



The Alta GroupSM



Global Experience Provides Direction for Equipment Leasing and Asset Finance

Through collective knowledge and experience, The Alta Group provides value for its clients in the global equipment leasing and finance industry in outcomes that increase revenue, control expenditures, and improve productivity and profitability.

AltaVantage Points

Fourth Quarter 2011

Clients Turn to Alta for 'Actionable' Ideas to Address Current Challenges



John Deane

Difficult market conditions over the past few years have made at least one decision easy for companies in the U.S. equipment leasing and finance industry.

Lessors have turned to The Alta Group in growing numbers to help them address a myriad of challenges that have combined to test even the most seasoned professionals.

Their top-of-mind concerns include identifying opportunities for growth in the anemic market, developing captive finance programs and other

strategies to build closer ties to customers, and improving operational efficiencies, according to John Deane, CEO of The Alta Group, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2011.

Meeting Emerging Needs

Alta has responded by adding additional practice capabilities to meet the emerging needs of current and prospective clients. The firm has increased its team to 90 consultants around the world, each with deep, hands-on operating experience in this evolving industry.

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News Briefs

Impact of Dodd-Frank on Leasing

A two-part article outlining the anticipated impact of the Dodd-Frank financial regulation legislation on the equipment leasing industry, written by Paul Bent, a senior managing director of The Alta Group and the head of the firm's Legal Support Services practice, has recently been published.

[To read the article, click here.](#)

Neptune Joins Alta

The typical client team includes a strong general consultant to manage the client relationship, as well as Alta executives and researchers with extensive experience in specific vertical markets.

"Our competitors tend to develop academic reports," Deane said. "Our ability to develop actionable recommendations is a big reason so many companies in our industry call on us for help. They appreciate our practical operating experience" Deane said.

The Alta Group also is available to help execute the recommendations, something it is doing more of these days with clients facing headcount restrictions.

Most recently, Alta consultants were asked to help a client complete an internal evaluation of its operations with recommendations to enhance the profitability of the business.

Alta was initially charged to help the client map process steps to determine costs and how expenses should be allocated. The project quickly evolved into looking at the company's overall costs and how full-time employees aligned with each function.

"Our client's costs are too high - now we are working on determining why," Deane said. "The second phase of this project is to identify the nature of the high costs and provide solutions."

Management Reporting

In addition to providing steps for improving efficiencies and containing costs, Alta is helping the client develop a management reporting system to help make such decisions much quicker than before and better run the business.

Alta also was engaged this year by a client looking for top-line growth and building revenues. It wanted the consultancy to help it evaluate a number of vertical markets for potential expansion (equipment assets or industries).

The project involved determining the client's key competencies in the vertical markets that it competed in currently. The next step was to align these strengths with the potential expansion candidates and then determine if there was a fit. Then a more thorough analysis is completed.

"This deep dive includes the scope of market, competitors, competitive factors to entry, approval rates and other decision points," said Deane.

He added that Alta has completed several such consulting projects this year for larger clients, where the firm has evaluated 5-10 vertical markets.

In addition to general management consulting, Alta's other practice areas include vendor and captive finance program management, merger and acquisition services, legal support services and professional development. Alta's newest practice area is municipal and federal government leasing program management.

[For more information, click here.](#)

Consider Practical Benefits of Mediation in Leasing



Bob Neptune

Bob Neptune, a leader in governmental leasing and former president of De Lage Landen Public Finance, has joined The Alta Group as a consultant. This addition significantly expands the firm's advisory services for companies involved in state, municipal and federal leasing. At De Lage Landen, he helped integrate new products into eight separate business units and structured and sold one of the largest municipal lease securitizations in recent history. He was president of ORIX Public Finance from 2001-2005 until De Lage Landen took over ORIX's governmental leasing business.

Earlier in his career Neptune held senior executive positions at Transamerica Public Finance, Heller Public Finance and Chrysler Capital Corp. He is on the board of directors of the Association for Governmental Leasing & Finance.

[For more information, click here.](#)

Alta's Swandel Now Also President of NEFA Board



Hugh Swandel

Hugh Swandel, a managing director of The Alta Group, is the newly elected president of the National Equipment Finance Association's (NEFA) board of directors.



Paul Bent

Sometimes it pays to mediate rather than litigate.

A growing number of lessors and lessees are finding neutral mediation of disputes involving equipment leasing and secured financing to be a preferred alternative to costly and time-consuming litigation.

According to Paul Bent, leader of The Alta Group's legal support services practice, mediation is an important tool for significantly reducing costs, retaining business relationships, and avoiding the time and disruption of

litigation when business disputes occur.

He actually feels this practice can and should be used much more extensively than it has been historically in the leasing industry.

"Mediation is not the same as arbitration, and certainly not the same as court litigation," Bent said. "In the mediation process, a neutral third party (the mediator) confidentially discusses the facts and issues of the dispute with both sides and with their attorneys and helps them all arrive at a mutually agreeable settlement.

"No lawsuit, no courtroom, no judging or arbitrating, no discovery or depositions, no winner or loser. The objective is simply to talk through the issues and negotiate a satisfactory resolution between the parties, before spending all the money and time that litigation always requires."

Bent said he has mediated more than 200 cases over the past several years. These disputes have involved the failure to pay lease rentals, buying and selling of portfolios of transactions, the nature of true leases versus capitalized leases, fraud in asset appraisals, and the failure to redeliver assets at lease expiration, among many other issues.

"In the hands of a skilled and experienced mediator, a mutually acceptable settlement can be reached more often than not," he said. "And even if the parties simply can't find a way to settle in mediation, they have not lost any of the rights or benefits they may have in court."

The mediation process is completely confidential and private, and nothing said during mediation can be used by anyone after the proceeding is over, he stressed. In fact, in nearly every U.S. state and jurisdiction, the mediator cannot be compelled, even by a court, to testify about what was said during mediation.

"At The Alta Group, we believe strongly in the benefits of mediation in leasing; and we are glad to assist leasing companies, lessees, and their attorneys to understand and take advantage of this important and practical business tool."

[For more information, click here.](#)

AltaVantage Points is published regularly since 2009 by The Alta Group, a leading consultancy in the global leasing and finance industry. For more information, visit www.thealtagroup.com.

The NEFA is a U.S.-based association of equipment finance and leasing professionals. The announcement was made at NEFA's recent annual funding conference. Swandel leads Alta's Canadian division. He has been an active member and board member of NEFA since it was formed from the merger of two regional leasing associations.

In his new role as NEFA president, Swandel said he will help the association emerge from the credit crisis era. He also hopes to provide enhanced opportunities for the next generation of leaders while catering to the educational and networking needs of brokers and lessors who make up this community of business professionals.

Prior to joining The Alta Group, Swandel founded Swandel and Associates. Earlier in his career, he served as president and chief operations officer of Electronic Financial Group (EFG), a Canadian company that built and launched a multi-lending, web-based credit system.

[For more information, click here.](#)

IX Latin American Leasing Conference Nov. 17-18 To Highlight Equipment Finance Trends, Opportunities

The IX Latin American Leasing Conference will explore industry trends and attract equipment leasing and finance professionals from Latin America, North America and Europe Nov. 17-18, 2011, at the Hotel Intercontinental Doral in Miami. The conference is sponsored by [The Alta Group Latin American Region](#) (LAR), with simultaneous English/Spanish translation provided.