Q&A

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

I grew up in an entrepreneurial family and had always been exposed to finance, so it was a natural progression to pursue a career that had an element of finance.

What did your path into this field look like — was it intentional, or did you discover it along the way?

Intentional, and along the way – my entrepreneurial family upbringing developed my interest in finance. I loved debating at school, hence me wanting to go into law. This combination of finance and law led me to qualify as an attorney with a BCom LLB, with a specialisation in finance. Once qualified as an attorney, I had an opportunity to specialise in Tax, and was fortunate to work within an investment bank. And now, twenty years later, my passion for law has led me to private practice, with a specialised focus on banking and finance and projects.

Can you share a defining moment or turning point in your career so far?

When I celebrated 20 years at Norton Rose Fulbright…remembering that when I was offered partnership at Norton Rose Fulbright, my intention was to stay for five years…

Have there been key decisions that significantly impacted your career trajectory?

Yes, when I decided to move from an investment bank back into private practice.

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

My first deal when I came back to private practice was closing a mining finance transaction. It was dealing with financiers, mining corporates, and difficult and complex matters for many weeks with tight deadlines. When we closed, it was exciting to know that I had contributed significantly to the advice given – not only from a legal perspective, but that I had added value in finding commercial solutions to some tricky situations that had arisen along the way.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

By remaining true to myself as a woman, knowing my competencies and skills, and never getting flustered. And most importantly, always being prepared.

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

As I've progressed in my career, I've realised that not everything in life is fair or equal, and that, to succeed, you need to be resilient and keep pushing forward.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

By having an unbelievably supportive husband, and the support of my four children who have grown up with a working mom, and who know how important my career is to me.

What does self-care look like for you, and how do you prevent burnout?

For me, self-care is taking time out to catch my breath… I love a good spa and spending time in my garden. I avoid burn out by ensuring that I build good teams around me, who share the same aspirations and values. Always giving 120% and then, when all else fails, eating jelly tots.

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

Growing up in an entrepreneurial family, I experienced work-life balance never as a 50:50, but rather knowing that "work-life balance" is a personal matter. There are always going to be times when you're required to work 24/7. The "life balance" comes in when you take it upon yourself to prioritise yourself and family over work, and then work must wait.

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

Yes, definitely. I grew up with an incredible role model – my mother, who has taught me the values of hard work, being a businesswoman, juggling a professional career and motherhood, the gift of giving and not expecting. She always gave 120% in everything she did.

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

There has undoubtedly been an increase in the representation of women in managerial and leadership positions. We see that women in such positions bring a different dimension and perspective at management level, which influences the strategy and culture of organisations. Progress has indeed been made.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

Tough days extend me and provide purpose, because I know that when the day is over, I will have grown and contributed. It gives me purpose in life to conquer a tough day!

If you could rewrite one chapter of your journey, what would it be and why?

The unexpected loss of my mom, who made such a difference in my life and my choice of career. She was taken too soon.

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