Q&A

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In your view, how does having diverse viewpoints at the negotiation table tangibly impact the outcome or strategy of a major transaction?

When looking at a transaction, numbers alone never tell the full story. Ultimately, success comes from a strategic rationale that resonates with all stakeholders, including shareholders, management, employees and consumers. Having diversity of thought at all stages of a transaction ensures a strong understanding of how different stakeholders might react, which inevitably leads to a more resilient transaction outcome.

What do you see as the most exciting growth sector or trend in South African M&A and capital markets right now?

There is a race to own the customer ecosystem. We're seeing banks, insurers, retailers and telcos increasingly converge around the same customer. Businesses are moving beyond selling individual products and are, instead, building integrated ecosystems that increase share of wallet and customer lifetime value. Sustained competitive advantage is likely to come from owning the customer relationship and the data behind it, and we will likely see M&A or partnerships emerge that will focus on acquiring these capabilities.

Deal-making requires intense relationship building. How do you establish trust and credibility quickly with stakeholders who might be set in traditional ways of doing business?

Credibility today is earned through relevance, not just information access. Clients can easily verify facts and research independently, so the real differentiator is demonstrating a deep understanding of their business, strategic priorities and growth ambitions. While AI makes information more accessible, it is also making authentic human relationships more valuable. Trust is built by providing sound judgement to clients, and demonstrating that you are genuinely invested in a client's long-term success.

If you could go back to the very first week of your career, what is the single piece of technical or professional advice you wish someone had given you?

Ask the question! Don't assume people know more than you. Being armed with more information allows you to understand the problem better and come up with better solutions. You can never know too much!

How has your definition of success changed from when you were an ambitious graduate to who you are today?

My five-year-old daughter recently asked me what the word 'rich' meant, and I paused before answering her question. This ties into how my perspective on success has changed – being rich in life, rich in family, and rich in health is what true success looks like, versus chasing the next career milestone.

How do you balance the technical, analytical side of valuation with the deeply relational side of managing client expectations?

In my experience, technical acumen and a deep understanding of a client's business, including levers that are available to progress a deal to execution phase is integral to managing client relationships and setting realistic expectations – the two work hand in hand. Walking a journey with a client in a clear and transparent way is the best way to align all parties' interests. In practice, it doesn't always work out this way, but effective communication, and keeping clients up to speed usually mitigates the risks that clients' expectations aren't met

Capital markets require a high tolerance for volatility. What personal traits have helped you thrive in an environment where the goalposts move so quickly?

To thrive in this environment, you need a mix of resilience, intellectual agility, adaptability, and a healthy dose of optimism and positivity. I enjoy the pace and complexity of capital markets and although it can be volatile, it's definitely not monotonous – every day presents new and unique challenges to be solved, which keeps life interesting. You definitely need to be quick on your toes when deals require deal teams to pivot without losing sight of the broader strategic objectives.

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