&A advisor for the Knowledge Economy worldwide

Project Ascend  	VACOR  	MidEuropa  	VAR - Retail Industry  	Financial Services Consulting    	gcp  	Blackrock Aladdin  	optimus sbr  	Ergo  	sekuro  	Kelley Austin  	TRC ADVISORY  
Digital Strategy Investment from  	Software development and change-management Sold to  	VAR - Retail Industry Acquired  	Financial Services Consulting Sold to    	Blackrock Aladdin Investment In  	Management Consulting Investment from  	Global Intelligence Services Strategic investment from  	Cybersecurity Consulting Sold to  	Salesforce Consulting Sold to  	Business Consulting & Strategy Sold to  		
To be announced  	Advised on the sale December 2025  	Advised on the acquisition December 2025  	Advised on the sale December 2025    	Advised on the investment November 2025  	Advised on the sale November 2025  	Advised on the sale November 2025  	Advised on the sale October 2025  	Advised on the sale October 2025  	Advised on the sale September 2025  		
Advised on the sale January 2026  	Advised on the sale December 2025  	Advised on the acquisition December 2025  	Advised on the sale December 2025    	Advised on the investment November 2025  	Advised on the sale November 2025  	Advised on the sale November 2025  	Advised on the sale October 2025  	Advised on the sale October 2025  	Advised on the sale September 2025  		
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MSP - Automotive Industry Sold to    	Strategy & Operations Consulting Sold to  	Digital Commerce Sold to  	Healthcare Consulting Sold to  	Digital Payments Sold to  	Product-Driven Growth Strategy Sold to  	Atlassian Consulting Sold to  	Leadership Sold to  	Cloud Cost & Performance Sold to  	 		
Advised on the acquisition September 2025   	Advised on the sale September 2025  	Advised on the sale September 2025  	Advised on the sale August 2025  	Advised on the sale August 2025  	Advised on the sale July 2025  	Atlassian Consulting Sold to  	Leadership Sold to  	Cloud Cost & Performance Sold to  	Advised on the sale May 2025  		
Salesforce Consulting Sold to  	Energy Consulting Sold to  	Public Sector Consulting Sold to  	Databricks Sold to  	DataBricks Sold to  	Software Engineering - Financial Services Sold to  	Healthcare Technology Sold to  	Strategy Implementation Sold to  	Microsoft / Azure Majority Recapitalization by  	Google Cloud Sold to  		
Advised on the sale May 2025   	Advised on the sale March 2025  	Advised on the sale March 2025  	Advised on the acquisition January 2025  	Advised on the sale December 2024  	Advised on the sale December 2024  	Advised on the sale December 2024  	Advised on the sale December 2024  	Advised on the sale December 2024  	Advised on the sale December 2024  		
Intelligent Content Management Sold to  	Controlling Stake Sold to    	Salesforce RevOps Investment From  	ESG Advisory Sold to  	Technology/software engineering Sold to  	Procurement Consulting Sold to  	Anaplan Consulting Sold to  	Microsoft Data and AI Sold to  	Marketing Consultancy Sold to  	Confidential  		
Advised on the sale November 2024  	Advised on the sale October 2024    	Advised on the sale October 2024  	Advised on the sale October 2024   	Advised on the sale September 2024  	Advised on the sale September 2024  	Advised on the sale September 2024  	Advised on the investment August 2024  	Advised on the sale August 2024  	Confidential  		
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About Us

Founded in 2005, Equiteq is a global investment bank and strategic advisory firm dedicated to accelerating growth and maximizing value for knowledge-economy businesses.

We combine deep sector expertise with world-class M&A execution to guide founders, investors, and leadership teams through their most pivotal moments of transformation. With a unique focus on professional services, technology, and consulting organizations, we help our clients scale sustainably, realize equity value, and achieve successful outcomes in the capital markets.



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