



# Q&A

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

During my first year in corporate finance, I found myself in a meeting discussing a complex issue that threatened to derail an important deal. As I listened to my experienced colleagues thinking aloud, exploring creative solutions, a spark of inspiration struck. I took a leap and suggested an idea – a bold thought born in the moment. The team embraced it, and my contribution proved pivotal in solving the challenge, enabling the deal to move forward. Witnessing my suggestion come to life and seeing its tangible impact solidified my passion for corporate finance. It was a defining moment that taught me the power of courage and creativity, igniting a deep-seated drive to shape meaningful outcomes in this dynamic field.

This experience highlighted the importance of creating a safe space for both juniors and women to speak out. Having such an environment allowed me to have the courage to share my ideas, and it continues to do so. The support and openness of my team played a crucial role in this, demonstrating that when people feel safe and valued, they are more likely to contribute innovative solutions.

## Can you share an experience where mentorship played a crucial role in overcoming gender-based challenges or biases in your career?

At the start of my journey in corporate finance, I initially tried to conform to the prevailing norms, often mimicking the majority of the team – which was (and is) male-dominated – and adhering to what seemed to be unspoken rules. But this shifted when I started working under an extraordinary woman whose intelligence, drive and unwavering commitment to fairness shaped not just my career, but my identity within this field. She stood up firmly for herself and, importantly, for me, teaching me the value of asserting my presence and being unapologetically female in an environment where subtle barriers often persisted.

Her mentorship transformed my perspective. She demonstrated how perceptions could be altered, fostering a more inclusive workspace where mutual respect and equality thrived. Perhaps her most valuable lesson was helping me recognise and combat imposter syndrome, a struggle faced by countless women navigating male-dominated industries. She taught me that resilience does not just emerge from personal strength, but also from the solidarity among women – helping others stand taller while standing tall yourself.

Her influence didn't stop at me; the changes she championed rippled through our team, cultivating an atmosphere where awareness of equality became ingrained. This evolution highlighted the profound impact women can have when they lift each other and actively teach those around them, including male colleagues, about the importance of equity. The unwavering support of allies, both female and male, has made my professional journey not just enriching, but deeply empowering. It is a testament to the transformative power of mentorship, and the essential role women play in shaping inclusive workplaces that recognise and celebrate diverse contributions.

## What barriers still need to be broken down in M&A or the corporate finance industry for women?

Corporate finance often revolves around serving clients and, in many cases, the adage that “the client is always right” applies. However, a significant challenge arises when many clients in leadership positions, whether in large, listed companies or private equity firms, are predominantly men who may possess unconscious biases. These biases can manifest subtly, such as looking to male colleagues for validation, or not fully giving weight to the insights shared by women. While progress has been made, and though these dynamics have improved over time, there is still work to be done.

Navigating these situations can be particularly challenging, as it's rarely appropriate to call out a client or create conflict. By actively participating in discussions, sharing their insights and demonstrating their expertise, women can challenge existing biases and reshape perceptions. It is essential for women to have the courage to keep fighting and breaking down these barriers by being proactive and vocal in their contributions. In addition, one of the most effective ways to address this is through the confidence and support displayed by male colleagues and leaders. When they affirm and reinforce your expertise in front of clients, it becomes a powerful tool for overcoming these biases and establishing credibility. My male counterparts within my team have played a crucial role in this regard, and continue to actively support me in breaking down barriers. Their allyship and willingness to champion equality in everyday interactions underscores the importance of collective efforts in fostering equality within professional spaces.

## What advice would you give to your younger self starting out in this field?

If I could speak to my younger self, I would say: trust in your abilities, and never underestimate the power of your voice. There will be moments when you feel overshadowed or overlooked, especially in an industry that has traditionally been male dominated. But remember, your perspective is unique and valuable; never let doubts or biases diminish your confidence.

Build a network of allies early on. Seek mentors who genuinely support your growth, and colleagues who recognise your capabilities and advocate for you. Allyship is not just about having people who stand by you, but also about learning to stand firm for others as you grow into your role.

I would also remind myself to redefine success on my own terms. It's easy to get caught up in chasing external validation, but true fulfillment comes from staying authentic and aligning your career with your values and purpose. Be bold in challenging norms, but approach these challenges with diplomacy and resilience.

Finally, prioritise self-care and balance. The demands of corporate finance can be intense, but taking time for yourself will make you stronger and more effective in the long run. Embrace the journey with optimism, and learn from each step – it's all part of building the future you envision. 

