



Trishna Sewnarain

Head: Institutional FX and Money Market

What attracted you to finance?

I've been in banking for 22 years now, with most of that time having been in financial markets. I started as a graduate trainee and was lucky to work across different areas of the bank early on. However, it was in 2008 that I found my stride in markets. My motivation was steered by my wanting to solve complex problems, help clients navigate their universe, and contribute to creating financial solutions that drive value and growth for both clients and the bank. I was also inspired by the continuous learning and adaptability that the industry demands. I was drawn to the dynamic, fast-paced environment where every day presents new challenges and opportunities. That's what hooked me.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

Believe it or not, I wanted to be a Bollywood singer! Music was such a big part of my upbringing; it's how we shared stories and connected in my family. However, as I grew older and came across investment banking during a university career counselling session, something clicked. I loved the energy of the environment, the complexity of the work, and the inter-connectedness of the bank with the real world, as in businesses, communities, and economies.

What was it like entering a male-dominated field?

In 2008, the landscape was very different. You had to be confident, stand your ground, and back yourself, especially as a young woman in markets.

I learned early on to stay grounded in my values; to be authentic. I had to lean into my strengths of being relationship driven, resourceful, and resilient. I understood very quickly that credibility comes from knowing your stuff, showing up consistently, and delivering my best always. I surrounded myself with mentors and sponsors, building networks both internally and externally and maintaining a mindset of continuous learning, all of which were critical.

Why did you join Nedbank?

The role gave me a chance to join a focused, growing markets team; it was the kind of challenge I was looking for. What drew me in was the chance to be part of Nedbank's transformation story and to contribute to a high-performing team. Looking back, it was absolutely the right move.

What challenges have you faced along the way, and how did you handle them?

One of the biggest challenges I've faced was navigating environments where my voice was either underestimated or overlooked – especially in the early stages of my career. That was tough. However, I learned that consistency, credibility, and always showing up with your best work eventually speak volumes. One defining moment was being asked to step into the Head of Money Markets right at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. It was unexpected and intense; however, I leaned into it, stayed clear on my purpose, and made sure I wasn't afraid to ask for support. It taught me a lot about leading under pressure.

What are you most proud of during your time at Nedbank CIB?

Definitely being one of the co-creators of the Tabono Women Advancement Programme, which we launched in 2021. It's all about helping women succeed in the workplace, building a leadership pipeline, creating mentorship opportunities, breaking down the barriers that are still very real for many women, and making sure CIB is a space where women feel seen, supported, and empowered. It's close to my heart.

How do you manage work-life balance?

It's not always easy, however, I've learnt to focus on what matters in the moment. I try to be self-aware when I'm stretched too thin, set boundaries, and make space for family, friends, and myself. Saying 'no' without guilt has been a big one; you can't be everything to everyone. Ask for support – don't do it alone. Build a tribe: be it your spouse, extended family or friend; and knowing when to delegate or ask for help at work is key.

What advice would you offer to young women entering the corporate finance field?

Know who you are. Confidence comes from knowing your stuff, so invest in your growth. Confidence grows from competence. Speak up, ask questions, and don't shy away from opportunities just because they feel a bit out of reach. That's where real growth lives.

Build connections with peers, mentors and sponsors. There are tough days, unfair moments, and ceilings to crack – keep going. Learn from every 'no' – let it sharpen your mind and focus and let it not shrink your ambition. Start strong, stay bold, and rise together!

