



Sandi Mda

Principal: Syndication & Distribution

What attracted you to the world of corporate and investment banking and what was your motivation to enter it?

I actually wanted to be a lawyer in high school. I was drawn to the boldness of the legal figures I would see on TV advocating for their convictions. However, my family strongly encouraged a career in finance, and so I followed their advice. Over time, I found a space in banking where I could channel that same sense of purpose and presence. My journey began through Nedbank's Graduate Programme about 12 years ago. From there, I transitioned into credit management and then into the front office of investment banking, which had always fascinated me.

What has your career journey looked like?

It's been an organic evolution. After spending time in vanilla loans, I joined the Leveraged and Diversified Finance Team. That was a major growth phase, stretching me beyond deal execution into broader structuring. Later, I pivoted into Syndication to gain valuable market-facing experience at another institution. When an opportunity presented itself to return to Nedbank, it felt right. The values, the people, and the culture align deeply with who I am. Today, I'm a principal in the Syndication and Distribution Team, operating in the broader Markets cluster. I'm still learning and growing, and that's what makes it meaningful.

Why Nedbank?

I've grown up here professionally. I started as a graduate and returned after a stint elsewhere because of a strong alignment of values with the bank. I knew I could be challenged and still show up as my most authentic self. That's rare. At Nedbank, the 'how' is as important as the 'what.' There is a lot of respect for people, for process, and for inclusive, thoughtful decision-making.

Tell us more about your current role.

I love how people-focused it is. Syndication is about understanding the deal, yes, but it's really about relationships. We partner with debt teams to originate transactions, and then work with institutional investors and other banks to build appetite for those deals. You need deep technical insight, but also emotional intelligence and trust. Transactions are secondary to the relationships that enable them.

How have you managed to grow in a male-dominated environment?

It's about building connections that go beyond the professional – creating genuine human relationships. People buy into you as a person, not just a performer. I've had fantastic mentors, both male and female, who advocated for me and opened doors, because of these connections. And I've come to embrace my style, even when it's in contrast with my male counterparts. I may be softer in my approach than some of my male counterparts, but that's a strength. My voice may be different, but it's still valuable.

How do you approach challenges?

I believe in being strategic and values-led. I don't default to confrontation; I aim for resolution. Most challenges are rooted in human dynamics, so I try to reconnect at that level first. Then we can address the issue from a more grounded place. I always aim to resolve rather than escalate, and I try to do it without stepping outside who I am at my core.

How do you manage the work-life balance formula?

Balance is a myth. It's more about integration. I'm a mother to 2 young boys, a wife, daughter, granddaughter, friend, and I'm a principal in investment banking at all times. Each part of my life needs attention, and I give it as needed. My late aunt had a mantra we learned as kids: 'I do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, whether I like it or not'. That stuck with me. It's about being present, responsive, and intentional.

What is your advice to an aspiring female corporate finance professional?

Have a vision. It doesn't need to be crystal clear, but be aware of the kind of life you want to build. I was raised by powerful women and a grandfather who always believed we could achieve anything. That shaped me. Don't play small. Don't wait to be given permission. Show up, speak up, and aim to do work that matters, because you matter.

