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Q Where did your corporate finance journey begin, and how did you end up where you are today?

A I joined Standard Bank's graduate programme which provided me with a comprehensive overview of the products within the corporate and investment banking space. That enabled me to select the field of debt capital markets as an area of interest. I then joined Investec, where I focused primarily on securitisation in the commercial property asset class. I then moved to Nedbank, where I worked in debt origination – specifically, the corporate bond market. At Nedbank, I pivoted to balance sheet lending in the corporate and leveraged sectors. My current role at Absa is a convergence of my collective experience in both the bond and loan markets, from a syndication perspective.

Q Did you have a mentor at any point in your career? If so, who were they and what did you learn from them?

A I have had a few mentors along the way who provided guidance and a supportive sounding board. I am still in touch with my first mentor

from my grad year. Apart from the more tangible lessons, such as the importance of networking and learning from unsuccessful deals, they also challenged me to think broader than my current role. By doing so, I discovered how to become more solutionist in my approach. I was also intentional about choosing mentors who were both within the banking industry as well as those who had branched out. The unique perspectives I gained there were hugely beneficial.

Q What are some of the most memorable deals you have worked on?

A It was a multi-faceted transaction for a company that was acquiring a business from another entity. We provided sizeable acquisition financing and advised and assisted the company in putting in place a longer-term funding structure by way of a bond issue and syndicated loan. The complexity resulted from having to successfully navigate all three phases of the transaction against the backdrop of an extremely volatile and uncertain market.

Q How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your work or career?

A Working during the pandemic forced me to practise greater collaboration and communication, albeit in a remote setting. It was an opportunity to increase the frequency of interaction with various people in my network, which helped me strengthen it. I also learnt how to be more productive and efficient, given that the workday was longer, and the demands were greater.

Q What advice would you give to young women who are looking to enter the corporate finance market?

A Your individuality and authenticity earned you the seat, so don't feel the need to blend in with your counterparts. Embrace a culture of different thinking and the requisite challenge to the norm. That is what is valued in this environment. Maintain high levels of tenacity and perseverance and stay the course. Keep top of mind whether your interactions are conducive to a positive career trajectory, as well as the path you leave for those who follow. 

