



Q&A

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Mentorship, sponsorship and 'lifting as you rise'

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?

One standard I set for myself is to be the kind of leader I wish I had encountered more often at the start of my career: visible, accessible and honest.

Having joined Absa through the graduate programme and spent my entire career with the organisation, I have had the benefit of learning from exceptional leaders, navigating periods of significant change, and growing through opportunities that continually stretched me. Those experiences have shaped my belief that mentorship is about far more than career guidance. It is about helping talented women build confidence, find their voice, and recognise their potential long before they fully see it themselves.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to create opportunities for exposure and growth. I challenge myself to ensure that every woman I mentor leaves an interaction, however brief, with greater clarity, confidence or capability than when she arrived. That means providing honest feedback, encouraging stretch in her objectives, and creating an environment where learning and even mistakes are viewed as part of growth.

Most importantly, I measure success not by how many people report to me, but by how many individuals grow because of my influence. If the women coming through our industry feel empowered to speak up, pursue leadership opportunities and bring their authentic selves to work, then I know I have made a meaningful contribution.

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

Become the person people instinctively turn to when they need help, answers or delivery. In other words, become the 'go-to' person.

Early in a career, it is easy to focus solely on completing assigned tasks, but the people who create the most opportunities for themselves are often those who build a reputation for reliability and responsiveness, and consistently adding value. I encouraged a young colleague to think beyond her role description, proactively solve problems, and build strong relationships across the business. I explained that promotions are rarely awarded based on technical excellence alone – they are often given to individuals

who can be trusted to deliver, influence outcomes, collaborate effectively, and make life easier for the people around them. When you become the obvious person to call, you naturally become the obvious person to consider when bigger opportunities arise.

Watching that individual put the advice into practice and develop into a highly respected professional was incredibly rewarding. It reinforced my belief that career progression is not about waiting to be noticed; it is about consistently creating value, building trust, and establishing a reputation that speaks for itself.

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

Having spent my entire career at Absa, from graduate to senior leader, I have experienced multiple leadership transitions, organisational changes, and shifts in strategic direction. Through all of that, I have remained motivated because I have continually been given opportunities to learn, grow and contribute. That experience has shaped my views on what truly drives retention.

Too often, organisations focus on attracting women, but spend less time thinking about what makes them stay. In my experience, women stay where they can see a future for themselves. That future is built through meaningful opportunities, challenging assignments, exposure to decision-makers, and clear pathways for growth.

As a leader responsible for developing talent across a diverse team, I have seen first-hand that people grow most when they are trusted with responsibility and supported through challenges. Development rarely comes from formal programmes alone. It comes from being given opportunities that stretch capabilities, build confidence and expand perspectives.

Some of the most pivotal moments in my career were influenced by leaders who advocated for me, opened doors, and created opportunities I may not have pursued on my own. Mentorship provides guidance, but sponsorship often changes careers, even if just for one opportunity.

Ultimately, moving beyond diversity checkboxes means creating cultures where women feel valued, challenged and able to see a future for themselves. When organisations invest in development, provide meaningful opportunities, and create pathways to leadership, diversity becomes a natural outcome, rather than a target to be measured. 

