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

A Horrifyingly, I decided at the age of 14 that I was going to be an accountant. That was my “dream job”! It was unsurprising, then, that I joined Absa CIB in the technical accounting team after completing my articles at PwC. As part of the technical accounting team, I met some amazing people in investment banking, who matched my ambitious nature. I then grabbed the opportunity to move to a frontline investment banking product team, interfacing with JSE and large corporate clients.

I have worked on many corporate finance deals, both mainline finance and as part of M&A and BEE transactions, with loads of equity and equity-linked market transactions. It has been amazing to be pushed and challenged with the expectation to deliver top-quality solutions for our clients.

While working for the investment bank, I furthered my studies and attained a CFA designation, which I suppose is part of the requirement in corporate finance these days.

In 2015 I had an opportunity to try something different and moved internally to the Barclays Seeker Fund, an investment fund investing in fintech start-ups that are digitally disruptive to traditional banking. The great benefit of being a CA(SA) with investment banking experience is that new positions are attainable. This allowed me to develop a very different set of skills while interacting with some fascinating, energetic, disruptive people who are pushing boundaries on how a traditional bank currently operates. But the call of investment banking was loud, and I returned to frontline banking in Cape Town as director and Head of Global Finance for

the Coastal Regions, leading the regional investment banking coverage and product expertise across the range of products from finance to M&A.

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 fortunately experienced many mentors, within the work environment and also in the sporting world, as I race in the professional category in the global Ironman series. My sporting mentors have assisted me in building my blueprint for success, developing tenacity, discipline, strength and resilience – all of which have had an enormous impact on my corporate career.

What works as the best form of mentoring for me is when my senior direct line managers demand absolute performance from me and push me to deliver results. As a junior I respected when seniors performed, and it drove me far more than having a formal mentorship would have. They may not have known the effect they had on me, but for me that is the best mentorship you could ask for: your peers and colleagues demanding performance.

The biggest lesson I have learnt from mentors is that discipline is freedom. If you do the hard yards, do what is required, and don't take shortcuts, your career will move quickly.

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

A For most of my working life it has not been about being a female in a male-dominated environment; it's been about whether I could deliver on the task. Investment banking is great in that if you perform you can generally fast-track your career. It is noticeable, however, that as I have progressed through investment

banking and corporate finance, there has been a swing towards more males and less females. Is it family demands or limited opportunities for females? Most likely it's a combination. Investment banks need to make a real effort to reorientate the environment to ensure that seniors are truly representative across gender and demographics. Could the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic finally trigger the realisation that people can perform to remarkable standards without office conformity, and allow individuals to succeed with their own identity? I am hopeful.

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

A Memorable deals are typically those that came through hard negotiations. Some of these have been raising capital for a leading retailer amid the initial COVID-19 pandemic; or working on a black economic empowerment transaction for one of the leading global diamond producers, where the entire legal, tax, and client corporate finance teams were all women.

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

A Immediate validation often doesn't happen. The environment has a funny way of making you work for what you want, but corporate finance allows you to excel, be visible and make a difference – and that is seen and noted. So approach your career (and your life) with discipline and drive, and try to make those around you better. In the long run you will gain multiple benefits from that approach. My take on life across everything is to try to be your best. Not the best woman corporate financier, but the best corporate financier. 