Q&A

Tarryn Witten

Transactor
RMB

Blueprint for the next generation

What would you say to a young woman looking at the long hours and intense pressure of M&A and thinking, "I don't know if I can do this"?

I'd tell her that almost everyone who succeeds in M&A has had that same thought at some point. The long hours and pressure are real, but there are ebbs and flows. Over time, through experience, you build resilience, confidence and perspective, which helps you navigate the tougher periods.

What matters most is your attitude. You don't need, nor will you have, all the answers on day one. Be willing to learn, stay curious, ask questions and trust that you can grow into the role. The people who thrive are often those who consistently show up, embrace challenges and keep improving.

I'd also point out that the investment banking model has evolved meaningfully in recent years. Many firms have embraced greater flexibility and placed more emphasis on wellbeing and sustainability. While M&A remains demanding, these changes have made the profession more manageable than it once was.

Most importantly, give yourself the chance to discover what you're capable of. Some of the most rewarding experiences come from stepping outside your comfort zone. Don't let the fear of the unknown hold you back if this is where your passion truly lies.

What are the non-negotiable soft skills, beyond financial modelling and sharp Excel skills, that a woman needs to cultivate to excel in capital markets?

Beyond technical expertise, one of the most important skills is the ability to read the room. Capital markets is a people business. Understanding different stakeholders, adapting your approach, and knowing when to speak or listen can be just as valuable as technical capability.

Building genuine relationships are equally important. The strongest professionals are not only technically excellent, but also trusted advisers. Trust is built through credibility, consistency, and showing up when it matters. Many opportunities in this industry stem from relationships developed over time.

I would also encourage young women to identify sponsors early in their careers. Having senior leaders who recognise your potential and actively advocate for your development can make a meaningful difference.

Finally, resilience and confidence are critical. Not the confidence that comes from having all the answers, but the confidence to ask questions, tackle new challenges, contribute your perspective, and keep learning.

The dealmakers who stand out to me combine technical excellence with emotional intelligence, strong relationships, and the ability to earn trust over time.

How do you advise young professionals to build a visible personal brand in an industry that often prioritises behind-the-scenes execution?

Building a personal brand starts with recognising that your reputation is shaped by how people experience working with you every day. In a highly execution-focused environment, it is easy to become consumed by immediate deliverables, but it is equally important to build meaningful relationships with colleagues, clients and other stakeholders.

The most effective personal brands are authentic. This allows for stronger relationships to be built, and is far more sustainable over the long term.

Importantly, your personal brand is often defined more by your actions than your words. It is built through consistency, reliability and trust. Do you deliver on your promises? Can people depend on you under pressure? Are you willing to step up when needed? Are you a team player? Those are the qualities people remember.

Over time, that consistency builds a personal brand that speaks for itself.

The traditional 'rite of passage' was grinding through hours of manual financial modelling and data-room sorting, tasks AI now handles in seconds. How must the training and expectations for entry-level analysts evolve in this new landscape?

The traditional analyst experience was centred around building models, processing large datasets and completing highly manual tasks. While those technical foundations remain important, AI can now perform many of these activities more efficiently. As a result, the value of entry-level professionals is shifting from producing information to interpreting it, challenging it, and applying it effectively.

Training should place greater emphasis on critical thinking, commercial judgment, and the ability to connect the dots. It is no longer enough to build a model. The real differentiator is understanding what the output means, identifying key insights, assessing strategic implications, and communicating conclusions clearly to clients and decision-makers.

The next generation of analysts has a natural advantage, having grown up alongside rapidly evolving technology. AI should be viewed as a tool that augments capability, rather than replaces it. The real opportunity lies in using technology to work smarter, uncover deeper insights, and focus on areas that require human judgement, creativity and relationship-building.

My advice would be to embrace technology while continuing to build strong technical foundations. Equally important are commercial awareness, communication skills, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. In a world where information is increasingly accessible, genuine insight remains scarce. The analysts who thrive will be those who combine technology with human judgement to deliver better outcomes for clients.

RMB