



# Q&A

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## What initially drew you to a career in M&A or corporate finance?

I grew up in a family where my siblings pursued careers in Economics, Finance and Information Technology – a clear steer from my dad who was a medical doctor, but also had a keen interest in business. It was during my audit articles that I had to review a valuation and I had picked up an error. I had to discuss this with a CFO of a property company, who was so impressed. We had an interesting (albeit basic) discussion around strategy, what he thought of the future ambitions of the business, and I knew that this was for me.

I enjoy looking forward, learning from the past, and helping clients to think about their future. In a sense, it is also about putting together pieces of a puzzle – where one client has a need and another may have an offering which could be complementary. Matchmaking in a way.

The variety of transactions, the way business responds to changing market conditions and the impact and value it unlocks, not on the business itself, but on society, is a key drawcard for me.

## What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

My first transaction taught me that even seasoned transactors can get caught up in deal fever, and that emotions play a pivotal part in executing a transaction. The role of the independent advisor is so critical, and my first engagement resulted in the client withdrawing from the auction process upon our advice. They thanked us a year later, when the target went into business rescue due to regulatory findings.

## What's the hardest lesson you've learnt, and how did it shape you?

You are not an island. To be successful, you need your deal team, your internal administration team, your fellow partners and, most importantly, your personal circle. Trying to go at it alone will never work. Ask for advice, get the second opinion, and listen to your inner voice.

## Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

Yes. My initial views was that work and life are completely separate. In my current season of my life, there is a lot more grey, and I need to be agile and flexible when managing both. Your support system

is of utmost importance and surrounding yourself with those who understand and appreciate you, is critical. We try our best and that is all we can do. One needs to prioritise what is important to you and those closest to you.

An example is being at prize-giving on a Thursday morning and telling my clients that my sons need me, has brought about better client relationships as they too have a life outside work. Clients (male and female) often share their ways of attending rugby and still running listed companies at the same time. A non-negotiable is that quality and deliverables will never be compromised, and this is a priority. We will never get it 100% right, and if outsourcing your cupcake contribution to Woolies gets you through the day, so be it. Job creation, after all.

## Did you have any mentors or role models? How did they influence your journey?

My mentors include past clients, partners, and my immediate family. I have been privileged to learn from the best and to extract the life lessons I've needed, depending on the season of my life. These individuals have played a key role in guiding career choices and navigating challenging circumstances, and have been my biggest cheerleaders.

## What kind of leader are you, and how did you develop your leadership style?

I firmly believe in authenticity and transparency. As important as your career is, your personal support system is more important. As a leader, my clients and team come first. We work hard from the get-go to avoid surprises, and work with them to get the best outcome. And saying "please" and "thank you" goes a long way.

## How has the landscape for women in finance changed since you started?

The boardroom has changed during my 18 years in corporate finance, from me being the only female, the only person of colour, and the only one (then) under 30. Today, it is our responsibility as leaders to groom the next generation of champions to lead with grace, inclusivity and authenticity. Our landscape today is made up of highly intelligent women and men, who are hardworking, motivated and wanting to make an impact, and this is exactly the environment I want my sons to make an impact in one day. 🙌

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