



Q&A

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

It was the dynamic intersection of strategy, analysis, and real business impact. I've always been fascinated by how companies grow, evolve and create value, and M&A felt like a natural extension of that curiosity.

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

A defining moment in my career came about two years into my focus on corporate M&A. While the experience I gained was valuable, I started to realise that my true interests and strengths lay elsewhere, specifically in competition law, a niche area within M&A. I had always been drawn to the strategic and high-stakes nature of deal-making and, after some reflection, I decided to make a shift.

It wasn't an easy move, but it proved to be incredibly rewarding. I had to draw on both my Bachelor of Commerce and postgraduate LLB to bridge the gap and build expertise in a new field. The moment I made the transition, I felt a renewed sense of purpose and excitement, knowing I was in the right space to apply my skills in a way that aligned with my long-term goals.

Looking back, making that change was one of the most important decisions I've made in my career. It reminded me of the value of following what truly excites me and embracing challenges that push me to grow.

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

Building resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment has been a combination of mindset, support networks, and continuously improving my skill set. I started by developing emotional intelligence, particularly in how I respond to stress and setbacks. Over time, I learnt to stay calm under pressure, pausing to assess situations rather than reacting impulsively, and approaching challenges with a more strategic mindset.

Having a solid support network has also made a significant difference. I've been intentional about connecting with other women and allies who understand the unique challenges of the environment and can offer perspective. These relationships, whether in or outside of work, have helped me stay grounded and encouraged me to keep pushing through.

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

Self-care looks like a mix of things – being outdoors, creative, and making sure I take moments of stillness. I love having time to just step away from everything and disconnect, whether it's going for a run or focusing on my breathing at Pilates. I think a big part of preventing burnout is finding that balance between productivity and rest. It's easy to get caught up in the hustle, but I try to check in with myself, notice when I'm feeling off, and give myself permission to step back when needed.

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

Yes, definitely! My mentors have shaped the way I approach challenges, interact with others, and navigate my goals. One of the most influential mentors I had was a woman I met during my articles. She emphasised the importance of resilience and taught me that failure is just a part of the process, not a permanent setback. Instead of focusing on how something went wrong, she pushed me to think about what I could learn from it. That mindset has been essential for me in growing and improving. Another mentor in my life showed me the value of humility and continuous learning. He always remained curious, even after achieving success, which kept him grounded and open-minded. He taught me that growth doesn't stop, and there's always something new to learn, no matter where you are. What stands out most, though, is how both mentors helped me believe in my potential even when things didn't seem clear or easy. Their encouragement gave me the confidence to take risks and trust my instincts.

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

While there have been significant strides toward gender equality, several barriers still need to be addressed for women to achieve full representation and equal opportunities. These barriers include:

- *Unconscious bias and stereotypes:* Women in M&A often face unconscious biases that assume men are more competent or suited for high-pressure deal-making roles. These biases can lead to women being overlooked for promotions, high-profile deals, or leadership roles.
- *Lack of representation in leadership:* Although more women are entering the industry, they remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions, especially at the executive level. Without visible female role models in these top positions, younger women may feel they lack the guidance or motivation to aspire to leadership roles themselves.
- *Work-life balance expectations:* The demanding nature of M&A, with long and often unpredictable hours, can disproportionately affect women, particularly those balancing family responsibilities. These pressures can limit career progression or lead to women stepping back at key points in their professional journey.

Addressing these barriers requires systemic change within firms, including better policies for work-life balance, more opportunities for mentorship, a focus on diversity in leadership roles, and a commitment to eradicate unconscious bias.

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

Don't rush the learning process. It's easy to get caught up in the pace and pressures of M&A, especially early on, but the more you can focus on building a solid understanding of the fundamentals, the better.

Embrace the discomfort. Some of the hardest moments, when you feel like you are out of your depth, will be the ones that teach you the most. 📖

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