

# Built on Experience, Defined by Results: Stonehill's Rise to Middle-Market Integration Leader

*Stonehill started as a strategy shop. Its private-equity clients kept asking the same question - who actually makes the plan work? The answer became a category.*

TAMPA, FL, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most mergers don't fail in the



boardroom. They fail in the first hundred days after the deal closes - when two payrolls have to become one, when customers start asking which logo answers the phone, and when the synergies that looked so clean in a spreadsheet collide with the messy reality of people, systems, and culture.

These are the deals that build communities and create jobs. They deserve a partner who moves at their speed and leaves them stronger than we found them, not a binder and a bill."

*Doug Pace, CEO of Stonehill*

For years, the companies most exposed to that risk had the fewest places to turn. The founder-led and private-equity-backed businesses of the middle market were too important to wing it and too lean to absorb the cost of a brand-name firm built to serve the Fortune 500. They were

handed playbooks, priced at enterprise rates, and run by consultants who were just out of business school and never closed an integration in their lives.

Stonehill didn't set out to fix that gap. It discovered it.

"We never planned to be an integration firm," says Doug Pace, President and CEO of the Tampa-based company. "We focused on [strategy consulting](#). But our private-equity clients kept coming back with the same problem - they had a plan and no one to implement it. The more deals we touched, the clearer it got: there was not a respected firm built to handle integration in the middle market. So we created one."

That realization has since grown into a reputation. Today Stonehill is widely regarded as the go-to specialist for post-merger integration in the middle market - the firm dealmakers call when a transaction has to work.

The work that found them

Stonehill opened its doors as a strategy firm - the senior, hands-on kind that private-equity sponsors and founder-led companies turn to when they need a plan they can act on. The plans landed. The trouble came next. Again and again, a client would approve a strategy and then look up with the same question: who is going to make this happen? In a merger or a carve-out, that question has teeth. Implementation is where value is won or lost, and the sponsors had no one they trusted to run it.

So Stonehill stepped in - and the more integrations it ran, the more a gap in the market came into focus. The big consulting firms were built for the Fortune 500: leveraged teams of junior staff led from a distance by a handful of partners. That model can work at enterprise scale, but in the middle market it breaks. The deals move faster, the margin for error is thinner, and lean leadership teams have no bandwidth to babysit an army of analysts learning on their dime. For a whole class of companies doing some of the most consequential deals in the economy, there was no respected firm built to handle the work.

The methodology as the engine

What turned that opening into a category position was the methodology itself. Stonehill started with a process-driven approach to integration - a disciplined, repeatable framework grounded in best practices and hard-won experience. Then it layered in Design Thinking, adding a human-centered element to work that too often treats people as line items: the combined organization gets designed around how the work actually happens, not around how an org chart looks on paper. Design Thinking is also inherently agile, and that matters - the framework gives every engagement a proven backbone, while the design mindset lets the team flex and adapt it in real time as the deal changes.

That methodology lives inside the business, not in a binder. At the center is Stonehill's embedded [Integration Management Office](#) model: rather than handing over a deck of recommendations, the firm stands up an IMO inside the company and runs it shoulder-to-shoulder with leadership through the critical early stages of a deal. And because Stonehill knows it won't be there forever, it works as a partner from the first day - integration stops being a deliverable and becomes an operating capability the company keeps. "Integration isn't a document you hand over," Pace says. "It's something you stand up inside the business and run alongside the leadership team until it sticks."

More recently, the firm has layered in an AI, Automation and Analytics Center of Excellence, bringing data and automation directly into the integration playbook - accelerating everything from synergy tracking to the operational reporting newly combined companies need before their systems are unified.

The integration practice became a doorway, too. The same client-led instinct that turned a strategy shop into an integration firm kept widening what Stonehill does: as clients asked for help beyond the deal, the firm built out [organizational design](#), process improvement, customer experience, and change-management capabilities. Each one arrived the way the integration practice had - because a client needed it, not because a brochure promised it.

A track record that travels

The approach has earned Stonehill work that punches well above the size of the firm. Across the full arc of complex transactions including IMO stand-ups, carve-out and transition-services advisory, organizational design, and change management - the firm has successfully handled billions of dollars in merger value.

That work has drawn outside recognition as well, including honors such as the U.S. Chamber's Emerging Business of the Year, the American Business Awards' Entrepreneur of the Year, and Insight Magazine's Design Leader of the Year.

Headquartered in Tampa, with studios in Tampa, Dallas, Chicago, and New York, the firm serves PE-backed and founder-led companies across the country, with post-merger integration as its flagship practice.

For Pace, the rise validates a thesis the industry was slow to accept - that the middle market never needed a watered-down version of the enterprise model. It needed its own. "These are the deals that build communities and create jobs," he says. "They deserve a partner who moves at their speed and leaves them stronger than we found them - not a binder and a bill. That's our whole company."

About Stonehill

Stonehill is a nationally recognized strategy and innovation consultancy based in Tampa, Florida, serving Fortune 500 companies, private equity, and government clients. The firm specializes in helping organizations navigate complex challenges by combining advanced analytics, design thinking, and business strategy. Stonehill's award-winning team partners with clients to drive growth, improve operational performance, and deliver measurable results across industries. Known for its collaborative approach and proven methodologies, Stonehill has built a reputation for excellence in strategic planning, customer experience, and digital transformation. For more information, visit [stonehillinnovation.com](http://stonehillinnovation.com).

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