

## Mari Rabie

Corporate Finance Transactor



**Q** *What led you to pursue a career in M&A | the Financial Markets?*

**A** I started my career as an executive assistant to the CEO of Remgro Limited, and had not specifically intended to pursue a career in corporate finance. During my time as an executive assistant, I was privileged to be exposed to companies of various sizes in different sectors, diverse business functions and several deals, which provided insight into a variety of potential career paths. However, my analytical nature, actuarial / statistical education and affinity for a high-performance environment sparked a curiosity for, and interest in, corporate finance. A few dealmakers had suggested that I should consider corporate finance and, as I'm energised by seeking out new challenges, I made the move and joined RMB Corporate Finance. I'm a member of the sector team that is mostly focused on Retail advisory.

**Q** *What was the toughest deal | listing | issue etc you ever worked on and why?*

**A** I was privileged to work as part of the RMB team that advised Distell Group Holdings Limited (Distell) in respect of the recent intricate three-way cross border deal which combined Distell, Heineken International's South African assets and a majority interest in Namibia Breweries Limited to form a South African domiciled company, Heineken Beverages. The highly complex transaction comprised intricate inter-conditional steps, numerous stakeholders, and spanned over several years. Being involved in the steady and deliberate journey of executing the deal, guiding our client through the many challenges arising from the multi-jurisdictional complexities, and ultimately closing the deal, was exhilarating and rewarding. I also had the opportunity to work with exceptional professionals, including some formidable women.

**Q** *What is your favourite sector to do a deal in and why?*

**A** I haven't worked in every sector (yet), so it would be unfair to pick a favourite, but I do enjoy the Retail sector. The Retail sector touches most individuals in one way or another almost daily, even if it's just seeing an advertisement. It is a sector that has been constantly disrupted generally, and specifically in South Africa over the last few years, forcing management teams to constantly problem-solve and rethink their strategies to establish greater operational resilience. I like the fact that even though the underlying principle of selling goods and services to customers remains the same, the changing environment and changing customer needs require companies to constantly improve their offering to better serve customers. As financial advisers, we can play a role in assisting them to achieve that.

**Q** *If you could change one thing on your career path to date, what would it be and why?*

**A** I think life is a sequence of defining moments, so it's hard to look back and isolate one thing in my career to date. All the moments, previous roles and experiences (good and bad) have helped to define who I am and where I find myself today, and I wouldn't want to change that.

**Q** *What piece of advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal | transaction?*

**A** I was recently invited to speak at the first team capping ceremony of a local girls' school. The speech was based on the "toolkit" I had developed in my previous life as an athlete, and how the young ladies could consider applying these "tools" in their upcoming season. After the talk, two prominent South African businessmen remarked how these "tools" are also very applicable and useful in

one's career.

1. Have specific and visible goals – Write them down, stick them on your mirror, save them as your phone background as a conscious reminder of what you are working towards every day.
2. Just do your job – Don't focus on the end goal, focus on getting your job done and being accountable. If you do your job well every day, and try to be better today than you were yesterday, the end goal will come.
3. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and keep the positive momentum – Things go wrong, you must learn to deal with it. If it does, do not feel sorry for yourself, but change your framing and keep on moving forward to keep the momentum going in the right direction.
4. It takes what it takes – Being successful in most endeavours (including M&A) requires hard work, dealing with pressure, sacrifices and often being tired. If you want to be good, you don't really have a lot of choices – you must be prepared to do what you have to do to be successful, because it takes what it takes.
5. Celebrate success – Your own and that of others!

**Q** *What do you do to unwind | get away from the stress of work?*

**A** I find that immersing myself in nature and exercise, preferably both at the same time, restores my energy levels and increases my resilience. It may sound counterintuitive, but I really like exercising at high intensity during stressful work periods. I think it's because exercising at high intensity requires focus, which clears my mind of everything else and physically fatigues me, both of which result in better quality sleep and improved cognitive function! 🏃‍♀️