

James Darnell Graham

M&A | RUSSEL GROUP MBA | OXFORD/ SAÏD PE | SME ROLL UPS VIA SEARCH FUNDS | EXIT CONSULTANT.

Empower Technical Services

To Nick & Denis,

I have formed a more formal CV which is attached to this cover letter, alongside the website circlecontrol.co.uk. With a background in M&A, search funds, my own transactions and exit consultancy, I am excited about the prospect of contributing to Empower after the inaugural acquisition. CV's are difficult to gage as brand names and school prestige tend to steer decision. Whilst those points are important, here's the value I would bring to Empower Technical Services:

- Strong financial modelling skills acquired through PE programmes, experience in deal analysis and exit consultancy. I think the most important factor is not just being able to speak the language of models, but the language of vendors, I am a hybrid who aims to build and interpret the models to communicate negotiation in the sales process on the ground with the prospective sellers. Note: I actually managed to negotiate a 85% deferred deal in the electrical contracting sector at a 2x EBITDA multiple once cash was deducted but my risk size tolerance prevented me from closing with the repayments schedule.
- Proven ability to build proprietary lead flow in the sea of M&A letters vendors receive. I can architect systems to streamline outreach, whilst adhering to hygiene and quality of leads.
- An entrepreneurial mindset and startup history that aligns with the dynamic environment of a growing technical-services holding company.
- A venn diagram of not just M&A but also M&E. I have been around the industry from a young age in former family businesses and have seen the operational bottlenecks in the technical services industry that most typical MBA's have never been exposed to.
- I have a strong desire to implement in post acquisition stage platforms and integrate PowerBi to track value creation from a strategic viewpoint and to work with Denis on AI enablement in bolt ons.
- I do also have existing relationships with debt providers etc that I have nurtured over the years and speak the language of LBO's and gearing if required.
- I want to see how I can add value to Empower as for me to be mentally stimulated I want to work on what's exciting and in companies I believe in. Technical services is a sector in which many MBA's find boring or overlook, to me it's one of the most exciting sectors, with major fragmentation, typically less sophisticated vendors from an exit perspective, major room for aggregators to benefit from multiple arbitrage and also the factor of AI resilience on the service delivery side but with the potential of AI enablement on the operational back office side.

Again, I always aim to provide value upfront and I will arrange for the domain to be forwarded to you. I have also been working on an M&E datalist for outreach to get an early start if required. Also, feel free to send over any non-confidential data for me to model or help with integration. I know together we can Empower the technical services space.

Warm regards and please find my CV following.

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☎ 07484824241

📍 Wherever Required



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Profile

Extensive experience in financial modelling, M&E services, exit consulting and startups. I currently have a thesis to begin impactful work on a higher scale, targeting AI-resilient service sectors in the UK that we can back office AI enable. Whilst evangelising the search fund model with recent acquisition searchfund.co.uk. With a history of overseeing our mini family office and managing M&E operations and buyouts, and diversifying into self-built leisure parks. Currently pursuing a Russel group MBA on the case of "exceptional potential" and have completed programmes in private equity at the University of Oxford. I have sat across the table from countless sellers over the last 18 months and I feel speaking the language of sellers is a requirement at Empower.

Employment History

Searcher & Deal Analyst, British Equity

2024 — Present

I hit a crossroads pending a divorce of parents leading to company division, so was keen to rebuild. With my modelling and exit consulting experience I had the aim to acquire companies in the micro SME market and got an electrical contractors to LOI stage which I have recently pulled out of to gain a few more years of experience as I am focused on scale exposure which the recent Empower raise seems to be on velocity towards. The deal pond I was fishing in was far smaller than my appetite and as mentioned I would rather join a train that is already leaving the station than build my own smaller train on the same tracks, at least until later on in my career.

- Built an AI Resistant service delivery with AI back office enablement thesis.
- Promoting the search fund model to enhance awareness and growth in the UK market.
- Closed an electrical contracting firm with an LBO structure with heavy deferred over a 3 year period. It just happened to be smaller than my appetite.
- Developed systems and lead generation to increase proprietary sourcing. Healthier than average response rate.

Search Fund Evangelist, SearchFund.co.uk

2025 — Present

Promoting the search fund model to enhance awareness and growth in the UK market. Recent domain acquisition to bolster the community in the British acquisition scene.

- From here I've been a sponge around many acquisitions and have spoke with most of the searchers and deal professionals in the country, immersion learning.
- Acquired SearchFund.co.uk, 150+ community. Hobby project.

Exit Consultant, Exit Optimiser

2024

Throughout my MBA I've advised with SME's building systems and tech enablement in order to exit.

Links

[LinkedIn](#)

[CircleControl.co.uk](#)

Skills

Financial Modelling

Valuation Analyst

Strategy

M&A

FM + M&E History

Resource Allocation

Management Accounting

M&A Negotiation

Operational Leadership

Pipeline Architecture-

Proprietary Deal Origination

Strategic Research

Hobbies

BJJ (Currently unbeaten in competition).

Reading (I aim for an audio book per week, really enjoying The Dealmaker by Guy Hands currently).

Podcasts (Acquired, Hold Co Builders, Acquisitions Anonymous).

Endless hours on Business-esforsale.com.

+ Suddenly realising how boring I sound.

- This has ranged from using LLM's to optimise manufacturing and eventually successfully helped them outsource production with suppliers in China at pennies on the pound and also built sales channels and systems for a B2B2C model which currently didn't exist and optimised for volume orders and modelled them towards an exit.
- Was poached by a top sell-side business brokerage firm in April but declined the position due to my desire for buy side vs sell side.

Passive Site Director, Woodlands Lodges

March 2022 — 2024

Overseeing build and operations of our self-sufficient holiday lodge parks.

- Recently achieved planning to 5x the size of the site.
- Implemented systems to improve guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.
- Oversaw budgeting, management accounts, VAT and resource allocation to optimise park performance.
- Trained and led a team to deliver exceptional service in a self-sufficient environment.
- Prepared the company models for exit post planning (as of summer 2025).
- Entirely passive (for me) from 2024.

Partner, Oakwood

March 2018 — 2023

Served as a partner in a family-run construction and M&E business, focusing on key clients.

- Managed partnerships with Butlins, Haven, and Park Dean, ensuring project alignment and client satisfaction.
- Oversaw day-to-day operations and strategic planning to enhance business performance.
- Coordinated construction projects, ensuring adherence to timelines and budget constraints.
- I can proudly say I have done each and every job on site, from labouring at 11 to site management, accounts to new build management.
- Developed relationships with suppliers and subcontractors to optimise procurement processes.
- Managed the family property portfolio, led to some wealth advisory and job offers from large property allocators in beaconsfield.
- Managed financial portfolios and strategic planning for the mini family office.
- Supervised all phases of construction, from design to completion, for self-built leisure parks.

Startups, Various Entrepreneurial Endeavours.

Where do I start?

- From the age of 12 I've been building companies, from stores, to AI CSA chatbots, to property platforms. I have been through the startup ringer and learnt more than I could have ever imagined, from managing co-founders overseas, to mentorship from the founder of shopify, it's been a Journey!
- I have bought and sold different micro companies from being a teenager in which I like to call Mini M&A. Flippa & micro acquire were my home for a long time.

- This is key for Empower as I perceive the startup energy is what's needed, especially at a top co level, as although the acquisitions are mature, the hold co still requires startup energy to scale.

Education

Private Equity Programme -- Distinction, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

April 2024 — June 2024

I'm pleased to have applied and gained acceptance into Oxford's PE route in which we were assessed weekly for two months on topics ranging from LBO modelling, valuations, DCF's, all the way to benchmarking and IM's for the board etc.

- I averaged 100% on 4 of the 6 exams under Prof Ludovic.
- Sharpened my private equity tools with one of the world's best.
- A top quartile LBO Hilton case study.

Master of Business Administration - MBA, University of Birmingham, Remote

October 2024 — Present

Mid MBA at the University Of Birmingham (Remote, part time at weekends)

- My most recent module was Strategy in which I achieved the highest grade in my year. I have delved in accounting, managerial finance, strategy, leadership, economics and much, much more.
- I got into a world top 15 (FT) DL-MBA on the case of "Exceptional potential route" as I never pursued an undergrad as I was busy in the family business and building startups. Which is rarely granted at masters level Russell groups.

Mises Institute Of Economics, Institute Fellow

2025 — 2025

Remote fellowship & evangelism of Austrian economic thought.

Certifications, Various

2019 — 2025

I have also been through various CPD and programmes ranging from CFI, financial modelling, AML and accounting. I have also weighed up completing my CIMA FLP post MBA.

Business , Lincoln College

2018 — 2019

GCSE's, Skegness Grammar School

September 2013 — June 2018

Highlight- Achieved A* 39/40 on my business exams, the highest in my grade.

This is the only placement I will apply for. As you can tell from the website, this isn't a mass sent, auto apply like many on LinkedIn. I am interested in Empower due to my family M&E industry history and subject matter expertise + my strategic M&A skills being personally aligned. If it's not Empower, I will use my energy to build within the acquisition space but I really see this being the next Water Direct, but bigger.