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Q *Where did your corporate finance journey begin, and how did you end up where you are today?*

A As a young child, I was acutely aware of the role my mother and father assumed in our household. I came from humble beginnings, my mum was a housewife and my dad was a mechanic. Growing up, I was surrounded by very strong and progressive women (including my mum who was and still is my role model). I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to study, however I wasn't exposed to the finance world nor did I know what I wanted to do in the long-term. My journey into corporate finance was as a result of me switching from Actuarial Science to Business Science Finance where the theory of corporate finance really intrigued me. When I joined banking as a young and energetic graduate, I soon learned how much more exciting and exhilarating corporate finance is. My journey in corporate finance included a mixture of highs and lows including a massive fear of failure, which I had to overcome. It took grit, hard work, resilience and self-motivation, in times when all I wanted to do was give up. I had also taken the opportunity to expand my skill-set across different product areas such as Equity Capital Markets and Corporate Debt, but it didn't take me long to realise that corporate finance is what I am passionate about and I haven't looked back since.

Q *Did you have a mentor at any point in your career? If so, who were they and what did you learn from them?*

A I've been very fortunate to have a number of mentors throughout my career. These mentors ranged from senior leaders within and outside of my field, to peers and even younger individuals with

unique perspectives to offer. To try and name them all would be a difficult ask but I can firmly say that I wouldn't be where (or who) I am without the sage advice I received. What stood out for me about a majority of my mentors is that they were willing to go the extra mile to assist me when needed, or to help me navigate my career to where it is today. My mentors helped me to identify my blind spots, leverage my strengths and be vulnerable in moments where vulnerability was needed (which I believe is a critical trait to demonstrate as a leader in the modern workplace environment).

Q *What is the biggest / most complex transaction you have worked on so far in your career?*

A I have worked on a number of complex and high profile deals, the most recent of which was advising IHS Holdings on its R6.4bn acquisition of 5,701 towers from MTN SA. This was a highly contested auction process which required the ability to be flexible in ones approach to structure and to also move quickly. This transaction represented IHS's entry into South Africa and enabled them to become the largest independent tower operator in the country. We were able to deliver a range of M&A Advisory and Debt services to IHS Towers to assist in its growth trajectory. Whilst it's a privilege to work on high profile transactions, I have probably learnt more from transactions that failed which also taught me resilience when I was a young analyst.

Q *Did the COVID-19 pandemic with the various lockdowns, changes in working habits etc. bring about any major changes for you from a work/career perspective?*

A Absolutely. I had just joined Absa, after 8.5 years at Standard Bank

when hard lockdown was announced. It was daunting because not only was I joining a new company, I also had to do so remotely. I recall only having met my team in person more than 6 months after joining which was a shock to the system, as I had pre-conceived ideas regarding the physical stature of my team members (it is a weird experience when you eventually meet someone and they actually turn out to be really short or really tall!). The biggest challenge I was faced with was how to make an impact on the organisation and prove myself whilst not having the ability to do so physically. It made me self-reflect and the question I posed to myself at the time was, "Mesh, how do you want to show up today and what sort of impact would you like to have".

Q *What advice would you give to young women who are looking to enter the corporate finance market?*

A Entering the corporate finance space might seem daunting especially if there are numerous war stories and myths that young women may hear, that could deter them from taking the leap. We all have doubts, as individuals, as human beings. Make conscious efforts to understand what those are for you and take steps to overcome your self-doubts, to prevent it from eroding your confidence or your ability to achieve your goals. If you don't believe in yourself, how do you expect others to? Have faith in your abilities and an inner drive that will help you withstand any trials or tribulations (because rest assured, there will be many as you grow in your career!). To be successful in corporate finance, you must love what you do, be willing to work hard and recognize that sacrifices are necessary in order for you to achieve your goals. 📌