Q&A

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Career journey and navigating the deal room

Looking back at your career, what do you consider your 'defining deal' – the one that tested you the most or reshaped how you view your capabilities?

I have been fortunate to work on several notable transactions across the African continent, but one deal that stood out was the sale of Azule Energy's (a bp and ENI company) stake in Blocks 14 and 14K-AIMI offshore Angola. It was one of my first major oil and gas transactions and it provided an invaluable learning experience, exposing me to the complexity and scale that characterise large cross-border energy deals.

The transaction required us to navigate a range of complex commercial and regulatory considerations, including revenue-sharing frameworks, shareholder rights, engagement with multiple stakeholders, such as existing equity block partners and Angolan regulatory authorities, and developing a deep understanding of the local operating environment.

What made the transaction particularly rewarding was the opportunity to work closely with the C-suite leadership of a leading international energy company, gaining exposure and insights that are not often available so early in one's career. Equally important was the opportunity to work alongside an exceptional deal team, whose expertise and collaborative approach reinforced the importance of teamwork in delivering successful outcomes. This transaction, and the people I had the opportunity to engage with, materially accelerated my professional development. It reinforced the importance of technical rigour, stakeholder management and teamwork in delivering a successful outcome, which contributed to making it a particularly memorable milestone in my career.

If you could go back to the very first week of your career, what is the single piece of technical or professional advice you wish someone had given you?

One of the most important lessons I have learnt is to trust your capabilities, and never underestimate the value of your perspective. Early in my career, working in the energy and infrastructure sector, I often found myself in rooms where I was one of very few women. That can be intimidating at first, but I quickly realised that meaningful contributions are not determined by seniority, gender, or years of experience. Every perspective matters, and it's important to have the confidence to share your view without feeling the need to apologise for it.

I have also learned that mistakes are an inevitable part of professional growth. Rather than fearing them, it is far more valuable to treat them as learning opportunities. Asking questions and seeking help when needed are signs of strength, not weakness. Equally important is being proactive in pursuing opportunities to learn, as this accelerates your development and helps you accelerate your learning curve.

Beyond technical expertise, I believe the strongest professionals are those who are proactive, curious, and willing to challenge themselves. It's easy to fall into the trap of simply executing tasks, but the real differentiator is taking the time to understand the "why" behind a transaction. Questioning assumptions, thinking critically, and looking for ways to create value beyond the obvious can help distinguish you as a successful transactor.

Finally, I would place even greater emphasis on mentorship. One of the biggest influences on my career has been the guidance of an exceptional leader who took a genuine interest in both my professional progression and personal growth. That experience transformed my confidence and encouraged me to pursue opportunities I may otherwise have doubted I was ready for. Because of that experience, I cannot overstate the importance of finding mentors who challenge, support and advocate for you.

How do you balance the technical, analytical side of valuation with the deeply relational side of managing client expectations?

Financial analysis is fundamental to any transaction, but it is only one part of the adviser's role. It's very easy to become absorbed in the detail of a model, valuation methodology or transaction structure. I believe the real value comes from really understanding the client's objectives and focusing on what factors will drive value for them. This approach not only helps deliver better outcomes, but also builds long-term trust.

Capital markets require a high tolerance for volatility. What personal traits have helped you thrive in an environment where the goalposts move so quickly?

Corporate finance is a fast-paced and dynamic environment where every transaction presents new challenges. Deals can take months to complete, so I have learnt the importance of viewing each deal as a learning opportunity and celebrating the milestones along the way, rather than focusing solely on the end outcome.

With multiple transactions often running concurrently, priorities can shift quickly, and unexpected challenges can arise. Maintaining a high degree of flexibility, resilience and composure is, therefore, key to sustainability in the sector.

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