



Faeza Amod

Director: Senior M&A Investment Banker,
Absa Corporate and Investment Banking



Q *Where did your financial markets journey begin, and how did you end up where you are today?*

A My career in corporate finance started at Absa/Barclays in 2014. I joined a team with broader extension into the global Barclays network, working across several sectors and geographies. However, my aspiration to work in corporate finance started long before then. I spent the greater part of my early career in an equity research role, where I honed my knowledge in the telecommunications, media and technology sectors. Those insights were very useful when I joined a corporate finance team, as I brought with me an enriched client relationship network and a solid set of technical skills – both of which were essential to my role as a banker.

Being entrusted with key strategic decisions for major corporates, both locally and abroad, makes this one of the most dynamic industries I have had the privilege of working in. That, coupled with colleagues, clients and seniors who have a vast array of knowledge and experience, continue to keep me very engaged in this profession.

Q *Did you have a mentor at any point in your career? If so, who were they and what did you learn from them?*

A I have been fortunate to have had several mentors throughout my career. I'm further fortunate to have some mentors in my family, whose experiences I continue to learn from. The most valuable lessons I have taken from them are the importance of having a strong

work ethic; and that you should build a career based on acquiring skills, rather than focusing on a "job" or role.

Q *What, if any, hurdles have you had to overcome in an industry that has traditionally been male-dominated?*

A I would like to say that there have not been many, but in truth there are challenges. Retention of females past the traditional associate role (who can ultimately assume more senior positions) has been incredibly difficult. When I started my career in corporate finance, I was one of only two females in the team, while our broader cohort extended to about 25 professionals. Often you are the only female in the room. Finding your voice to speak up or debate is an item I have seen on numerous occasions as a developmental area for many females, but that same feedback is not replicated for their male colleagues. Generalisations aside, having the confidence to pursue progression and promotion is something I see many females contemplate heavily. If I had to hazard a guess, I would say this is down to females thinking they have to work significantly harder or be an absolute expert in their chosen field. While these may be some of the many considerations women wrestle with, much of it is taken as a given for their male colleagues.

Q *What are some of the most memorable deals you have worked on?*

A All deals are memorable for me, as there is something unique to each of them. A standout, however, was my first deal. We were selling a telecom operation

based in a difficult jurisdiction in Africa, for a client whose business was based in larger, more developed markets. Getting up to speed with all the workstreams and processes on a transaction, much of which was new to me, coupled with a very tight transaction timeline, translated into a fast and steep learning curve. The adage that "You learn the most on your most difficult deals", is definitely true!

Deals where I worked with a client that is new to my portfolio, or that operates in a sector outside of telecoms and media, are also memorable. The considerations and regulations are different, and the knowledge gained along the way is invaluable.

Q *What advice would you give to young women who are looking to enter to financial markets?*

A As a female, you are already a standout! Seriously, though, find the thing that interests you early, and hone that skill. If it is in a sector or in a particular vertical (such as regulation), work on learning it so that whenever you are called upon, your response is considered and definitive. This is just one of the building blocks in establishing your credibility.

Secondly, participate – and grow your network early. Client relationships come easier when you know how to extend your network and connect people.

Finally, maintain your authenticity. Every individual and their contribution is significant. These different perspectives enrich conversations with clients and ultimately help them get to an answer in a considered way. 