# Q&A

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### Mentorship, sponsorship and 'lifting as you rise'

**Who was the first person in the industry to take a genuine bet on you, and how did that sponsorship change the trajectory of your career?**

Before moving into the financial services industry, I worked in environmental and social consulting. Many years ago, a social specialist consultant offered me an opportunity to work on a fixed-term contract, in-country, on a natural gas project in the Middle East.

It was a unique opportunity to apply my technical skills on a complex project, gain international experience, work with professionals from diverse backgrounds, and experience a new culture. While I recognised the potential of the opportunity, I initially questioned whether I was ready for it. Relocating to a different country and leaving behind my family, friends and familiar surroundings felt quite uncomfortable.

Looking back, accepting that opportunity was one of the most defining decisions of my career. Immersing myself in such a different culture forced me out of my comfort zone in ways I could never have anticipated. I had to adapt quickly, learn at a rapid pace, and apply my science skills to an entirely new context. The project came with demanding timelines and high expectations, which taught me resilience, adaptability, and how to perform under pressure. Working alongside colleagues from different countries and professions broadened my perspective and helped me recognise strengths in myself that I had never fully appreciated.

What began as a short-term contract evolved into a two-year experience after I extended my contract – twice. It ultimately shaped my move into environmental and social risk in financial services, where I could combine my technical expertise with financial structures and project construction timeframes in a meaningful and impactful way.

'Growth rarely comes from staying within our comfort zones. Sometimes all it takes is one person willing to back your potential before you fully see it yourself.'

**What is the most rewarding piece of advice you've ever given to a younger colleague that you watched them successfully put into practice?**

The advice I've often given younger colleagues is: 'trust your instincts, be your authentic self, and don't be afraid to voice your opinion'.

Early in our careers, it's easy to assume that the more experienced people have all the answers. I've seen many technically capable colleagues hold back from sharing their perspectives, especially where they're concerned about differing views from their own.

My advice has always been that your opinions are valid, and you deserve to be heard. You don't need to be the loudest voice in the room, and even if others disagree, there is value in contributing and just having the courage to speak up. Technical expertise is important, but having the right attitude and the confidence to share your opinion is what accelerates professional growth.

I've seen this advice have a meaningful impact on a few colleagues (and friends). One of the most rewarding parts of my career has been watching colleagues find their voice. I've seen individuals, who were initially hesitant to speak up, trust themselves and become confident contributors. Seeing someone realise that their own opinions are valued, and then watching their confidence grow as a result, is incredibly fulfilling for me. I've also realised that encouraging people to speak up requires more than instilling confidence. It means creating an environment where they feel safe to participate, where questions are welcomed, and where different perspectives are valued and respected.

'The thought you're most hesitant to share is sometimes exactly the one that needs to be heard.'

**How can corporate finance institutions move beyond 'diversity checkboxes' to create environments where young women actually want to stay long-term?**

Corporate institutions need to move beyond measuring success by how many women are hired, and instead focus on whether the women hired are progressing, succeeding and choosing to stay.

I feel this requires investing in leadership and development much earlier in career journeys, rather than waiting until women reach senior management levels. Opportunities such as secondments, mentorship and increased client-facing exposure can help build confidence and visibility from an early stage, enabling young women to speak up without being afraid to share their perspectives (this links with my response to the advice question above).

Creating an environment where women feel respected, valued and heard has a positive knock-on effect on retention. Visible female role models are important as they create an environment where ambitious young women want to stay, as it demonstrates that leadership is attainable.

I have been especially encouraged by the Bank's emphasis on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Work-life integration is actively promoted, and wellbeing is viewed as a necessity, rather than a luxury.

In addition, the Bank's leadership and development programmes for women recognise the unique challenges we may face, while also valuing the different perspectives women bring to financial institutions. Such development programmes are not limited to women-focused initiatives; the Bank also offers programmes tailored to men, reinforcing my belief that building an inclusive culture and supportive workplace is a collective effort and shared responsibility that requires everyone to play a role.

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