

# ST. LOUIS BUSINESS JOURNAL

## With biggest deal, St. Louis leads the way in M&A

By [Greg Edwards](#) – Reporter, St. Louis Business Journal

St. Louis was a hotbed of merger and acquisition activity in 2018, led by the biggest U.S. deal of the year.

Cigna's purchase of Express Scripts Holding Cop., valued at \$67.6 billion, was the largest U.S. deal in 2018, according to 24/7 Wall Street. The Business Journal has valued the deal at \$54 billion.

It was one of 83 St. Louis companies that were sold in 2018, compared with 69 in 2017, according to The Fortune Group, an M&A advisory firm.

High-profile sales completed during 2018 included the Express Scripts deal, Monsanto Co. (purchased by Bayer) and American Railcar Industries (purchased by ITE Management), [John Hull](#), Fortune's managing director, said.

On the buy side, St. Louis companies acquired 136 businesses in 2018, compared with 113 in 2017. The most active acquirers were Centene (seven deals), private equity group Thompson Street Capital (six deals), Emerson Electric (four deals), and privately held Midwest Industrial Rubber (four deals).

"Overall, [The Fortune Group](#) projects M&A activity in the middle market to remain strong in 2019, although companies in highly cyclical industries may begin to experience diminished opportunities," Hull said. "Some market commentators are speculating on a slowdown in M&A activity during 2019 given the advanced age of the current economic cycle and the current uncertainty regarding trade and tariffs issues."

But, he said, middle-market M&A is resilient and remains strong for the same reasons that have fueled growth over the past couple of years — buyers seeking growth opportunities, abundant equity capital to deploy, the availability of low-cost debt financing, and lower tax rates.

For the 12 months ended Jan. 31, 2019, the number of U.S. deals of all sizes totaled 13,426, almost 10 percent more than the 12 months ended Jan. 31, 2018, according to [Factset](#).



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