Q&A

Somila Dondashe

Associate

ENS

Blueprint for the next generation

What would you tell 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"?

Give yourself a chance; I also didn't know I could do this. Most times, we discount ourselves from opportunities based on what we have heard from others, or the hypothetical scenarios we have created in our minds based on the little we know about a situation. The only way to know if you can manage the long hours and intense pressure of M&A is taking a bet on yourself and seeing it through.

What are the non-negotiable soft skills, beyond financial modelling and sharp excel skills, that a woman needs to cultivate to excel in capital markets?

Flexibility, amiability and curiosity.

Flexibility: This field is like a river, and you need to learn to flow with it and not exert your energy directing the water elsewhere. It requires you to adapt to different working styles and to accommodate situations that are constantly changing.

Amiability: I think my career trajectory can be partly attributed to my warmth and approachability. It doesn't matter how smart or driven you are; chances are that you won't excel if you're an unpleasant person to work with.

Curiosity: Whenever people ask me why I chose law, my answer is always 'curiousness'. I knew very little about what I would do with my LLB beyond university, but I knew I was very interested in the law. Interest produces a desire to learn, and that will sustain you in any industry, especially in capital markets. This industry is niche and the learning curve quite steep, but a strong desire to learn will take you far.

How should young women handle microaggressions or being spoken over in a boardroom setting? What is your personal strategy for reclaiming the floor?

Read the room and understand different settings. Sometimes you will need to keep quiet and let those with stronger personalities think they are dominating the floor. This is not a loss; it's being confident enough in your power not to fight for attention. On the other hand, know when it is time to be bold and assertive (especially when negotiating the best outcome for your client). You may need to remind yourself there is a reason you are in the room, and speak up.

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

Always lead with an abundance mindset. Once you enter any negotiation (whether it is for compensation or promotion) from a point of lack, you end up discounting what is due to you. Also, quickly distinguish what you actually want for your life and what others around you assume you want. This clarity will help you see the bigger picture and empower you to be clear about your needs.

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How do you advise young professionals to build a visible personal brand in an industry that often prioritises behind-the-scenes execution?

The easiest way is to be visible in the office and attend networking events. The reality of advancement and building visibility is that it requires physical proximity. Unfortunately (or fortunately for some), the work doesn't always speak for itself.

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?

I love the introduction of AI in the industry because it promotes efficiency by removing the focus of junior lawyers from laborious admin tasks to the actual commercial work. This means senior lawyers need to be intentional about the work they give to juniors, and involve them earlier in transaction work. Not only does this eliminate the culture of performative busyness that plagues our industry, it also helps us distinguish between what is actually urgent and important, and what is not.