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Q Where did your corporate finance journey begin, and what led you to pursue a career in the space that you are in?

A My journey in banking started on a trading desk, more than two decades ago. Inspired by Michael Lewis' influential book "Liar's Poker," I was drawn to the dynamic world of finance. Trading, in particular, captivated me due to its inherent ability to quantify one's value within an organisation. I found great satisfaction in analysing market trends, swiftly responding to news developments, and executing trades to seize lucrative opportunities.

Throughout my career, I have gained valuable experience across various trading desks, delved into financial asset and liability management and, most recently, pushed my professional boundaries in the role of Markets Treasurer. This journey has allowed me to assimilate my extensive expertise, hone my skills, and broaden my understanding of the intricate dynamics within the financial markets.

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 Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to have had numerous mentors, both in formal and informal capacities, many of whom I now consider friends. One such mentor was a former colleague who provided invaluable support from the onset of my journey at Absa Bank. They actively engaged me in discussions that significantly elevated my exposure within the organisation. Serving as an invaluable sounding board, this mentor guided me across a broad spectrum of subjects, ranging from technical product advice and prospects for future career growth to matters about women in banking and personal development.

Additionally, I have been privileged to have another mentor who epitomises the qualities I admire in a leader. Their visionary approach, marked by ambitious ideas and strategic insights, was coupled with a persistent pursuit of operational efficiency: something that resonates with me. Although this mentor operates within another division within

banking, their presence nonetheless allowed me to exchange ideas, seek critical feedback, and challenge my perspectives on a myriad of subjects.

These mentors have contributed significantly to my professional growth, providing guidance, support, and wisdom that have shaped my trajectory within the industry. Their diverse perspectives and experiences have expanded my horizons and played a fundamental role in my overall development as a professional. I am truly grateful for their ongoing mentorship, and consider them instrumental in my journey towards success.

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

A Looking back, I've had the privilege of working on numerous memorable projects that have left a lasting impact on me. One project that stands out is the execution of hedges linked to the renewable energy Independent Power Producer programme. These market-moving transactions not only carried a significant risk for the hedge providers, but also encompassed everything I enjoy about banking. These deals served our client base, provided a solution to the energy crisis our country is facing, and required seamless teamwork between multiple areas of the bank, including corporate finance, credit, markets, and treasury.

Witnessing the collaboration and synergy across these teams, all working towards a common goal, was truly invigorating. The intricacies of these deals demanded a comprehensive understanding of the renewable energy landscape, intricate risk management, and astute financial analysis. Being involved in such impactful transactions allowed me to leverage my expertise while expanding my knowledge base. Moreover, the outcomes of these projects had tangible benefits for our clients, our institution, and the larger community, as they contributed to the growth and sustainability of the renewable energy sector.

Q What piece of advice would you give a young woman joining your team?

A Banking offers a rewarding career path for individuals, irrespective of gender. I have found that being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field has occasionally presented unique challenges, leading to feelings of isolation. While competence and a strong track record are crucial in establishing credibility, it has become apparent that these alone are insufficient for advancement. In my experience, actively engaging in networking and seeking advocates who can support your professional growth is essential.

I have observed that some of my male counterparts naturally excel in self-promotion, whereas I have personally struggled with self-advocacy. However, I recognise the significance of raising one's profile and acknowledging personal achievements. While it may be uncomfortable at times, it is crucial to articulate our successes, ensuring that our contributions are recognised and acknowledged. By actively participating in conversations about our accomplishments, we can increase our visibility within the organisation and cultivate opportunities for career advancement.

Finding support systems, building strong networks, and seeking out individuals who can champion our endeavours are vital steps towards overcoming the potential sense of isolation. These networks and advocates can provide guidance, open doors to new opportunities, and amplify our influence within the industry. By actively participating in these networks and seeking out mentors and sponsors, we can foster a supportive environment that values and encourages the growth and advancement of women in banking.

In summary, while gender should not limit one's aspirations in banking, it is important to navigate the unique challenges that women may encounter. Delivering exceptional results is necessary, but not sufficient, for success. Active participation in building networks, finding advocates, and proactively sharing our accomplishments are key steps towards establishing a strong professional presence and fostering our career growth within the industry. 