Q&A

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Personal reflections and integration

Do you believe AI will act as an equaliser that lowers the barriers to entry for women looking to launch their own boutique advisory firms, or will it further consolidate power among the global hyperscale institutions that own the technology?

Both are true. AI genuinely collapses the cost of things that used to require a team of analysts – first-draft due diligence, comparable-company screening, document review. A sharp woman with great judgement and a small team can now punch far above her headcount. That is real democratisation, and I welcome it.

But, let's not be naïve. The models are owned by a handful of institutions with the capital and data to stay ahead, and access to the best tooling will track access to capital, as it always has. The equalising effect only holds if we deliberately protect it – through fair access, local capability building, and regulators who understand what they're regulating. Left to the market alone, technology tends to concentrate power, not distribute it. So, in my view, AI can be an equaliser, but it won't be one by accident. That's on us.

The phrase 'work-life balance' can feel mythical in transactional finance. How do you personally define and manage the integration of a demanding career with your personal life?

I gave up on 'balance' years ago – it implies a scale that's always tipping, and it just makes me feel like I am always failing at something. Instead, I think in terms of integration and seasons. A live deal is a season: it's all-consuming, and I don't pretend otherwise to the people I love. What I protect is what happens between seasons – the recovery and the being present.

The discipline is in the honesty. I don't promise my family a version of me that a deal season can't deliver. But I'm ruthless about repaying the debt afterward. I always try to, for example, plan a family getaway, even if just for a weekend, after a very busy 'season'.

When the deal closes and the adrenaline drops, how do you intentionally disconnect, recharge, and protect your mental well-being?

The comedown after a deal close is real, and for years I underestimated it – you go from total intensity to a strange flatness overnight. Now I plan for it, rather than getting anxious about it. I build in a deliberate decompression: no new commitments for a few days, proper sleep, time outdoors, and genuine distance from the screen.

I've also learned that recharging isn't the same as resting. Rest is doing nothing; recharging is doing something that uses a completely different part of me. Outlets for me are things like cooking, spending time with my children, and a family weekend break away.

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

As a graduate, success was almost entirely external – the title, the mandate, being in the room where decisions were made, proving I belonged there. And I'm not embarrassed by that ambition; it got me here. But it was a scoreboard someone else was keeping.

Today, success is quieter and, honestly, harder. It's the quality of my judgement under pressure. It's whether the younger people I've backed go on to do things I couldn't. It's being able to look at a transaction and know I'd be comfortable if every detail were on the front page. The graduate wanted to win; the woman I am now wants to have been worth trusting. That shift – from being impressive to being trustworthy – is the one that matters.

When your career in this industry is eventually complete, what is the lasting legacy you want to leave behind in the South African financial sector?

I want to be remembered less for the deals and more for the standard. Two things specifically: first, that I helped make it possible for a woman to accomplish career success in our industry.

Second, integrity that held under pressure. Our sector runs on trust, and trust is built in the moments when cutting a corner would have been easy and no one would have known. If people can say I made the market a little more honest and a little more open than I found it, that's a legacy I'd be proud of.

If your life story up to this point had a headline in a business newspaper, what would it be?

"Built to last: A career measured in trust and integrity, not transactions."

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