

DealMakers[®]

WOMEN 2025



Women of SA's M&A and Financial Markets Industry



Marylou Greig
Editor

Each year on Women's Day, we pause to honour the courage, strength and resilience of women, both past and present, who have broken barriers and paved the way for future generations. In South Africa, this day holds deep historical significance, rooted in the 1956 march of 20,000 women to the Union Buildings in protest against unjust laws. It serves as both a tribute and a call to action; a reminder of how far we've come, and how much further we must go.

Within the South African M&A and financial markets industry, women continue to make strides, often quietly, often against the odds. This sector, long dominated by men, is slowly but surely beginning to recognise the immense value women bring to the table: not only through skill and insight, but through leadership, empathy, resilience and collaboration.

This collection of profiles and personal reflections is a celebration of those women. Each voice is unique, and each journey distinct, but common threads emerge; work hard, believe in yourself, and embrace the guidance and support of others. These stories are rich with lessons: from overcoming doubt to navigating complex deals, from building credibility to mentoring others in the quest to advance the visibility and influence of women in this industry.

It is our hope that these pages serve as more than just a showcase; that they be a source

FOREWORD

DealMakers WOMEN 2025

Women of SA's M&A and Financial Markets Industry

of inspiration to young women considering careers in finance, law or dealmaking. We hope that they offer encouragement to those who are navigating their own path, and serve as a reminder that they are not alone. Others have walked this road and thrived.

Let this be both a recognition of remarkable women and a beacon for the next generation.

This fifth edition of the feature will be released at the third DealMakers Women's Day networking event, which builds on the previous two years' success and will once again include a panel discussion. This year's panel members are Jo Mitchell-Marias, a Partner in Restructuring, Turnaround & Performance Improvement at Deloitte Africa; Amalia Lui, a Partner at Clyde & Co Tanzania; Shireen Motara, Founder and CEO of The Next Chapter Studio; Soria Hay, Founder and Head of Corporate Finance at Bravura; and Titi Sekhukhune, co-Founder and Partner at Infinite Partners.

My grateful thanks go to this dynamic industry for the continued support and participation in this feature and the networking event. And to my own team, who themselves are women juggling many roles, for their dedication and excellence in compiling this discourse – a collaboration and testament to the talented and resilient women in this space. 🙌

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Editor: Marylou Greig
Assistant Editor: Lee Robinson
Research: Vanessa Aitken
Marketing: Samantha Walmsley
Design & Layout: Suzie Assenmacher



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Tel: +27 (0) 11 886 6446
e-mail: reception@gleason.co.za
www.dealmakerssouthafrica.com

VIDEOS

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Q&A

Marianna Djonis

Executive - Structured Finance
Standard Bank

What did your path into this field look like — was it intentional, or did you discover it along the way?

My path into this field wasn't intentional. After completing my audit articles, I had my sights set on a career in corporate finance, but given the market conditions at the time, opportunities were scarce. While considering a financial manager role with a client, I was offered a position in tax. I saw it as a chance to broaden my skill set — something I'd do for a year or two before moving on.

That "year or two" became more than 15 years. Just as I'd start to feel ready for a change, new and exciting opportunities would emerge. I went from handling compliance and basic advisory work to structuring complex leveraged buyouts and setting up private equity funds. It's not the path I planned, but it's exactly where I was meant to be.

What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

One of my most memorable early deals was a leveraged buyout of a JSE-listed company. It was long, complex, and full of unexpected turns. I'll never forget a night just before the TRP guarantee was due, when a sudden legislative change sent us into crisis mode. Whilst I no longer remember what the change was, I do remember my team and I spending the night around a whiteboard, problem-solving under pressure.

That deal taught me that M&A is rarely straightforward. It demands resilience, agility, and a solution-driven mindset. Most of all, it showed me the power of a strong, trusted team — people who show up and stay in it with you, no matter what.

Have you faced any gender-based challenges or biases in your career? If so, how did you navigate them?

Earlier in my career, during a critical internal briefing, a senior stakeholder asked me to fetch his jug of water from his desk. I was the only woman in the room, and the most senior representative from my team. Despite the importance of the meeting and the fact that several members of his own team were present, any of whom could have fulfilled the request, I complied.

That moment has stayed with me. It was a subtle yet striking reminder of the gender dynamics that can still play out in

professional spaces. I often reflect on that experience when I need to remind myself to use my voice — not just for my own sake, but to set an example and advocate for others as well.

What does self-care look like for you, and how do you prevent burnout?

To be honest, I don't always get self-care right, especially with the demands and time constraints of daily life. While I know I need to work on things like exercising more and eating healthier, I do make a conscious effort to prioritise my mental well-being by carving out time to switch off.


Small habits make a big difference: I pamper myself when I need a pick-me-up, my phone goes into "Do Not Disturb" mode after a certain hour (with exceptions, of course), and Sundays are my dedicated "switch-off day". Aside from attending church in the morning, the rest of the day is just for me — no work, no social commitments. I'll work late on Friday or through Saturday if I need to, just to protect that time. It's my way of recharging and setting myself up for the week ahead.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

I believe in sharing experiences, whether they're good, bad, personal, or professional. Storytelling not only connects us, it also invites vulnerability, which builds trust and understanding, and reminds us that we are not alone. One of the most meaningful moments of support I've received wasn't advice at all; it was someone simply saying, "Me too." That simple moment of connection meant everything.

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

My mother used to say, "No one is better than you — just different." I wish I had carried that mindset into my professional life earlier. In the business world, it's easy to feel like an imposter, but often what sets others apart is simply different experience.

I'd tell my younger self: don't compare; rather learn. Every challenge you face is shaping your own experience. Come prepared, stay curious, and trust that your time will come. I would also remind myself to trust my instincts more, and not to be afraid to take risks. 



Q&A

Natalie Di-Sante

Executive, Head – Regulatory
Standard Bank

What initially drew you to a career in M&A or corporate finance?

I never considered a career in corporate finance, and was introduced into a role in a corporate finance team without knowing what it really entailed. The moment I learnt more about the environment and what the work involved, I was hooked. I was curious to learn more about M&A, and found the work intriguing and interesting. It seemed to be a highly pressurised and challenging environment, but rewarding. I enjoyed the complexity of transactions, the thought process around structuring, and overlaying the regulations.

Have there been key decisions that significantly impacted your career trajectory?

The decision to join Standard Bank's corporate finance team impacted my career trajectory. It provided me with opportunities, and has been a tremendous learning curve. It has also been a very rewarding career path. I have worked on many different transactions, some of which were really complex, as well as new listings on the JSE. The exposure has been tremendous.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

Resilience is built over time, as you grow and learn to deal with situations. I have learnt that you never have to stand back, make excuses or be afraid to voice your opinion, and that being soft spoken is actually okay. We are all equal and play our own part in a team. I am fortunate to be part of a team where women are recognised and supported.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

When I started my career in corporate finance, my children were small and work pressures were real. The hours were long, and

spending time with family was limited. I had to find a way to juggle and balance this and, for me, it was important to make sure that I set aside time to spend with my family.

It was important to try and attend events that mattered to them, even if it meant that when I got home later, I had to complete what I needed to finish from a work perspective, or get up early the next morning to get through the "to do" list.

I have a better work-life balance now, and it's important for me to have "me time".

I have learnt that
you never have to
stand back, make
excuses or be afraid
to voice your opinion,
and that being soft
spoken is actually
okay.


What does self-care look like for you, and how do you prevent burnout?

Fortunately, I have always been able to cope with stress. Self-care for me is focusing on taking care of myself by exercising, eating well, and making sure that I get sufficient rest in order to destress.

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

My advice would be to keep going and never give up. There are days where things are difficult and challenging, and sometimes the learning curve is huge, but just know that you can do it. Build and treasure relationships. It is also always a good idea to have a mentor. Try and become part of a team where there are opportunities to learn and grow within a supportive leadership structure.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

The belief that all will be okay, and knowing that although challenges come our way, you always come out stronger in the end. And then it's the coffees and conversations with my daughter, who is always prepared to just listen. 



Q&A

Nompilo Thenjwayo

Analyst

Standard Bank

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

One of the biggest decisions I've made was choosing to stay in a role that challenged me, rather than taking a more comfortable path. It wasn't the easiest decision at the time, but it exposed me to complex deals and steep learning curves that accelerated my growth. Another key decision was learning to speak up more — whether in meetings or when advocating for myself. That shift in mindset changed how others saw me, and more importantly, how I see myself.

What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

My first deal was a whirlwind — long hours, steep learning curves, and a lot of imposter syndrome. But it was also incredibly rewarding. I learnt how much goes on behind the scenes, how important attention to detail is, and how valuable it is to have a team that supports you. I also learnt that it's okay not to know everything on day one — what matters is being willing to learn, ask questions, and show up consistently.

Have you faced any gender-based challenges or biases in your career? If so, how did you navigate them?

I've encountered moments where I felt underestimated or overlooked — whether it was being talked over in meetings, assumptions being made about my role, or having to work harder to be taken seriously. It's frustrating, but I've learnt to pick my battles and speak up when it matters. I try to stay grounded in my work, let my results speak for themselves, and surround myself with people who value what I bring to the table. It's not always easy, but I've found strength in staying true to myself.

What's the hardest lesson you've learnt, and how did it shape you?

One of the hardest lessons I've learnt is that not everyone will see your value right away, and that's okay. Early on, I took rejection or criticism very personally. Over time, I've realised that growth often comes from discomfort, and that setbacks don't define you — they shape you. That shift in mindset has helped me become more confident, more patient, and more focused on the long game.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

As someone who was a student-athlete at university, I learnt early on how to manage intense schedules and competing priorities.

That discipline has carried over into my career in finance. I treat my calendar like training blocks — allocating time for deep work, recovery and personal commitments. I've found that maintaining structure and staying physically active helps me stay sharp and avoid burnout. It's not always perfect, but I try to be intentional about keeping space for relationships, hobbies and downtime.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

Yes — massively. I used to think work-life balance meant having everything perfectly figured out: excelling at work, maintaining relationships, staying healthy, and still finding time for hobbies and rest. But I've come to realise that's not what balance really is.

Work-life balance isn't about perfection — it's about being adaptable and self-aware. Some weeks are work-heavy, others are more personal, and that's okay. It's more about checking in with yourself regularly and making sure you're not constantly sacrificing one part of your life for another.

I really relate to something Michelle Obama once said: "We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our own 'to-do' list." That's been a big shift for me, realising that balance also means prioritising myself, not just trying to keep everything else afloat.

Did you have any mentors or role models? How did they influence your journey?

I've been fortunate to have a few mentors and role models who've shaped my journey in meaningful ways. Some were formal mentors, people who took the time to guide me, challenge me, and open doors. Others were role models I observed from a distance — women who carried themselves with confidence, made bold decisions, and didn't compromise their values. What they all had in common was a sense of authenticity and resilience. They showed me that success doesn't have to look one way, and that gave me permission to define my own path.

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

I'd tell myself: "you don't need to have it all figured out right away. It's okay to ask questions, to not know everything, and to grow into your confidence." I'd also say, "your voice matters, even in rooms where you feel like the least experienced person. Be curious, be kind, and don't underestimate the value of building genuine relationships." 🗣️



Q&A

Obakeng Monamodi

Analyst

Standard Bank

What initially drew you to a career in M&A or corporate finance?

I have always been intrigued by the ability to see behind the curtain and understand how companies come to be, grow and evolve. I was curious about how deals are structured, and how companies merge – especially at a large, publicly listed scale. The complexity of buying and selling companies has always fascinated me.

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

My path into corporate finance was serendipitous. When I was in high school, making university choices, I told my mom that I wanted to be an investment banker or a consultant. I knew very little about what either career entailed, but they appealed to me. My university journey was challenging, and my early years in the working world were filled with imposter syndrome. I doubted my ability to succeed in corporate finance. One day, I shared my CV with a friend at the bank for a credit role, only to receive an email from the Head of Corporate Finance in Business and Commercial Banking – and, as they say, the rest is history.

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

The choice to move from mid-market M&A to corporate and listed M&A has been the best decision of my career so far. It has challenged me and helped me grow in unimaginable ways. Above all, it has affirmed my ability to do hard things, and reminded me that I am more capable than I know.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

I've built resilience by cultivating discipline in my routine, my wellness, and how I show up for my job. People often remark on how difficult it must be to work in a male-dominated environment, but to most people's surprise, it has been good for me. It has taught me to embrace my femininity, lean into my strengths, and speak up in areas where I may lack experience. I don't try to keep up with the men; instead, I bring a softness and human element to the environment, which allows everyone to let their guard (and

egos) down. I think, in such an intense environment, we can all get quite robotic and hardened, so I go out of my way not to add to the intensity and harshness of the environment.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

My views have evolved. I've accepted that balance is a myth, and chasing it can become a job in itself. Instead, I've embraced routine, discipline and self-care to keep me going. I make the most of my free time, ensure that I rest when I can, and give myself what I need, when I need it. Sometimes I sleep more than I see my family, or spend most of my weekend socialising because that's what I need to recharge at that time.

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

You are far more capable than you realise, and you have to bet on yourself before anyone else does. Most people suffer from some form of imposter syndrome or another, but what matters is how you deal with it. I would also emphasise the importance of showing up and standing out. People treat and receive you based on how you treat and present yourself, so always put your best foot forward. 🙌

I don't try to keep up with the men; instead, I bring a softness and human element to the environment, which allows everyone to let their guard (and egos) down.



Q&A

Oratile Monyeki

Analyst in Advisory - Corporate Finance
Standard Bank

What initially drew you to a career in M&A or corporate finance?

What drew me in, initially, was my love for economics. I fell in love with the subject at 16, and it quickly became more than just an academic interest. It was a lens into global systems, business dynamics, and decision-making. That passion led me to research what a career rooted in economics could look like, and that's when I stumbled upon corporate finance. I didn't fully grasp what it entailed, but I was intrigued. It sounded intellectually demanding, strategic, and full of impact.

That ambition followed me into university, where I enrolled with the intention of majoring in economics and finance. I did well in my first year, but financial realities meant I had to pivot. I needed a bursary, and the most viable path was through accounting. Ironically, everyone in my family had always encouraged me to become a CA(SA), which I had firmly resisted. But I came to appreciate accounting, and recognised the strength of the CA designation. So I chose to recalibrate and pursued my articles in audit at EY.

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

Even though I temporarily took a different route, I never lost sight of the destination and kept my sights on corporate finance. I still loved the structure, the problem-solving, and the commercial storytelling that finance demands. And I was clear with myself: I had set out to do this, and I was going to make it happen.

Corporate finance was still that dream space where everything came together: the numbers, the big-picture thinking, and the opportunity to help shape real business outcomes.

But the detour through audit proved to be invaluable. It taught me how to manage pressure, meet intense deadlines, and engage with clients. It also gave me early exposure to leadership.

As a senior in the team, I was often responsible for guiding and mentoring juniors, something I quickly found that I genuinely enjoyed. Teaching others helped me solidify my own knowledge, and gave me a clearer sense of how far I'd come.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

My foundation for resilience was laid long before my career began. I was homeschooled for five years, which meant I had to be incredibly self-disciplined. There was no teacher chasing after me to meet deadlines – it was all on me. That experience taught me how to be accountable to myself, how to stay motivated, and how to push through, even when it was difficult. That mindset has followed me into every professional space I've entered.

I've also learnt that it's not just about endurance, it's also about being smart with your energy. High-pressure environments can

easily lead to burnout if you're not working efficiently. I've always tried to find ways to work smarter, to ask the right questions early, to learn from those around me, and not to fall into the trap of trying to do everything on my own. Being surrounded by brilliant minds, there's so much value in collaborating and leaning on your team when needed.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

Absolutely. Earlier in my career, I subscribed to the more traditional notion of "balance", where work and personal life were treated almost like two separate entities you were expected to juggle evenly. But one of my former bosses offered a concept that really shifted how I view things: work-life priorities.

In a high-pressure, client-facing and deadline-driven field, true balance isn't always possible. The hours can be long, and the demands can shift quickly. Trying to achieve a perfect balance every day often leads to frustration and disappointment. Instead, I've learnt to focus on what my priorities are at any given point in time, both personally and professionally, and to ensure that the most important things don't fall through the cracks.

There will always be trade-offs, but I try to be very intentional about showing up for the things that matter most. I might miss some of the smaller moments, but I make a concerted effort to be present for the important celebrations, the meaningful conversations, the family milestones.

At the same time, I also understand the importance of showing up for my clients, especially during pivotal moments in a transaction. The key for me is making sure that over time, the things I value most, both at work and at home, are receiving the attention they deserve.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

Since varsity, I've consistently enrolled in mentorship programmes – not only to receive guidance, but also to offer it. Even early in my career, I felt strongly that we all have something to give, no matter how far along we are. You don't need to have 20 years of experience to offer meaningful support; sometimes the most helpful insights are those little nuggets you pick up while finding your feet. The kind of advice you wish someone had given you at the start.

In my current role, I make a point of connecting with new graduates and interns who are navigating and still finding their feet in their careers. Something as simple as scheduling a coffee chat or checking in can go a long way. These moments create a safe space for them to ask questions, share concerns, or just feel seen, which is often all someone needs to keep going with confidence. 🙌



Q&A

Shanelle Singh

Associate - Mergers and Acquisitions
Standard Bank

What initially drew you to a career in M&A or corporate finance?

What drew me to a career in corporate finance was the combination of financial modelling, logical thinking and overall strategy. As someone who doesn't feel engaged with routine tasks, the dynamic environment and intellectual challenge of M&A appealed to me. Engaging with the brightest minds around, through senior colleagues and industry leaders, provides exposure not easily found elsewhere. It is inspiring to work on impactful transactions whose effects will shape a company's future. It is a bonus that the career affords me a vacation or two. Working in M&A allows me to work with diverse sectors, gaining insights into different business models and strategies. As a young professional, the opportunity to develop these valuable skills was important in my decision-making process.

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

The path into finance was intentional; I was always academically inclined towards the finance field, but it was after greater exposure to the various finance streams throughout university that the interest in corporate finance started to take shape in my mind. After completing my SAICA articles in external audit, I branched out into traditional financial manager, internal audit and general corporate finance roles before settling into my current position in M&A. Not being afraid to leave a career path that is not working for me has led me to a field that I am excited to be a part of. The journey and broader experience reaffirmed my passion for corporate finance and the learning opportunities it provides.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

Having a personal 'why' for choosing this career path is important to navigate challenging situations. In a high-pressure environment, it is important not to take things said in a stressful moment personally, and to learn and grow from any setbacks faced. Having high standards for yourself ensures you are prepared for any situation. Being in a male-dominated environment throughout my career, I have never felt any pressure, as I have confidence in my abilities. Advocating for yourself and demonstrating what you bring to the table are appreciated in any environment. And I do

believe the work environment has been changing, where gender diversity is acknowledged and promoted.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

My work-life balance is better in some weeks, compared with others, due to the nature of how a transaction process progresses. The concept of work-life balance has changed for me throughout my career. Currently, balance to me means being able to get to those things that are a priority in my life. It is important in slower weeks to take the time to reset and rejuvenate, through vacations and quality time with loved ones, so that, in the long-term, I build a career that is sustainable.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

A good starting point is always to try to be the person I needed when I entered the field. Being a team member who is supportive from a place of emotional intelligence helps me engage with empathy and clarity. High standards are a non-negotiable, but still achievable in an encouraging environment. Contributing to a work environment where others feel respected, valued and motivated is incredibly important to me. I try to practise situational leadership by tailoring the approach to individual needs, which is more effective in the diverse teams we work in – focusing more on being output driven and where optics should play a lesser role. My mentorship and support approaches continually develop, based on my experiences.

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

- Trust your instincts and voice your thoughts with confidence, knowing that you deserve to be in the room.
- Not everything is within your control and the process is not always as you planned; however, these moments of uncertainty provide the most growth.
- You can succeed not because of your background, but despite it.
- Focus on building a career that reflects your ambition and your authenticity. 🙌



Q&A

Tanya Landman
Head - Corporate Broking
Standard Bank

Was there a pivotal moment or influence early in your life that shaped your interest in finance?

Throughout my school career, I always had a natural ability and enjoyment for maths. The options I explored for my undergraduate studies post school were vastly different, ranging from accounting to graphic design to psychiatry. However, my strong affinity for maths and accounting ultimately led me to study a BCom Accounting and obtain my Chartered Accountant qualification, which was instrumental in opening doors across the finance and banking space at the time.

What did your path into corporate finance look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

My move into corporate finance was intentional. However, my desire to enter this field was only clear a few years after I finished articles, and once I'd had the opportunity to travel, work abroad and experience different cultures. My first permanent role post articles was in structured asset finance at a UK bank in London. After moving up from a middle-office role into a client facing position, I realised my passion for client engagement, financial analysis, and the excitement of working in the "city". At the same time, a few of my friends and ex-colleagues had started to pursue careers in corporate finance – it sounded challenging, but very exciting, to work on deals that made the front page of newspapers. I felt that the corporate finance field could provide me with a steep learning curve and opportunities to excel. I chose to move back to South Africa, and secured a role in a corporate finance team at an international investment bank. I gained invaluable experience in my foundational years in corporate finance – in M&A, equity capital markets and sponsor services – before moving onto more diverse roles in investment banking, and on the client-side at a corporate.

My move into corporate broking was, however, less deliberate. Due to the broad experience I obtained throughout my career in corporate finance, equity sales, investor relations, shareholder value management and strategy, an unexpected but welcome opportunity in corporate broking presented itself. I jumped at the opportunity to consolidate my broad skill set in this sub-sector of corporate finance, where I could apply a particular fondness for capital markets and add value for clients through strategic equity advice in their pursuit of delivering long-term sustainable shareholder value.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

While the investment banking industry is male-dominated, particularly at the more senior levels, I am fortunate to have worked in diverse environments with supportive leaders and teams, where I haven't necessarily felt the need to prove myself just because I am female. Corporate finance is very competitive and demanding; to build and maintain resilience, I have had to learn to manage expectations, not to be overly sensitive in high pressure situations, to be adaptable within reason, and to continually remind myself of my achievements and true worth.


How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

I have found that my need for balance has naturally evolved as my career and personal life have progressed. I was fortunate enough to be able to take a career break to focus on my young family. The return to work and demands of being a full-time working parent have required continual planning and prioritising, discipline, managing expectations, and a strong support network at home. Consistent performance and delivery at work, and an approachable and accessible attitude with your team and clients is also critical to build trust, affording the flexibility required to achieve balance.

Did you have any mentors or role models? How did they influence your journey?

I have had several informal mentors throughout my career, starting from my time at university. These have taken the form of leaders, colleagues, friends and family. Their support, guidance, and honest, objective advice have been pivotal and influential as I have navigated the various stages of my professional and personal life.

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

The hours can be long, work demanding, and timelines seemingly unrealistic, but it is worth it in the end. The experience and knowledge you will gain is invaluable and transferrable across fields, combined with exposure to multiple sectors, transactions, products and clients. Seek out a mentor, and learn to manage expectations early on; be inquiring, be consistent, build your professional relationships, and most importantly, make time to maintain and lean on your personal support network. 



Q&A

Tochukwu Okehi

Vice President – Equity Capital Markets
Standard Bank

Was there a pivotal moment or influence early in your life that shaped your interest in finance?

My interest in corporate finance was ignited at the age of 15, during a pivotal time in my family's life. I vividly recall watching my father navigate the challenging merger of his private insurance company with another firm. This was a strategic move to comply with the new recapitalisation requirement set by NAICOM (Nigeria's insurance regulator) at that time. Witnessing the depth of negotiations and the intricate reassessment of equity value left a mark. The process – both complex and captivating – required a sophisticated understanding of financial principles and strategic thinking. This experience sparked my curiosity and set me on a path towards a career in investment banking.

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

I was deliberate in shaping my career path after witnessing firsthand the dynamic world of mergers and acquisitions from my father's experience. Initially, I aspired to become an auditor, but this experience solidified my interest in corporate finance, and the comprehensive curriculum in Accounting and Finance at the University of Manchester was a perfect fit to build a foundation. I then advanced my expertise with a MSc in Finance from the London School of Economics and Political Science, which offered some insights into the world of private equity.

What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

My first major deal was a sell-side advisory transaction for a consumer goods company that held franchise rights for one of the largest global ice cream and pizza brands. The experience was both exhilarating and educational. As someone with a sweet tooth, I found visiting the production sites and witnessing operations firsthand particularly thrilling. This opportunity allowed me to delve into the intricacies of valuation, and emphasised the critical importance of detailed information in successful transactions. The project was a perfect blend of my personal interests and professional aspirations, providing the adrenaline rush of deal-making and the satisfaction of drawing out the value chain for the

Information Memorandum. It reinforced the necessity of thorough due diligence and strategic thinking in every transaction.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

To navigate a high-pressure field, I've learnt to assert myself and advocate for my ideas. Establishing credibility through consistent performance and cultivating a reputation for reliability has been key to building resilience and thriving professionally.

What's the hardest lesson you've learnt, and how did it shape you?

The lesson of meticulous documentation has been invaluable. It has become clear over time that verbal agreements alone could lead to discrepancies and conflicts. Adopting a habit of documenting all interactions – keeping relevant and affected parties in the loop, particularly via email – enhances clarity, efficiency and integrity, and can help position you for career advancements.

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

I would advise my younger self to focus on specialising in a particular area of investment banking early on. Having rotated across three different corporate finance products (mergers and acquisitions, equity capital markets and debt capital markets) for over four years, I have learnt over time that by honing expertise in one product, you can build a strong foundation and gain substantial experience that will set you apart in your career.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

Building something visible and tangible outside of my job has been critical to help balance a high-pressured career with my personal life, both mentally and physically. Whilst setting boundaries is still a constant battle, having that mental note that there is something else to deal with has pushed for more intentional time management with work. 🏡