



## FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS ADVISES VERUS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN ITS \$325,000,000 CASH SALE TO SAGE GROUP PLC

*LANDMARK TRANSACTION HIGHLIGHTS FT PARTNERS' ESTABLISHED POSITION AS  
THE CEO ADVISOR OF CHOICE  
IN THE PAYMENT PROCESSING / MERCHANT SERVICES INDUSTRY*

*4<sup>th</sup> FT Partners Transaction Announced / Closed in Last Week and 5<sup>th</sup> in Last 30 Days*

**San Francisco, January 9, 2006** – Financial Technology Partners LLC and FTP Securities LLC (“FT Partners”), founded by former Goldman Sachs (NYSE: GS) senior banker Steve McLaughlin, today announced another landmark cross-border transaction in the payment processing / merchant services sector with its representation of Verus Financial Management (“Verus” or the “Company”) in its sale to Sage Group plc (LSE:SGE) (“Sage”) for cash consideration of \$325 million. The transaction was Sage’s largest since 2000.

“We are delighted to have had the opportunity to play a key role in helping consummate this highly successful transaction for Verus and its shareholders,” said Steve McLaughlin, Managing Partner of FT Partners. “This outcome demonstrates FT Partners ongoing ability to win and execute some of the payment and financial technology industry’s most important transactions ahead of all of the largest investment banks in the world.”

This transaction represents FT Partners’ sixth major advisory role in the payment processing / merchant services sector since inception in mid-2002. FT Partners also advised Lynk Systems in its ground breaking cross-border \$525 million sale to the Royal Bank of Scotland which closed at the end of 2004. Through its roles as the exclusive strategic advisor to Verus and Lynk Systems, FT Partners has executed the two largest private merchant acquiring M&A transactions in the last 7+ years.

“FT Partners provided us with first-class, senior-level advice and transaction execution that was simply unrivaled,” said Rich Roberts, CEO of Verus. “We were courted by every major investment bank for this role, so our expectations were extremely high for FT Partners – and all of our expectations were greatly exceeded on every level.”

Verus is one of the few remaining private non-bank providers of merchant processing and acquiring services with \$10 billion in volume and over 100,000 merchants in North America. Sage is a leading international supplier of accounting and business management software solutions and related products and services for small to medium-sized enterprises. Sage generated revenues of over \$1.3 billion in fiscal year 2005 and has a market capitalization of approximately \$5.8 billion. By acquiring Verus, Sage gains access to potentially significant revenue synergies through cross-selling Verus’ highly profitable, transaction-based payment services into its U.S. customer base of 2.3 million SMEs.

### ***About Financial Technology Partners LLC and FTP Securities LLC***

FT Partners is the only investment banking firm focused exclusively on providing strategic and financial advisory services to CEOs in the dynamic financial services and technology sector. Mr. McLaughlin formerly was a senior investment banker in Goldman, Sachs & Co.’s Financial Technology Group and was the senior investment banker in the Financial Institutions Group in San Francisco before leaving the firm to form FT Partners. FT Partners is comprised of a team of experienced investment bankers formerly with the financial technology, M&A and investment banking groups of Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse First Boston, and J.P. Morgan. FT Partners was selected by *The M&A Advisor* as “Investment Banking Firm of the Year” for 2004 and for its role as IPO Advisor to VeriFone Holdings, Inc. in the “Computer and Information Technology Deal of the Year” for 2005. The firm offers CEO-level services, including mergers and acquisitions advisory, IPO advisory, refinancing, recapitalization and private capital raising. FT Partners was founded by Mr. McLaughlin in late 2001 and is based in San Francisco. For additional information, visit [www.ftpartners.com](http://www.ftpartners.com).

***About Verus Financial Management***

Headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, Verus is a leading provider of end-to-end payment solutions for retail, wholesale and e-commerce businesses. Verus' highly integrated, end-to-end technology platform is specifically designed to meet the electronic payment service needs of the small and medium-sized business segment. The Company offers integrated electronic transaction services for credit card, debit card, check conversion, gift payment / loyalty cards and other electronic funds transfer transactions. For additional information, visit <http://www.verusfm.com>.

***About Sage Group plc***

The Sage Group is a leading international supplier of accounting and business management software solutions and related products and services for small to medium-sized enterprises. Headquartered in the U.K., Sage has significant operations in Europe, North America, South Africa, India, Singapore and Australia. Formed in 1981, Sage was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1989 and the Group now employs over 9,000 people worldwide. For additional information, visit <http://www.sage.com>.

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