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CALL IT TALENT.  
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We searched the middle market  
for some of the fastest-rising  
up-and-comers.  
Here is one of them.



## Numbers man

William Pruellage of Castle Harlan

BY KELLY HOLMAN

Not many private equity professionals hone their analytical skills from a few rounds of poker with friends. For William Pruellage, a managing director of New York leveraged buyout firm **Castle Harlan Inc.**, it's as good a mental exercise as any.

Poker, he says, gives him a chance to socialize. But he adds, "I especially enjoy the probability analysis required in the game." Pruellage is known as an analytical, dispassionate and extremely focused individual, qualities that serve him well in the buyout business.

When he joined Castle Harlan in 1997 as an analyst, Pruellage's flair for numbers came in handy when he helped out on the firm's \$360 million buyout of **Tidewater Inc.**'s gas compression equipment business. His subsequent assignments at the firm, which was founded by former Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Inc. CEO John Castle and investor Leonard Harlan in 1987, won him accolades from portfolio company chiefs.

Harley Kaplan, CEO of **RathGibson Inc.**, a Janesville, Wis.-based tubing maker,

agrees. "As an operations guy, I tend to be quick to the trigger, but Bill is very even-keeled and a lot more polished," he says. Kaplan and Pruellage got acquainted when Castle Harlan

bought RathGibson from New York buyout group **Liberty Partners** in 2006 for \$275 million. As project manager, Pruellage worked closely with Kaplan on RathGibson's acquisition of Greenville Tube Co. in August 2006.

"He has great judgment," says Castle Harlan president Justin Wender. "The portfolio companies like working with him, and the management teams trust him." Pruellage has joined the fundraising team to help raise Castle Harlan's fifth buyout fund this year.

Sourcing deals in energy, healthcare and manufacturing is where Pruellage plays a key role. He sits on several boards of portfolio holdings, including **Advanced Accessory Systems** and **Ames True Temper Inc.**

Stephen Snider, CEO of **Universal Compression Holdings Inc.**, says that from the time Pruellage became involved with the Houston oil equipment company around 1999 to 2000, he has "matured and grown as a director." Pruellage still sits on

the company's board, although Castle Harlan exited after its \$154 million initial public offering in 2001.

Pruellage grew up in St. Louis. His father, John Pruellage, was a managing partner at **Lewis, Rice & Fingersh LC**, a St. Louis law firm specializing in corporate and banking law.

As a college student, Pruellage was interested in philosophy and Japanese. That led to a year at Sophia University in Tokyo, where he played goalie for Sophia's soccer team. A summa cum laude graduate of Georgetown University with a double major in finance and international business, Pruellage worked as an analyst at **Merrill Lynch & Co.** in 1995. Under Jack Levy, now co-chairman of **Goldman, Sachs & Co.**'s global M&A business, Pruellage worked on large transactions and learned the ABCs of LBOs.

When not cutting deals or dealing cards, the Manhattan resident likes to tee up at Rockaway Hunting Club in Lawrence, N.Y., or walk around Central Park with his family.

Meanwhile, dealflow at the firm is as strong as ever. At any given day, Pruellage would be busy working the numbers on attractive prospects, but naturally he's not showing his hand. ■



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