THE CONFERENCE BOARD

2026 M&A Summit – San Francisco

M&A, Divestitures, and the Future of Portfolio Strategy

October 14, 2026
InterContinental Mark Hopkins
San Francisco, CA

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2026 M&A Summit

M&A, Divestitures, and the Future of Portfolio Strategy

October 14, 2026
InterContinental Mark Hopkins | San Francisco, CA

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Registration, Networking and Light Lunch

1:00 PM – 1:05 PM

Opening Remarks

1:05 PM – 2:30 PM **Panel Discussions**

The New Economics of Innovation: When to Build, Buy, or Partner

As AI accelerates the pace of innovation, companies must decide how to acquire the capabilities needed to compete. Building internally, buying technology, or forming strategic partnerships each offer distinct advantages, but the decision has become increasingly complex. AI is reshaping not only the technologies companies need to own, but also the infrastructure, talent, and resources required to develop and scale them, from computing capacity and energy to entirely new business models. How should leaders rethink their approach to growth and investment to compete in a new era of innovation?

The Changing Deal Landscape: Acquisitions, Divestitures, and Growth

The rules of dealmaking are changing. Expanding into new markets and strengthening core businesses remain the primary drivers of M&A activity, while nearly half of dealmakers are also pursuing acquisitions to gain new technology capabilities and talent. As AI drives demand for compute and infrastructure, where are the next strategic assets and acquisition opportunities emerging? What is driving today's M&A market how is the tech-driven market changing the landscape and where are the next opportunities emerging?

AI as a Deal Tool: How Technology Is Changing M&A and Divestitures

The conversation around AI in dealmaking is shifting from potential to practical application. Organizations are increasingly testing and deploying AI tools to streamline processes, analyze large volumes of information and support decision-making throughout the transaction lifecycle. But where is AI delivering measurable value? Which stages of the deal lifecycle are seeing the greatest impact, and what governance, controls, and human oversight are needed to ensure these tools are applied effectively and responsibly? Panelists will discuss how leading organizations are incorporating AI into transaction execution and the lessons learned along the way.

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Meet and Connect

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3:00 PM – 4:55 PM **Panel Discussions**

More Than Valuation: Finding the Right Partner in M&A

As M&A activity rebounds, boards and management teams are placing greater emphasis on strategic fit, execution certainty, and long-term value creation; not just valuation. Most CEOs are pursuing M&A while simultaneously redesigning portfolios for future growth and resilience. So, while price remains a critical factor, many transactions are ultimately shaped by considerations that extend beyond the highest bid. How are organizations balancing valuation against longer-term priorities? What distinguishes a strong partner from simply the most aggressive bidder?

Private Equity in Transition: New Investment Priorities and Exit Pathways

AI is reshaping investment priorities across private equity, directing capital toward technology and energy infrastructure while influencing strategic decisions throughout portfolio companies. Megadeal activity continues despite market uncertainty, placing greater emphasis on disciplined approaches to valuation, diligence, and holding periods. At the same time, firms are pursuing a broader range of liquidity and exit pathways, while using divestitures, carve-outs, and targeted acquisitions to refine portfolios and unlock value. How are executives deciding what to keep, what to sell, and where to deploy capital in pursuit of growth and value creation?

The New Regulatory Playbook for M&A

Regulatory risk has become a boardroom issue. As antitrust scrutiny intensifies and governments take a greater interest in cross-border transactions, regulatory considerations are influencing which deals get pursued, how they are structured, and whether they ultimately reach the finish line. So how are companies adapting to a more complex approval environment? Speakers will discuss the evolving role of regulatory strategy in M&A, including approaches to managing deal certainty, navigating global jurisdictions, and anticipating potential challenges before they become obstacles to execution.

The Human Side of Dealmaking

In many transactions, the hardest assets to value (and the easiest to lose) are its people. As companies pursue growth, digital transformation, and new capabilities, talent and culture are becoming central to both the rationale for a deal and its ultimate success. How are organizations evaluating talent as part of the investment thesis? This panel will examine how leading companies are approaching talent, culture, and organizational design as critical drivers of value creation before, during, and after a transaction.

The Deal Narrative: Communication, Shareholders, and Credibility

Every deal is judged at the moment it's announced. Investors, employees, and analysts immediately start testing the rationale, the price, and the upside. In that environment, how a transaction is communicated can be as important as the deal itself. Clear messaging around strategy and value creation has become central to securing support and maintaining credibility through the process. This panel explores how companies shape the story around major transactions, manage shareholder expectations, and respond when scrutiny intensifies. What separates deals that win confidence from those that face resistance and how can leaders stay credible from announcement through to execution?

4:55 PM – 5:00 PM

Closing Remarks

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Networking Reception

Confirmed Speakers:

- **Sarretta McDonough**, Chief Regulatory Counsel, Global Antitrust and International Trade, **Intel Corporation**
- **Brian Robins**, Chief Financial Officer, **Snowflake**
- **Steve Sapletal**, Principal, U.S. Transaction Strategy Practice Leader, **KPMG LLP**
- **Aabhas Sharma**, President & Chief Technology Officer, **Hebbia**
- **Randy Tinsley**, Senior Vice President, Corporate Development, **Synopsys, Inc.**
- **Derek Zaba**, Partner and Co-Chair, Shareholder Activism and Corporate Defense Practice, **Sidley Austin LLP**

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