

Expert Q&A With Graham Stokoe, Ernst & Young

Privcap: In addition to the audit and other services you provide private equity clients in Africa, are you also helping them source investments?

Stokoe: The key thing we're focusing on, particularly in the last two years or so, is really being more proactive in the origination of opportunities. I think one of the key things for private equity to be successful is really finding these businesses. We may not have transaction specialists, but we've got experience audit partners, tax partners that are in these businesses, that are serving other good, growing businesses and really leveraging our network to be able to potentially source investments.

Privcap: Please talk about the Ernst & Young network across Africa.

We've got offices in 34 countries across Africa. In the odd countries where we don't have offices, I guess we would serve that from a neighboring country. However, in all the main centers that we're serving, that's where private equity is from a transactions perspective.

We operate on a sort of hub and spoke model. So we have a fairly sizable team in Johannesburg, a growing, sizable team in Nigeria in Lagos, and then in Kenya. But then also the spoke teams, a very, very strong team in Ethiopia. And then also in the funding and structuring side, we've got a very strong team in Mauritius, and Mauritius is often key, not in the origination, but really in the support element from a private equity perspective. And we've got a really strong team there.