Q&A

Amrisha Raniga
Corporate M&A Lawyer
ENS

Blueprint for the next generation

What would you say to a young woman looking at the long hours and intense pressure of M&A and thinking, "I don't know if I can do this"?

M&A is demanding. There is no pretending otherwise: the hours are long, the pressure is real, and there will be sacrifices. But do not mistake uncertainty for inability. Every accomplished dealmaker has faced moments of doubt. Confidence is not inherited. It is constructed, deal by deal, through preparation and persistence.

Treat your career as a marathon, not a series of sprints. Pace yourself, protect your foundations, and ask for help before you need rescuing. If you are genuinely energised by complexity and the intellectual rigour of high stakes transactions, do not let doubt make that choice for you.

Personally, every time something has frightened me, I have used that fear as fuel to move towards it. That is precisely where the most significant growth has occurred.

Show up and do the work. Your reputation is forged over time through your judgment, your integrity, and your staying power. The lawyers who endure are not those who never doubted themselves; they are those who kept going regardless. That is the blueprint.

When negotiating your own compensation, promotions, or seat at the partnership table, what is your golden rule?

Never negotiate from self doubt. Negotiate from evidence. After fourteen years in this profession, this remains my golden rule.

Know the value you create, and know it cold: the deals you've led and closed, the judgement calls you've made under real pressure, the clients who trust you with their most consequential decisions, and the people you've developed. Quantify it where you can, then articulate it without apology. Advocacy is not arrogance. It is clarity about what you bring to the table.

If a particular opportunity does not materialise, that outcome does not define your worth. It may simply reflect timing, politics, or circumstances beyond your control. Don't internalise rejection as a verdict on your capability.

The lawyers who advance are not necessarily the loudest. They are the ones who can point to the scoreboard. So build your record, know your numbers, and speak to your value as though the evidence compels it. Because it does. Not every outcome will go your way, but if you have done the work the evidence accumulates until it becomes undeniable. A career is measured in years, not moments. Trust the compound effect of consistent excellence.

The traditional 'rite of passage' was grinding through hours of manual financial modelling and data room sorting – tasks AI now handles in seconds. How must the training and expectations for young women entering corporate finance right now evolve in this new landscape?

AI will not replace the apprenticeship of becoming a lawyer. It will accelerate it. Make no mistake: lawyers who refuse to embrace AI will be left behind. Our clients expect us to leverage AI to reduce their legal spend and deliver sharper outcomes, faster. That is the commercial reality.

I use AI every day. It is embedded in how I practise, how I advise, and how I lead transactions. I have heard the dismissive commentary, the suggestion that relying on technology somehow diminishes the lawyer. I find that curious. We don't mock surgeons for using robotics or pilots for using autopilot. The question is not whether you use AI, but whether you use it well. The lawyers who will lead this profession view AI as an extension of their capability, not a replacement for it.

The hours once devoted to due diligence review, contract markup, project management, and data room triage are being automated, and I view that as a profound opportunity. Before AI, young lawyers spent years on tasks that were necessary but not developmental. Now those tasks take a fraction of the time, freeing juniors to engage with the substantive architecture of a transaction from the outset and to develop legal judgement at a pace previous generations could not access. For young women in particular, this matters: technical mastery builds credibility, and the faster you demonstrate judgement, the faster you earn your seat at the table.

This opportunity comes with expectation. The next generation will be judged less on speed and more on interpretation, synthesis and strategic insight. My advice is to: lean into AI for efficiency, but never outsource your judgement. The output is only as good as the input, so give the tool the context it needs and never accept its answer uncritically. Interrogate it, refine it, apply your judgement. Those who treat AI as a shortcut rather than a starting point will plateau. Those who thrive will use AI to do more thinking, not less: to ask better questions, see patterns faster, and deliver insight no algorithm can replicate.

Double down on the capabilities that will define excellence in the decades ahead: critical thinking, commercial acumen, curiosity, and the ability to communicate with clarity and conviction. AI will make lawyers faster. It will not make them wiser. Wisdom, integrity, and the capacity to earn a client's trust in the most consequential moments of their business lives remain irreducibly human. That is the real competitive advantage.