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?

Looking back, my career was shaped less by one individual and more by several leaders who recognised potential in me before I fully recognised it myself.

At different stages, people trusted me with opportunities that stretched me beyond my comfort zone. They encouraged me to tackle complex challenges, contribute to important discussions, and take on responsibilities before I felt entirely ready. Those experiences shaped my understanding of sponsorship.

A mentor offers guidance and advice. A sponsor goes further by creating opportunities, advocating for you when you are not in the room, and putting their credibility behind your potential.

The trust others placed in me had a greater impact on my career than any technical training programme. It reinforced an important lesson: careers do not accelerate simply because you are capable; they accelerate because someone is willing to trust you with responsibility before you feel fully prepared. That perspective continues to influence how I support and develop others today.

There is a difference between a mentor (who gives advice) and a sponsor (who advocates for you behind closed doors). Have you had a sponsor, and how did that dynamic work?

I have been fortunate to benefit from both mentors and sponsors, and they play distinct roles.

Mentors challenged my thinking, shared lessons from their own experiences and helped me navigate critical decisions. Their impact was developmental and often personal.

Sponsors created opportunities. They recommended me for complex engagements, trusted me with greater responsibility, and advocated for my progression when key decisions were being made.

What made the relationship valuable was that sponsorship came with high expectations. Sponsors opened doors, but they also expected me to be prepared to walk through them. They encouraged me to develop not only technical expertise, but also commercial judgement, confidence and leadership capability.

Those experiences helped me evolve from being focused primarily on delivering quality work to becoming a trusted adviser who helps clients navigate uncertainty. They also shaped my leadership philosophy: supporting growth is important, but creating opportunities for that growth to be seen and recognised is even more powerful.

As a successful leader now, what standard do you set for yourself when it comes to mentoring the next generation of female analysts and associates?

The standard I set for myself is simple: leave people more confident than I found them.

When mentoring young professionals – particularly women entering corporate finance – my aim is not to create dependence, but to build confidence. I want people to leave every conversation believing they belong in the room and that their perspectives matter.

Technical excellence remains essential, but I encourage young professionals to invest equally in qualities such as curiosity, resilience, communication and commercial judgement. These are the attributes that transform capable professionals into trusted advisers.

I also believe mentorship should extend beyond advice. Confidence grows through experience. Whether leading part of a client discussion, presenting to senior stakeholders or taking ownership of a workstream, meaningful opportunities accelerate development far more effectively than observation alone.

For me, leadership is about creating an environment where people become more capable, confident and successful because they have worked with you.

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

The conversation needs to move beyond representation and focus on opportunity.

While it is encouraging to see more women entering corporate finance and advancing into leadership, lasting change requires more than improving statistics. People stay where they feel challenged, supported and trusted.

That means providing meaningful work early in careers, creating clear development pathways, and ensuring leaders actively advocate for talent when promotion and opportunity decisions are being made.

Inclusion is shaped by everyday experiences: who is invited into client meetings, who is trusted to present to senior stakeholders, whose ideas are heard, and who receives feedback that supports growth.

The strongest teams I have worked with succeeded not because everyone thought alike, but because diverse perspectives were welcomed, challenged respectfully, and aligned around a shared objective.

Ultimately, I hope my legacy is measured not only by the transactions I have advised on, but by the people I have helped develop and the opportunities I have helped create. Deals eventually close; investing in people creates an impact that lasts.

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