

OUTLOOK 2026

# BUSINESS SERVICES



Across industries, the market is accelerating. Yet it's a nuanced environment, in which quality is king, strategic options are expanding, technology is transforming the landscape, and change is a constant. Overall, 2026 offers a wealth of potential for buyers and sellers who can navigate this complexity with strategic conviction and tactical creativity. [Read our 2026 Outlook.](#)

Here, we explore how these dynamics are driving M&A opportunities in business services.



## Business Services: Solving Challenges in Attractive End Markets

To make the most of 2026, enterprises across geographies and sectors are continuing to focus on core areas of expertise, driving growth across commercial and industrial services, IT services, professional and tech-enabled services, and specialty distribution. “By outsourcing important functions, enterprises gain access to deeper skillsets, more up-to-date technology and approaches, economies of scale, and other benefits,” says [Derek Lewis](#), a managing director and co-head of our [Business Services Group](#).

Indeed, the future is bright for innovative business services providers that combine technology and human interaction to solve more customer challenges. Going forward, M&A will be a key strategy to help these forward-leaning outsourcers pull ahead of the pack through superior scale, sophistication, and service.

Below, we highlight key business services sectors for investors to watch in 2026 and a selection of clients that exemplify opportunities throughout the industry.

# Commercial and Industrial Services: Vital and Resilient

In 2026, many areas of the highly fragmented commercial and industrial services landscape will remain in demand and on investors' radar due to their essential, recurring, and resilient nature.

For instance, a wide variety of technical and specialized services are required and nondiscretionary due to regulations and mission-critical facility needs.

Labor for such services is limited, creating high demand for companies that can effectively deploy these solutions at scale. In addition, many markets that these businesses serve are large and expanding, creating opportunities for growth organically and via M&A.

Fire and life safety is a prime example. [Pye-Barker Fire & Safety](#), a leader in this category, provides inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, and installation services for fire detection systems, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, fire suppression and sprinkler systems, and security alarms. Another is [Encore Fire Protection](#), servicing the full spectrum of critical fire safety needs

for its customers through end-to-end capabilities across fire alarm, suppression, extinguisher, and sprinkler systems. HVAC service providers—vital to keeping expensive, high-cost-of-failure systems online and running efficiently—are also capturing strong investor attention. [Service Logic](#) showcases this potential, benefiting from a steady need for preventative maintenance, break-fix work, and systems upgrades.

The environmental services market also offers many attractive segments for investors, including solid waste management and recycling; diversified waste management and recycling; industrial, hazardous waste, and specialty services; water-related services; and environmental testing, consulting, and engineering. “This wide-ranging space is positioned for continued growth as we move forward through 2026, thanks to its resilient demand drivers, substantial public and private investment, nondiscretionary and compliance-driven services, and large addressable market,” says [Brian Lucas](#), a managing director and group co-head. Exemplifying the opportunity is [O6 Environmental](#), which provides environmental remediation, industrial cleaning, waste transportation and disposal, liquid waste processing, and emergency response solutions. [Wasteology](#) does as well, a managed waste services platform offering proprietary reporting and analytics to help customers optimize waste operations, drive efficiencies, and advance sustainability goals.



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# Professional and Tech-Enabled Services: Tech-Driven, Human-Led

For businesses of all types and sizes, ever-evolving technology is essential to facilitating growth, boosting efficiency, and differentiating from the competition. To unlock these benefits, organizations are increasingly relying on innovative outside experts. “Companies are seeking advanced professional and tech-enabled services companies to automate complex workflows, improve the customer experience, power cost-saving initiatives, generate useful data, and streamline decisions,” says Lewis.

In healthcare, for instance, providers are leveraging purpose-built technology to transform manual efforts into faster and more secure digital processes. A prime example is medical record retrieval, which is undergoing a digital transformation to better support growth in property and casualty insurance claims and litigation. Highlighting this segment’s expansion opportunity is [Ontellus](#), a leading medical and billing record exchange platform providing insurance carriers, law firms, and healthcare record custodians with efficient, compliant, and cost-effective record retrieval solutions.

There are also important challenges requiring external subject matter expertise within the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO). Due to growing complexity from constantly changing financial, regulatory, and stakeholder requirements, demand will remain strong for a wide range of these strategic advisory services.

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“C-suite executives will continue to seek long-term partnerships with experienced advisors in compliance, accounting, financial reporting, valuation, and other vital categories,” says Lewis. [Equity Methods](#) is a compelling example, delivering integrated, comprehensive technical and advisory solutions to help the OCFO and OCHRO manage complex, high-cost-of-failure processes.

And throughout the legal sector, jurisdictional differences, increasingly complex compliance regulations, intensifying competition, and higher customer expectations are driving a greater need for a range of solutions. [ABC Legal](#) demonstrates this potential, leveraging specialized technology to facilitate the delivery of legal documents in support of legal proceedings across different geographies. The business focuses on end markets where service of process is a critical component, such as creditors’ rights, personal injury, subrogation, and mass tort, among others.

Lastly, IT service providers will remain highly valuable business partners in 2026, delivering comprehensive technology solutions paired with in-demand expertise. [Omega Systems](#), for instance, provides managed IT solutions including cybersecurity and compliance, cloud and connectivity, NOC/SOC support, disaster recovery, and network monitoring, to a variety of regulated industries.

# Specialty Distribution: Handling Complexity

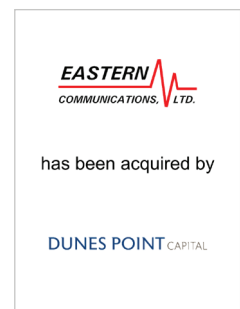
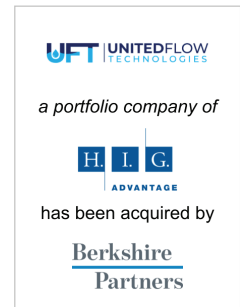
High-value, difficult-to-handle shipments require unique expertise and white-glove service to be delivered safely, efficiently, and on time. This is driving an ongoing need for specialty distributors in complex, high-cost-of-failure end markets, such as aerospace, automotive, building products, foodservice, healthcare, and technology.

“Mission-critical specialty distributors often feature stable and resilient customer demand and business performance,” says [Graham Gillam](#), a managing director. “Those that bring consultative services to highly technical deliveries create deeper, stronger, and more valuable customer partnerships and strong investor interest.”

Meanwhile, rising supply chain costs are magnifying the importance of automation and AI-powered distribution solutions. “Because of this, tech-enabled specialty distributors with more sophisticated and efficient capabilities will be especially in focus in 2026,” says Gillam.

Embodying this sector’s opportunity is [United Flow Technologies](#). The business offers industry-leading technical expertise and a comprehensive portfolio of process equipment, pumps, flow control, and automation and control systems, which its customers rely on to ensure clean, healthy, and reliable water and wastewater systems.

And within aerospace, [Eastern Communications, Ltd.](#) is another example. Eastern designs, procures, configures, implements, and maintains a full suite of critical communication systems and distributes a comprehensive portfolio of products spanning multiple leading aerospace original equipment manufacturers. The company’s distribution network is one of the largest in its category, providing extensive geographic reach and enabling rapid fulfillment nationwide.



## WHAT'S NEXT

For a variety of vital activities and processes, enterprises are actively seeking specialized business services providers to drive efficiency and create more value for customers. And across many categories, including commercial and industrial services, IT services, professional and tech-enabled services, and specialty distribution, a wide range of providers are finding success in attractive, high-growth end markets.

“Throughout the business services ecosystem, the most sought-after companies are operating in stable markets with recurring, predictable demand fueled by ongoing, non-discretionary needs,” says Lucas. “Looking forward, buyers will prioritize businesses that offer specialized skill sets and a broad set of value-added capabilities.”

[Learn more about the Harris Williams Business Services Group.](#)

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# 2026 Outlooks by Market

OVERALL MARKET OUTLOOK >

AEROSPACE, DEFENSE & GOVERNMENT SERVICES >

CONSUMER >

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HEALTHCARE & LIFE SCIENCES >

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