

A full-page background image of a rock climber in a grey t-shirt and dark shorts scaling a large, textured rock face. The climber is positioned in the lower-middle section of the frame, reaching upwards. At the bottom of the image, a colorful crash pad with blue, green, red, and yellow sections is visible. The sky is blue with some clouds in the upper left corner.

evolv



COMPASS
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*Case
Study*



We work hard for our clients, and we love to tell their stories.

Since its inception in 1991, Compass Advisors (Compass) has negotiated and facilitated over 165 business exits for middle market companies in sectors ranging from outdoor recreation and lifestyle to the manufacturing, distribution, and service industries. A nationally recognized mergers and acquisitions (M&A) advisory firm for the past 30 years, Compass has secured a 94 percent successful transaction closing rate for entrepreneurs and market leaders across the country.

In 2018, Evolv Sports & Designs (Evolv) approached Compass for assistance in securing a buyer that could enhance the company's vision, while preserving its values and legacy. This is their story.



THE AQUISITON: EVOLV

TWENTY YEARS AGO, EVOLV BEGAN AS A VISION FOR CLIMBING'S PROGRESSIVE FUTURE. IN THE YEARS SINCE, OUR SMALL CREW OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN CLIMBERS BUILT EVOLV INTO A CREATIVE FORCE.

In 2003, Brian Chung founded Evolv, an innovative climbing shoe brand in sunny California, in efforts toward developing and designing the best rock climbing shoe possible. The first of Evolv's models, the Kaos and Bandit, were developed in a 500-square-foot basement and handcrafted by the company's owners.

Advanced by a staff of dedicated climbers, Evolv realizes a culture and mission defined by the sport's future, continually developing technically inspired designs to meet the needs of an ever-evolving climbing community. Through collaborations with some of the world's most renowned climbers — and problem-solving around some of the world's

most challenging climbs — Evolv has continually set and re-set the bar, cultivating the personal and professional evolutionary ethos that informs its name.



"We measure success by incremental improvement in what we make, how we climb, and who we are as people. So, as we dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of technical innovation, we promote a culture of progression, where everyone can become a better version of themselves. Evolv is who we are, and what we do."



THE AQUISITION: EVOLV *CONTINUED*

EVOLV HAS GROWN, WITH NEW PARTNERSHIPS THAT ALLOW THE COMPANY TO AMPLIFY ITSELF TO A GLOBAL AUDIENCE.

Following an investment by BRS & Company Outdoor Holdings (BRS) in 2014, Evolv grew to obtain the #3 market share of technical climbing and lifestyle footwear, securing its place in the global market. A New York-based private equity investment firm founded in 1995, BRS has historically specialized in management buyouts and recapitalizations of middle market U.S. companies.

While its initial investment catapulted Evolv's command of the market, BRS's alignment with the company shifted in the years that followed. BRS committed to transitioning Evolv to a new ownership group that would serve as a long-term steward of the brand.

"BRS's philosophy is to partner with the management of its portfolio companies, allowing them operational freedom with long-term equity incentives and support. With over two decades of investing in lower middle market consumer companies, the firm has remained focused as well as disciplined in its strategy and process throughout multiple financial, market and economic cycles."





THE BUYER: OBERALP GROUP

OBERALP IS COURAGEOUS IN THE WAY THEY EXPLORE THEIR CURIOSITY, SEEKING NEW PATHS, AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS.

Founded in 1981 by Heiner Oberrauch, the Oberalp Group (Oberalp) is a family-owned and -operated technical mountaineering brand management and distribution company in Bolzano, Italy. Representing the apex in innovative textiles companies for six generations, Oberalp's staff of more than 1,300 implement comprehensive brand-building strategies for businesses around the globe, managing everything from R&D and sales to logistics and administration. Currently, Oberalp owns six mountaineering brands and applies industry expertise to exclusive brand partnerships throughout the sports sector.



oberalp
GROUP



THE RESULTS

EVOLV IS BRINGING RENEWED FOCUS TO THE CREATIVITY AND PERSONAL EXPRESSION THAT DEFINE MODERN CLIMBERS.

After engaging Compass as its exclusive sell-side advisor, Evolv was presented with multiple offers from prominent international brands. One entity, Oberalp, seamlessly aligned with Evolv's values, culture, and brand strategy, providing the progressive evolution of design and distribution support needed to define Evolv's path forward and into the future.

In 2019, Evolv was acquired by the Oberalp Group, joining its distinctive portfolio of leading international mountaineering brands, which includes Salewa, Dynafit, Pomoca, Wild Country, and LaMunt. "Our approach is focused on one theme — mountain sports. This is why the Evolv brand fits so well into Oberalp's brand strategy," says Oberalp CEO Christoph Engl. "The acquisition of Evolv — with a clear focus on climbing shoes and a leadership position in its segment — was a logical step." Evolv Brand Manager William Sinoff agrees: "We are a group of passionate climbers that embrace all forms of climbing. We move fluidly across the different disciplines and champion the idea that it is all just climbing."

After the acquisition, Evolv moved into a larger office, retail, and manufacturing facility in Orange County, California in preparation for its imminent expansion into global urban and outdoor climbing communities.



FOUNDER, BRIAN CHUNG

The company currently distributes its products directly to U.S. and Canadian specialty outdoor and climbing retailers, sells to international distributors in 30 countries, and sponsors elite climbers worldwide, including Olympic and adaptive athletes.



THE RESULT *CONTINUED*

THINK LONG-TERM BUT ACT FAST AND EXECUTE WELL.
FINANCIAL SUCCESS IS THE CONSEQUENCE AND ENSURES OUR INDEPENDENCE.

Today, Founder Brian Chung remains on the leadership team and continues to play a crucial role directing product and brand management. “I am extremely honored and excited for Evolv to become part of the Oberalp Group and look forward to strong global growth in the future,” says Chung. “I have always had the highest respect for the Oberalp Group of brands, for making industry-leading products and for the company’s commitment to sustainability, which are values that Evolv shares. In addition to our focus on creating the best climbing footwear, Evolv will also continue in our mission to make a positive impact in the climbing community through our various initiatives and organizations that we support.”



For both Evolv and Oberalp, the world got a whole lot smaller and the family immensely bigger with this mutually advantageous acquisition. Folded into the Oberalp family in a match generations in the making, Evolv has found a fitting and familiar alpine home half a world away from its southern California roots. And, just as Oberalp describes itself as a family of “adventurers and dreamers, looking for their next peak,” so, too, does Evolv, in a continued mission defined as much by intention as ethos.



Compass Advisors will be your
guide in the M&A landscape,
where every decision counts.



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