Before Chris Taylor became CEO of Madison Capital Funding in June, he got to know the Chicago-based private-equity lender’s business well, moving through six positions—including roles in research, recruiting and sales—over 13 years. The firm’s veterans and owner, New York Life Insurance, just kept handing Taylor more responsibilities. This year they gave him ultimate authority over Madison Capital’s $10 billion in loans to middle-market private-equity firms and the 100 employees who manage those portfolios.

Madison Capital plans to move to new offices in 2019 with space to double its operations. In his management role over the past five years, Taylor helped boost the firm’s assets under management by 50 percent. Clients include Chicago middle-market private-equity firms like Pritzker Partners. He is also now sourcing capital from outside investors for the first time.

Even the CEO of a rival praises Taylor’s leadership: “He is a straight-shooter, and people have confidence in his leadership,” says Ted Koenig, CEO of Chicago-based Monroe Capital.

Taylor grew up in Orland Park, the son of a real estate developer and a nurse. At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s College of Business, he studied public accounting so that he would have options. “It wasn’t that I dreamed of being an accountant,” he says. “It was more pragmatic, knowing that you could take an accounting education 10 different ways.”

Ultimately, Taylor says, “I wanted to be in the deal environment. I liked the human element of the transaction environment first and foremost, but also kind of liked the variability in the deal flow.”

Lynn Marek